



Ukrainian-Polish relations

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Here we publish the English version of an interview that Ola Hnatiuk gave to Volodymyr Yermolenko (editor of this book) for *Hromadske.ua**. The conversation focuses on Polish-Ukrainian relations in the 20th century: about the Volyn tragedy, history of Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation, and how Ukrainians and Poles should look for points in their history that unite them.

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You combine two identities – Polish and Ukrainian. Is that easy to do?

Today, it is easy and natural, almost like combining different professional, public or family roles.

I am a person of two languages and two cultures.

I am a Polish citizen, and Ukraine is a second homeland for me (however, not in terms of citizenship). We enjoy this comfort as a result of democratic transformations; neither my parents nor my grandparents had it. Totalitarian or authoritarian states forced their citizens – or rather “subjects” – to choose by using a specific formula of loyalty: “who is not with us, is against us”.

Your mother was born in Lviv, if I am not mistaken, the day after Soviet troops entered Western Ukraine.

Yes, my mother was born on September 18, 1939. Six years later, already after the war, my grandmother and mother were forcefully displaced from Lviv to Poland. It was called *repatriation* despite the fact that a large number of *repatriates* were born and grew up not in the places, to which they were *repatriated*, meaning not in central Poland and, moreover, not in Western Lands, which Poland received only after the Potsdam Conference (so-called Returned Lands, another creation of propaganda language). My mother grew up in Polish culture, and her identity was Polish. My father was born on the Polish side of the contemporary border in Chełm Land into a Ukrainian Orthodox Christian family. Before the war, he went to a Polish primary school: there was no Ukrainian school, although the only Pole in the village was the teacher, and the [Ukrainian Orthodox] church was intentionally ruined when my father was nine years old.

During the forced displacement of Ukrainians within the framework of Operation Vistula in 1947, my father first found himself near Wrocław, in the so-called Recovered Territories [*former German lands attached to Poland after World War II – Ed.*], then in the Northern Lands, and then in Warsaw. And later on my father met my mother in Warsaw. They

started a family contrary to the national narrative that dominated, which was especially hostile towards Ukrainians. In those circumstances, such a family was not supposed to exist. Of course, there were mixed couples, but in most cases the Ukrainian partner had to give up his or her identity.

This was after the Volyn tragedy and after “pacification”. Is the story of your family unique or were there many such stories?

This happened about a dozen years after the war, which not only ruined the pre-war world but wiped off entire communities from the face of the earth. With regard to my family, it was more of a rarity than a rule at that time. And in post-war Poland, this phenomenon was tabooed altogether.

When people talk about Ukrainian-Polish relations, they see a positive point in the union between Symon Petliura and Jozef Piłsudski in 1920 [a short-lived union of the army of independent Ukraine and Polish army against the Russian Bolsheviks – Ed.]. Yet, this was not the only point, was it?

Certainly, it was not the only one. And I would not say it was the most successful. In my opinion, a better example would be the activities of Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky [*prominent head of Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church from 1901 to 1944, coming from Polonized Ruthenian family – Ed.*], yet Polish historians need to first re-evaluate their attitude towards this person.

The Piłsudski-Petliura union caused disagreements both from the Ukrainian and from the Polish sides right at the moment when this agreement was signed.

Were residents of Western Ukraine opposed to it?

Polish right-wingers opposed it strongly, and they tried to persuade Polish and Western public that Piłsudski's adventurism would not

get him very far. If we talk about the “betrayal” of Polish interests, which according to Polish historian Andrzej Nowak was allegedly committed by the West, then we should remember the by far not unanimous position held by the Polish political elite regarding Eastern politics and Eastern borders.

From the Ukrainian point of view, this union was forced by the extremely unfavorable international situation and, in the first place, by the threat from Russia. Of course, Galician people opposed this union (it was a different story with Volyn people) because it required the Ukrainian People’s Republic to give up its claims on Eastern Galicia [*now Galicia is in Western Ukraine with its centre in Lviv – Ed.*]. Let’s remember that the Act of Unification was signed between the Ukrainian People’s Republic (UNR) and the Western Ukrainian People’s Republic (ZUNR) in January 1919. That is why giving up these Western Ukrainian territories meant betrayal of ZUNR’s interests. That’s how Galician politicians saw it, and their opinion was shared by a lot of political figures in the UNR.

