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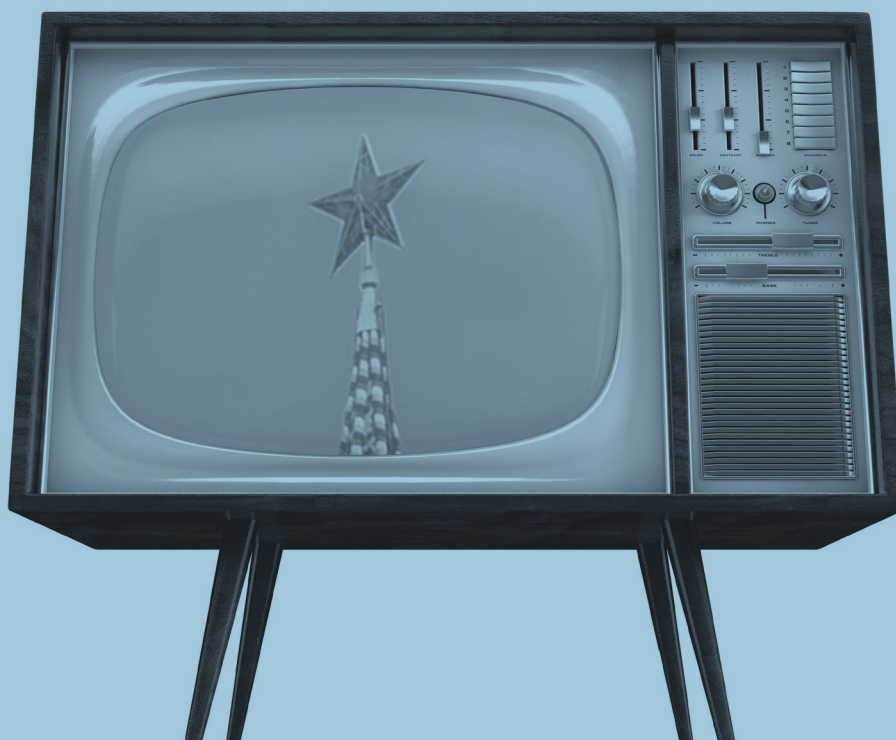
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# *PROPAGANDA AND DISINFORMATION IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S HISTORICAL POLICY TOWARDS POLAND AND UKRAINE*

*BASED ON PUBLICATIONS IN RUSSIAN  
AND PRO-RUSSIAN INTERNET PORTALS IN 2023*

REPORT







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THE JANUSZ KURTYKA FOUNDATION  
WARSAW 2023



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Propaganda and Disinformation in the Russian Federation's Historical Policy Towards  
Poland and Ukraine (Based on Publications in Russian and Pro-Russian Internet Portals in 2023)

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Warsaw 2023

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Republic of Poland



**TARCZA  
HISTORII**

## CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION	6
HISTORICAL POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION	6
<b>I. RUSSIAN HISTORICAL POLICY TOWARDS POLAND AND UKRAINE</b>	<b>13</b>
“SHIELD OF HISTORY”	23
<b>II. POLISH-UKRAINIAN FORUM FOR COUNTERACTING RUSSIAN DISINFORMATION IN THE AREA OF POLISH AND UKRAINIAN HISTORY</b>	<b>24</b>
TABLE I: THE LONG TERM (MEDIEVAL AND MODERN)	25
TABLE II: A CENTURY OF NATIONS (19TH CENTURY)	28
TABLE III: IN THE FACE OF TOTALITARIANISMS (20TH CENTURY)	33
SUMMARY	37
<b>III. TRUTHS, HALF-TRUTHS AND UNTRUTHS. THE HISTORY OF POLAND AND UKRAINE IN THE LIGHT OF RUSSIAN AND PRO-RUSSIAN ONLINE MEDIA IN 2023.</b>	<b>39</b>
POLISH-RUSSIAN RELATIONS	39
POLAND’S RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES	43
SHOWING POLAND AS AN EXTREMELY AUTHORITARIAN AND AGGRESSIVE STATE	
OPPRESSING NATIONAL MINORITIES AND SEEKING TO EXPAND ITS TERRITORY	44
POLAND AS AN ALLY OF THE THIRD REICH	50
POLISH COMPLEXES AND DREAMS OF RETURNING TO FORMER POWER	51
CRITICISM OF THE POLICY PURSUED BY THE POLISH STATE	54
POLISH HISTORY – VARIA	54
RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS THROUGHOUT HISTORY	57
POLISH-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS THROUGHOUT HISTORY AND THEIR MEMORY	58
COOPERATION BETWEEN UKRAINIANS AND GERMANS	61
HISTORY OF UKRAINE – VARIA	62
APPLICATIONS	63
PRESCRIPTIONS	64