However, when we assess this agreement, we should remember when and in what circumstances it was signed. The negotiations began in September 1919. At that time, the Ukrainian-Polish war for Eastern Galicia was over (in July 1919), and ZUNR troops retreated behind the Zbruch [*river in Western Ukraine that marked the border between Poland and Soviet Russia from 1921 to 1939 – Ed.*]. From a military standpoint, Eastern Galicia was lost. UNR troops did not have sufficient forces to win back these lands from the Poles because they were holding the frontline from the other side against the Bolsheviks and Denikin’s army. Neither should we forget about Romania, which occupied the territories of Southern Bukovyna and Bessarabia. This brings us back to the unfavorable international situation. Not only did Ukraine have no allies, but it also, unlike Poland, did not have international recognition.

Ukrainians even had different perceptions of their main enemy: for Galicians “the devil himself was better than the Poles”, but for Ukrainians of the former Russian empire Red [Bolshevik] and White

[Tsarist army] Russia constituted the biggest threats. That is why the dictator of ZUNR, Yevhen Petrushevysh, made arrangements with the Russians, even with Bolsheviks, but not with the UNR or the Poles.

On the other hand, the Polish authorities were indisposed to negotiate with the Galicians, and even at the moment of extreme danger for the young Polish state, they were not ready to release interned Ukrainian Galician Army soldiers for a joint fight against Bolsheviks. Of course, this can be explained by concerns they had about the loyalty of Galicians, though I think that triumphalism was the main reason. This ultimately determined Polish policy regarding the Ukrainians during the interwar period, with its attempts to introduce splits between Ukrainian political elites and public activists.

What is your assessment of history that followed, of 1920-1930, namely the so-called “pacification” of the Ukrainian population by interwar Poland?

This history, despite individual attempts to find the *modus vivendi*, was very complicated. It was difficult to turn Ukrainians into Poles, in accordance with the program of right-wing forces, and even into loyal citizens (program of centrist forces) in a situation when they were supposed to be second-class citizens.

“In early autumn 1930, the Polish government held a campaign (it lasted several weeks) for “reconciliation” of the civilian Ukrainian population. This was so-called *pacification*.”

Was it aimed against the churches?

Churches – no, but priests – yes. Churches were destroyed later, in 1938, and in a different territory – Chełm Land and in part of Podlasie.

These were Orthodox Christian parishes that the Polish administration wanted to destroy in order to restore “historical justice”. This meant the intention to return the population that was made Orthodox by force in the late 19th century into the Catholic faith.

I am explaining the logic of their actions though, of course, I don’t want to justify them. On the contrary, I believe it was a manifestation of extreme intolerance toward another Christian church and a violation of fundamental human rights, the right to freedom of religion, and wild behavior towards architectural monuments. And all of this was done for the sake of an ideological purpose, which was considered to be a civilizational mission, but *de facto* was intended to forcibly Polonize these territories. A reminder that all this was happening one year before the beginning of the war. During the war, citizens of Chełm Land were able to restore some parishes; but the Poles saw it as manifestation of disloyalty and traitorous cooperation with German occupants.

Instead, the so-called “pacification” [*of 1930 – Ed.*] targeted first of all the territory of Eastern Galicia, which at that time was called Małopolska Wschodnia [*Eastern Lesser Poland – Ed.*] by the Polish administration. This name was an ideological construction, which had no historical foundation but had an obvious objective – to affirm its Polishness. An artificial border was created inside the country between Volyn and Eastern Galicia, the so-called Sokal border to protect Volynian territories from “Ukrainian/Galician nationalists”.

The idea was to separate Galician Ukrainian politicians and public figures from residents of Volyn. The very word *Ukrainian* and *Ukrainians* was excluded, and the official terms used were *Rusyny* and *Ruskyi*. Attempts were made to create separate ethnic groups, Lemkos, Boykos, and Hutsuls, and to create a separate Apostolic Administration in the Lemko region, in order to divide Ukrainians into different ethnicities, and block the development of a unified national movement. This was the policy of the Polish administration and the Nonpartisan Bloc for cooperation with the Government (BBWR) controlled by Piłsudski. This policy was coming closer and closer to the

views held by Polish national democrats, or the right-wing views of supporters of Roman Dmowski [*National Democrats (ND, Endecja) were the right-wing opposition to Józef Piłsudski – Ed.*]

“Pacification” began in early autumn of 1930 and it encompassed the territory of Eastern Galicia. This was real demolition of organized Ukrainian life, and the victims were not only activists, cooperators, priests, but also women and teenagers. The material basis of the Ukrainian movement suffered greatly. The official cause for “pacification” was arson attacks on corn fields allegedly organized by OUN, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists. However, in reality a wave of arson attacks rolled through the whole of Poland and was caused by economic reasons (the 1929 global crisis brought corn prices crashing down). There were also political reasons, but not those still being described by Polish and Ukrainian historians (not terrorist acts by OUN, for example) but a deep crisis in Poland’s domestic policies. As Parliament was dissolved back in Summer, and the animosity between Piłsudski’s camp and right-wing forces exacerbated markedly, an external enemy was needed in order to de-escalate the situation.

Do I understand you correctly that the right-wing radicalism of the Second Rzeczpospolita also radicalized Ukrainian communities?

Not quite so: first, “pacification” was carried out not by the [right-wing] National Democrats, but upon the personal orders of Józef Piłsudski himself. Second, precisely at that time, in the 1930s, Ukrainian politicians were seeking understanding with the Polish authorities.

Piłsudski’s objective in 1930 was to appease his opponents from the National Democratic camp before the elections, and to fundamentally transform the Polish political arena so that it would be dominated entirely by his camp. They were appeasing the right-wing radicals by finding an internal enemy. They found this enemy in Galician Ukrainians.

“ This was yet not the period of widespread anti-Semitism of the mid-1930s, when violence broke out in the streets and in universities against the Jews. Ukrainians, instead, became a convenient internal enemy. ”

Not all Ukrainians though, because Ukrainians from Volyn were not included in this [pacification] campaign. The target was Galician Ukrainians, Galician civil society institutions, and cooperatives that formed the financial basis of social life. Galician Ukrainian intellectuals, especially the young, could not find jobs as public servants. Therefore, they went to villages where they worked close to the land. The Polish administration decided to attack these foundations of civil society. OUN's terrorist activities were good justification for this.

After “pacification”, the Ukrainians became significantly weaker and much more ready to recognize the *status quo* (although having an independent and united Ukrainian state continued to be their strategic goal). They realized that in the near future they were unable to do more, unable to create a separate state. So everything they could do in those conditions was to achieve autonomy within the borders of the Polish state. Legal Ukrainian political forces were trying to attain it. This tactic became especially widespread after the Holodomor [*artificial Famine organized by Stalin against Ukrainian peasants in 1932-1933 – Ed.*]. Ukrainian politicians in Poland understood that they were the only ones able to represent Ukrainian interests, and that the most important task for them was to preserve the “national substance”, i.e. national self-awareness.

On the other hand, the Ukrainian underground movement in Galicia was trying to persuade as many people as possible that the Poles were the greatest enemies for Ukrainian identity and for the Ukrainians. However, as of 1930 it was already clear that the main enemy was not Poland, but the Soviet Union. Stalin, as the leader of the USSR, first forced its collectivization plan, and then deprived Ukrainian peasants not only of arable land, but also of any food, annihilating the Ukrainian peasantry as a class. But shifting the focus

to Poland was precisely something that worked for the interests of the Russian Empire, which was called the Soviet Union at that time.

In 1932 and 1933, understanding the scale of the Holodomor tragedy, Ukrainian politicians in Poland tried to seek ways to normalize relations with the Polish administration. However, soon after the death of Piłsudski (in 1935) all attempts to find understanding faded away. In the years that followed, the situation of Ukrainians in the Polish state only deteriorated.

The 1930s were very difficult years in terms of Ukrainian-Polish relations. But you often also write about those who sought reconciliation. Who would you name in the first place?

First of all, the camp of Polish neo-conservatives who brought forward the proposal to start looking for *modus vivendi*. Paradoxically, at that time allies from the Polish side came not from the left, not from Józef Piłsudski's camp, but from the neo-conservatives camp.

Yet the biggest ally was socialist Tadeusz Hołowko. However, this supporter of the idea of understanding between the Poles and the Ukrainians was killed by an OUN unit in 1931.

And what was the logic of it? What was the sense of killing a Pole who called upon reconciliation?

The logic was “the worse, the better”. This is the style of revolutionary thinking.

Yevhen Konovalets, who headed the Ukrainian Military Organization (UVO), was shocked by that murder. Perhaps, the initiative was coming from low-ranking Ukrainian nationalists, but in unknown ways. One cannot exclude the possibility that this murder was instigated by provocateurs encouraged by the Polish police or (I think this version is more probable) by Soviet intelligence.