## INTRODUCTION

### HISTORICAL POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The purpose of historical policy is to consciously shape a certain image of the past, among other things, through a stronger emphasis on selected anniversaries and historical facts in the public space and their interpretation.<sup>1</sup> Implemented in this way, it aims, among other things, to arouse national pride in society, as well as to shape a positive image of one's own country and its former and current leaders, both at home and abroad. Its effectiveness, as emphasized by Katarzyna Kącka, is influenced by the multidimensionality of its application, i.e. providing recipients with specific stimuli in various fields, as well as the consistency of the message, i.e. distributing a unified vision of the past in many areas.<sup>2</sup> The measure of success in this case is the recipients' approval and identification with the promoted narrative, as well as induction of desired behavior.<sup>3</sup> A wide arsenal of tools can be used to achieve this goal. Subsidizing film productions and supporting the publication of scholarly and popular works that depict the past in the manner expected by those in power promotes the dissemination of their desired vision of particular events or assessment of historical figures, while interfering with the content of curricula and favoring certain school textbooks is intended to make them a part of the historical consciousness of future generations. One should also not forget about publicly funded specialized institutions that support the narrative in line with the authorities' assumptions, such as museums, libraries and archives. The creation of collective memory and ethno-cultural identity is also served by the restoration and display of specific symbolism.<sup>4</sup>

Before considering Russian disinformation concerning Polish and Ukrainian history, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of the Kremlin's decades old consistent and methodically implemented historical policy. This issue has, especially in recent years, been a frequent topic

1 J. Zielińska, *Ruska (русская) czy rosyjska (российская), czyli dylematy rosyjskiej polityki historycznej*, "Polski Przegląd Stosunków Międzynarodowych", 2017, No. 7, p. 91.

2 K. Kącka, *Polityka historyczna: kreatorzy, narzędzia, mechanizmy działania – przykład Polski*, [in:] *Narracje pamięci: między polityką a historią*, eds. K. Kącka, J. Piechowiak-Lamparska, A. Ratke-Majewska, Toruń 2015, p. 71.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 71–74; E. Ponczek, *Polityka wobec pamięci versus polityka historyczna: aspekty semantyczny, aksjologiczny i merytoryczny w narracji polskiej*, "Przegląd Politologiczny", 2013, No. 2, p. 9.

of study for historians, political scientists, and experts in the field of international relations or public security. Accordingly, for the purposes of this introduction, its analysis is limited to pointing out the key issues and related aspects that directly affect Poland and Ukraine.