Soviet intelligence was very well informed about the Galician political spectrum. It knew very well which strings it had to pull in order to achieve the desired objective.

The story is painfully familiar: this is an old scheme tried many times. Western public opinion was also influenced in a very similar way. We simply don't study it enough and know very little about it.

Let us talk about World War II. You have a book called *Courage and Fear* that received the Grand prix at the Ukrainian Publishers' Forum in Lviv in 2015. It is about the double (Soviet and Nazis) occupation of Western Ukraine. And you show very well how totalitarian regimes were trying to ensure clashes between Ukrainians, Poles and Jews against each other. Did they succeed at that time?

Yes, to a certain extent, they did. When Soviet rule came to Western Ukraine [*in September 1939, according to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact – Ed.*], it destroyed all elements of the previous political culture and public life. The Soviets arrested not only representatives of the Polish authorities, but also Jews and Ukrainians, members of the Polish Parliament, and all distinguished political figures.

Timothy Snyder wrote that during World War II occupation erased pre-existing state institutions; and this erasure made uncontrolled violence possible.

Of course, I agree with this. Besides, occupation implied governance through fear and distrust. In other words, both occupants [*Nazis and Soviets – Ed.*] were trying to completely destroy trust.

Were the Soviets and the Nazis different in any way? Or did they use the same methods?

Their style was very similar. But there was also a fundamental difference. From the Soviet side, there was political terror against individual layers of society; depending on their past, they were categorized

as [politically] trustworthy and untrustworthy. These layers were large – repressions affected almost 10 per cent of the population at that time. “Trustworthiness” was determined by social status and activism, and not by ethnic origin. If a person was a public servant (and they were predominantly Polish), a public or political figure (Ukrainians and Jews) then this person was “untrustworthy”. There was a newly-emerged category that was similar to the one from the Bolshevik Revolution era. But what was called “former people” [in the USSR], was now called “former Poles”.

Instead, Nazis put all Jewish citizens into the category of non-humans. The category of sub-humans — *Untermenschen* — was filled with Poles and Ukrainians. However, the Ukrainians received a few more rights.

And this did more harm than good, because it later created the grounds for accusing Ukrainians of collaborating with the Nazis.

The word “collaborationism” should be used very carefully. At that time, it was believed that a collaborator is always *another* person or another nation. It was never “I”, despite the fact that “I” was doing the same.

During those first months of Autumn 1939, during the Soviet occupation of Western Ukraine, were Ukrainians in any way enthusiastic?

Enthusiasm was ascribed to Ukrainians, especially by the Polish side. In reality, the attitude of Ukrainians towards Soviet occupation could hardly be called enthusiastic. A lot of Ukrainians, especially those involved in the UNR [*independent Ukraine’s People’s Republic of 1917-1921 – Ed.*], escaped to the German side, understanding they should not wait for anything good from the Soviet government. For instance, the half-Jewish Rudnytsky family fled from occupied Soviet

territory to German territory. They realized very well what was waiting for them from the Soviet side, and they had no illusions. Milena Rudnytska was a wonderfully educated person; she visited Europe many times and represented Ukrainian interests in the League of Nations. She realized very well that she was risking, but she also knew that in Soviet reality she did not have the slightest chance of surviving.

Out of all five Rudnytskys, only one elder brother, Mykhailo, stayed in the Soviet administration. But during Soviet occupation, the Soviets grabbed him by the throat.

I will only tell our readers that they can read about this in more detail in your book, *Courage and Fear*.

Yes, the book also shows that, regardless of circumstances, there are manifestations of humaneness and solidarity that go counter to national identities. It shows that old friends [with different ethnic origins] kept their close contacts, and which could not be influenced by the government.

Certainly, I cannot say that this was a mass phenomenon. But even if the share of stories about how some people saved others was just one per cent (the real number is much higher), they would still deserve our attention.

Let us talk about what happened in Volyn. How should we talk about Volyn, how can we define what happened in 1943, and how can we live with it now?

I think the problem already starts with the way we call it. The Polish Parliament recently called it *genocide*. This is a political decision that entails legal consequences. In Ukraine, the phrase *Volyn tragedy* is frequently used. But the Poles perceive it not just as a euphemism ...

...but as an attempt on the part of Ukrainians to lift the guilt from themselves?