The Russian government has always, regardless of the historical period, used past events to consolidate power, support the cult of successive leaders, shape desirable attitudes among citizens, create certain stereotypes, relativize erroneous moves and crimes committed, or erase them from the memory of the society.<sup>5</sup> In the case of the Russian Federation, there are numerous examples of such activities. President Vladimir Putin began pursuing an active historical policy shortly after taking power in the Kremlin.<sup>6</sup> A clear symbol of the adoption of this course was the return to the use of the double-headed eagle and the flag from the tsarist period and the restoration of the melody of the Soviet-era national anthem.<sup>7</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the USSR, the Russian Federation paid little attention to history in its domestic policy, focusing instead on overcoming the political and economic crisis.<sup>8</sup> However, it quickly became one of the most important elements of national consciousness, used for political purposes by transforming issues concerning the past into a national security problem. This was manifested, for example, in the provisions made to the Criminal Code in 1996, which introduced prison sentences for those who disseminate information about the role of the Soviet state during World War II inconsistent with the official narrative.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, historical policy has become one of the most important elements of the Kremlin's strategy to overcome the identity crisis in Russia after the collapse of the USSR.<sup>10</sup> This trend has been evident since the beginning of the rule of V. Putin, who began to see it as a tool to consolidate his own society by resurrecting the state's myth of greatness and imperialism. In pursuit of this, Russia began to emphasize the proud national successes of the past, mythologizing the "Great Patriotic War" and the role of the Red Army in the victory over the Third Reich.<sup>11</sup> Russia's triumph in the 1941–1945 conflict, which Maria Domanska and Jadwiga Rogozha describe as the "founding myth of Putinism",<sup>12</sup> was particularly emphasized<sup>13</sup> as part of the efforts to remind and make citizens aware of the past military achievements and omnipotent traditions. According to the researchers, the narrative on this topic is aimed at different audiences. Russians are supposed to find in it a cult of victory and strong leaders, as well as proof of the real benefits of sacrifices made for the state. In addition, according to the Kremlin's assumptions, the societies of the former Soviet bloc should find in it a myth of togetherness and brotherhood of arms. In Western countries, on the other hand, it is supposed to garner approval for Moscow's superpower ambitions.<sup>14</sup> As Lech Wyszczelski points out, this approach is evident, among other things, in

5 W. Materski, *Od cara, do "cara". Studium rosyjskiej polityki historycznej*, Warszawa 2017, pp. 13, 280, 301, 307, 315; O. Wasiuta, S. Wasiuta, *Przywłaszczenie historii jako sposób walki informacyjno-psychologicznej Rosji przeciwko Ukrainie*, "Nowa Polityka Wschodnia", 2022, No. 2, p. 26.

6 L. Wyszczelski, *Putin i jego wersja „polityki historycznej” kierowanej do Rosjan*, "Studia Orientalne", 2022, Vol. 11, No. 4, pp. 133, 136.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 137.

8 J. Zielińska, *Ruska (русская) czy rosyjska (российская)...*, pp. 94–95.

9 O. Wasiuta, S. Wasiuta, *Przywłaszczenie historii...*, pp. 32, 37.

10 A.R. Bartnicki, *Demokratycznie legitymizowany autorytaryzm w Rosji 1991–2004*, Białystok 2007, p. 72; S. Bieleń, *Panrosjanizm w rosyjskiej tożsamości mocarstwowo-imperialnej*, "Dyplomacja i Bezpieczeństwo", 2015, No. 1, pp. 83–84.

11 L. Wyszczelski, *Putin i jego wersja „polityki historycznej”...*, pp. 131, 133–134, 137–138, 141.

12 M. Domańska, J. Rogoża, *Naprzód, w przeszłość! Rosyjska polityka historyczna w służbie „wiecznego” autorytaryzmu*, Warszawa 2021, p. 27.