Yes, if we understand the word *tragedy* in classical Aristotle's sense, when the characters do something because of doom or fate, and hence have no impact on developments and no moral responsibility for their actions. But this is a very simplified interpretation. In fact, characters from Greek Antiquity are responsible, here and now. For instance, Antigone, who for the sake of values refused to follow the tyrant's command and the earthly order established by him, was punished, although she acted according to a moral principle and buried the dead.

However, the contemporary understanding of *tragedy* is much wider than the classical one, and it includes the notion of responsibility for crimes committed. At the same time, tragedy has an individual dimension.

Violence in Volyn in 1943 had a mass character.

It was ethnic cleansing. Polish historians say that the number of civilian victims among the Poles reached 100,000; the number of Ukrainian victims reached 10,000. Ukrainian historians, however, say that the number of Polish victims was between 40,000 and 60,000, while the number of Ukrainian victims reached over 20,000. Ethnic Czechs also suffered.

This violence was not just limited to the territory of Volyn. For instance, in 1944 mass crimes and extermination of the civilian population also took place in Eastern Galicia. In fact, we do not know the exact numbers of victims of this massacre even now. Unfortunately, there is speculation on the numbers from both sides. Moreover, this speculation is present not only regarding the numbers, but also the general picture of the war that took place on the territory of Volyn and Eastern Galicia. There is a tendency to separate the period of Spring and Summer of 1943 from the whole period of occupation – both Soviet

and German. One should remember that ethnic cleansing began not in 1943 but in 1940 with the repressions by Soviet forces and the cleansing of territory from so-called “counter-revolutionary elements” i.e. colonists. It continued in even more cruel forms during the German occupation, with the total extermination of Jews (Holocaust by Bullets). Extermination of the Polish population by Ukrainian units in Volyn and Eastern Galicia was a continuation of the wave of mass violence. Unfortunately, it continued in these territories right up to the early 1950s.

The word *tragedy* conveys the individual dimension, but it fails to convey an understanding of the scale of the crime. At least, this is how it is used in Polish vocabulary. Instead, in Ukrainian vocabulary, the word *tragedy* has a much wider meaning, and an example can be found in the fact that the Holodomor is often called a tragedy, although officially the Holodomor was recognized as genocide in Ukraine.

In Polish vocabulary, the phrase *Volyn massacre/slaughter* was used until recently. This phrase was used for a very long time in Polish historiography and journalism. I see it as dehumanization when the murder of people is equated with the slaughter of animals. This vocabulary leads to further rhetorical war. I do not accept, at the very basic level, such dehumanization of victims and everything in me protests against it. It makes no difference that this phrase is a widespread one, and I grew up with it and had to use it because no other name could be found.

I also feel a strong denial toward the phrase *Ukrainian genocide of Poles* (ukraińskie ludobójstwo na Polakach / narodzie polskim). In this case, we're dealing with manipulation based on the figure of speech *pars pro toto* and, as a result of using this phrase, Ukrainians are believed as such to be guilty of crimes.

Will Ukrainians and Poles be able to agree on the terminology? I believe they will, because it is difficult to imagine denial of the obvious: civilians were killed.

But what do we know, and what do we not know about those events? How do we study them? I think that Ukrainian historians and researchers have spent too little time studying those developments. And now a very high price is being paid for this.

We are not saying here that there is a point of view of the Ukrainian side and a point of view of the Polish side. It was precisely this erroneous attitude (Polish side versus Ukrainian side) that resulted in a situation when historians now behave as if they were crouched in the trenches. More and more pointed accusations are being voiced from one and the other side. While one side calls the developments in Volyn in 1943 genocide, the other side calls them the Polish-Ukrainian war.

| Is this an attempt to shift the guilt from oneself?

Yes, and, unfortunately, from both sides. The “Second Ukrainian-Polish War” is not just the name of a book [*by Volodymyr Viatrovykh, head of Ukrainian National Memory Institute – Ed.*], but also a statement. On the other hand, in the Polish context, when there is a talk about killings of the Ukrainian population, a euphemism is used: “retaliatory actions”. It means: “evil was done to us, so there were retaliation actions from our side”. The word “retaliation” is used, not the word “revenge”. But those retaliatory actions killed women, elderly people, newborn infants, everyone. And this was done only on the basis of their ethnic origin. And today we know neither the geography of those crimes nor their scale.

| What should the Poles and the Ukrainians do today?

I think they should, first and foremost, get out of their trenches. They should stop trying to impose the one and only standpoint. They should realize the consequences of using phrases that continue the war in a symbolic space.

Still, talking about Volyn, I think Ukrainians should admit that they were not only victims in their history, but also killers. And this is very difficult to admit.

Yes, this is very difficult to admit – for any person, for any community. Just like for the Ukrainians, it is hard for the Poles to admit they were not only victims but killers as well. And this martyr mentality in both nations has played a bad trick on us.

This is a case when martyrology – i.e. belief that you are only a victim – can be cruel. Would you agree?

Yes. I will mention here a brilliant essay written in the early 1980s by Jan Józef Lipski about different ways of understanding patriotism.

👉 **It is important to be a patriot who recognizes the mistakes of his or her own people.** 👉

Who believes that we are not the best in the world; we are ordinary people, ordinary communities, ordinary nations – like others next to us. It is a pity no such significant text was written by a Ukrainian author.

Let's move to the era after World War II. Of course, Poland had its painful interpretation of the Yalta division of the world, according to which it lost Eastern Galicia and Volyn. And then people like Jerzy Giedroyc appeared who founded *Kultura*, a Polish émigré magazine in Paris. He called on Poles and Ukrainians to forget mutual accusations and seek rapprochement. Can Giedroyc be called an architect of Ukrainian-Polish reconciliation?

Absolutely. But Giedroyc did not come from nowhere. He grew up in independent Poland, in the 1920s. He was in the trenches in Warsaw

when the Bolsheviks were advancing in 1920. His patriotism was real, not learnt at school; there were also real actions behind it. He was, perhaps, the most prominent Polish political thinker of the second half of the 20th century, although he did not write big texts nor a political treatise.

In the early 1930s, Giedroyc, having graduated from a law department, studied Ukrainian history at the University of Warsaw. His professor was Myron Korduba, a student of Mykhaylo Hrushevsky [*prominent Ukrainian historian and politician* – Ed.]. Myron Korduba was not admitted to the Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv as a Ukrainian professor and had to teach at a grammar school. Then he received an invitation from the University of Warsaw. And so Giedroyc attended his lectures.

What did he learn from Korduba?

First of all, he learnt a different view of history. Understanding that our standpoint is not the only possible one. In other words, it was the understanding that one can look at all those developments from a different point of view. And Korduba was able to show it – not only using an example of early modern history in which he specialized, but also contemporary history since he participated in the events of 1918–1919.

Ukraine should definitely be grateful to Giedroyc, and the first thing that comes to my mind is the anthology *Executed Renaissance* edited by Yuri Lavrinenko, which was a collection of texts of many Ukrainian writers from the 1920s, who were exterminated by the Soviet regime in the 1930s. The anthology became possible thanks to Giedroyc; he even came up with the name.

Yes. But the most important point was that he inspired the rethinking of Ukrainian-Polish relations. At that time, the issue was a huge

trauma for the Polish people, the change of borders through the Yalta order. Just as important is the fact that Giedroyc saw Ukrainians as partners for negotiations and agreements, as an actor, not an object.

And Giedroyc called on acceptance of the idea that Ukraine has a right to be independent.

Not only independent, but independent in those new borders. He called on people to admit that Lviv is a Ukrainian city. Back at that time, in the mid-20th century, this was an impossible thing for a Pole and an emigrant to imagine.

He started doing so in late 1940s – early 1950s. The discussion itself began in the 1950s. Let Lviv be Ukrainian, Vilnius be Lithuanian, let the blue and yellow flag flutter in Lviv, one of the correspondents of Giedroyc's Paris-based *Kultura* wrote, and this caused indignation among Polish readers. The public was absolutely not ready to accept Poland's new borders. 1952 was just seven years after the end of the war. This time is too short.

It was so because Eastern Galicia, including Lviv was, for Poles, an annexed territory.

Of course. On the other side, Poland had received western post-German territories. The period of uncertainty lasted for a long time, until the end of Communism, during which the Poles had the feeling that the Germans would come and take everything back.

When did Giedroyc's ideas start to penetrate into Polish society?

In the 1970s.

By the way, publication of the *Executed Renaissance* collection [*in 1959 – Ed.*] won the sympathies of Ukrainian emigrants. This opened up the possibility for talking with Ukrainian emigres.

In the 1960s, not many things were happening – but still, Koshelivets published his book, *Ukraine 1956–1968: Collection of documents of Ukrainian dissidents*. Borys Levytskyi published his book about national policy in the USSR. *Kultura* published regular articles by Bohdan Osadchuk: from the first half of the 1950s he was the staff correspondent of the *Kultura* magazine in Paris and informed its readers about eastern-Ukrainian affairs, first and foremost about Ukrainian affairs.

The first noticeable change happened in the 1970s. The political concept of a new Polish Eastern policy was developed.

👉 **This was the so-called ULB concept – Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus as ally countries of Poland; their existence was supposed to guarantee Poland’s independence.** 🏠

This was the topic of letters exchanged between Juliusz Mieroszewski and Jerzy Giedroyc, and later – of Mieroszewski’s publications in *Kultura*. There was also a statement issued by Polish intellectuals about recognizing the borders.

But still, the breakthrough was the Polish *Drugi Obieg* [*Second Circulation – underground press in socialist Poland – Ed.*], a strong movement by the Polish opposition that became interested not only in its own Polish affairs, not only in reflections as to how to make the Communist order more humane or how to overthrow it, but also in the question on what to do with Poland’s neighbors. This was a debate as to what country we see in the future and what we are striving for. The Polish political imagination started working in the mid-1970s, and it exploded in the mid-1980s. That is why Poland became the first state to recognize Ukraine’s independence.

Today, we see a conservative turn in Poland, often with a lot of anti-Ukrainian rhetoric. Are there people in Poland who would like to revise Giedroyc’s ideas?

Lots of them. This is a very dangerous trend in Polish political thought. And this could result in another geopolitical disaster. The tendency to see the Russians as allies has not disappeared. The tradition of Polish National Democracy that goes back to Roman Dmowski is based on the idea that the Russians are the biggest allies of Poland, and the Germans are the biggest enemy. Also, contempt for the state-building capacity of Ukrainians is rooted very deeply in the Polish tradition of political thinking.

Are these the dominant opinions in the *Law and Justice* (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS), the ruling party?

I wouldn't say they are dominant inside the PiS. To a large extent, they are present in much more extreme environments. However, when the PiS has to fight for voters, its political strategists are ready to go that far.

The most extreme environment permeated with this ideology is the clergy. Yet, it would be unfair to generalize, because not all priests and even less so bishops think this way.

Do these doubts about Giedroyc's ideas mean that there are forces in Poland that want to revise the borders?

No. It is not about the borders; it is rather about the weight of Ukraine in Poland's Eastern Policy.

So, there are no people who say publicly that Lviv should be Polish?

There are no politicians who say this.

If we talk about the Ukrainian side – do you have the feeling that there is some skepticism in Ukrainians, even West-oriented, about Poland and about our common history? For instance, in your book, *Farewell to Empire*, you analyze the search for

Europe in new Ukrainian literature, including such writers as Yuri Andrukhovych. And you show how they refer rather to the legacy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to Central European history than to the Polish legacy. Do Ukrainians have a virus of distrust toward the Poles?

It exists; it has not disappeared. But, on the one hand, empathy [on the part of Ukrainians towards Poles] prevails. Public opinion surveys show that, unlike the Poles, Ukrainians like Poland a lot. Apparently, this is because they are convinced that Poland is a very close example of success for Ukraine. More senior people remember the economic situation in Poland in the 1980s or in the early 1990s. And they understand what kind of reforms the country implemented during this period.

On the other hand, there is some distrust towards those Poles who do not have sufficient understanding of Ukrainian problems and aspirations.

What should the Poles and Ukrainians do today?

They should not succumb to despair. Despair is present not only in Ukraine but in Poland as well. Inside these societies, there are political oppositions, very deep controversies. I cannot say that there is an abyss, but these controversies are based on negative emotions, such as hatred.

These deep political controversies divide societies and prevent them from moving on. And this is not a purely Ukrainian problem – it is a global problem. Populist slogans are not purely Ukrainian problems – these are global problems.

When you have common problems, you should find common solutions. Polish-Ukrainian cooperation should continue, and it cannot be just limited to Polish-Ukrainian disputes about history. Historians must learn their lessons. However, I am not so naive to believe that politicians will leave history to historians. Because history is a fertile field for manipulations.

On the other hand, history can unite, and not only through common victories but also through common experience, analyzed and rethought. And we have to look for these factors that unite, and not only look for specks in each other's eyes.