13 W. Materski, *Od cara do "cara"...*, p. 247.

14 M. Domańska, J. Rogoża, *Naprzód, w przeszłość!...*, pp. 30–31.

V. Putin's attitude to the period of Joseph Stalin's rule, which is characterized by highlighting the dictator's achievements in building the Soviet empire and completely ignoring or justifying the crimes he committed.<sup>15</sup> Relativizing the actions of the perpetrators and treating the victims anonymously is a clear manifestation of the avoidance of accountability for the terror characteristic of the Soviet state.<sup>16</sup> Since the beginning of the 21st century, more exposure has also been given to, for example, the Second Resistance, which, under the leadership of Prince Dmitry Pozharsky, led to the surrender of the Polish garrison besieging the Kremlin in 1612, and the 1812 victory over Napoleon.<sup>17</sup> This historical policy is aimed at building a mirage of a community of interests of power and society and an imperial identity, justifying Russia's ambitions and the image it creates of its own country.<sup>18</sup> According to Wojciech Materski, modern Russians have thus been instilled with a false historical consciousness, a nationalist attitude lined with nostalgia for a superpower past and aspirations to regain a dominant position,<sup>19</sup> although references to the tradition of Orthodoxy and Slavism emphasizing the brotherhood of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine are also present in the narrative presented to them.<sup>20</sup>

Pressure put on the Kremlin to pursue such a targeted historical policy began to increase with the development of an unfavorable international conjuncture related to the outbreak of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the expansion of the European Union in 2004, and the emergence of narratives about communist crimes, which began to be recalled by the countries that joined the Commonwealth at that time.<sup>21</sup> In response to this, Russia began undermining voices assigning the USSR co-responsibility for the outbreak of World War II and undertook efforts to have other countries recognize its role in the victory over the Third Reich, making this not only the foundation of national mythology, but also of its own European identity.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, as Andrzej Nowak notes, the Russian president's propagandists at the time emphasized the civilizational significance of the Soviet empire's domination of Central and Eastern Europe, stating that thanks to it, electrification was carried out in those countries and a democratic system was introduced.<sup>23</sup> According to M. Domanska and J. Rogoża, during the first two terms of V. Putin's rule, however, these activities were not a priority, which began to change in 2011 with the political protests in Moscow and the Dignity Revolution in Ukraine, which were interpreted by the Kremlin as a threat to the regime.<sup>24</sup> According to Yulita Zielinska, after V. Putin's re-election to the presidency in 2012, there was a consistent glorification of the Soviet period and an attempt to replace the memory of World War II as a European hecatomb with a narrative of victory over Nazism, in which their legal and international predecessor was seen as a "liberator".<sup>25</sup> According to Wojciech Marciniak, cultivating this myth and seeking the international community's respect

15 L. Wyszczelski, *Putin i jego wersja „polityki historycznej”*..., p. 134.

16 M. Domańska, J. Rogoża, *Naprzód, w przeszłość!*..., p. 42.

17 W. Materski, *Od cara do "cara"*..., p. 247.

18 M. Domańska, J. Rogoża, *Naprzód, w przeszłość!*..., pp. 13–15.

19 W. Materski, *Od cara do "cara"*..., pp. 315–316.

20 Ibid., pp. 240–241.

21 J. Zielińska, *Ruska (pyckaja) czy rosyjska (rossijskaja)*..., pp. 95–96; A.M. Dymier, *II wojna światowa w polityce zagranicznej Rosji*, "Biuletyn PISM", No. 12 (1942), 28.01.2020; M. Domańska, J. Rogoża, *Naprzód, w przeszłość!*..., p. 9.

22 J. Zielińska, *Ruska (pyckaja) czy rosyjska (rossijskaja)*..., pp. 109–110; *Propaganda historyczna Rosji w latach 2004–2009*, Warszawa 2009, p. 15 (<https://www.bbn.gov.pl/wydarzenia/1840,dok.html>).

23 A. Nowak, *Liberálne imperium: rosyjskie idee (1907, 2007)*, [in:] *Putin. Źródła imperialnej agresji*, Warszawa 2014, p. 187.

24 M. Domańska, J. Rogoża, *Naprzód, w przeszłość!*..., p. 10.

25 J. Zielińska, *Ruska (pyckaja) czy rosyjska (rossijskaja)*..., p. 110.



for the role of the Soviets in defeating Germany is one of the goals of Russian diplomacy, as well as a way for Russia to emerge from political isolation and improve its reputation shaken by the attacks on Georgia and Ukraine.<sup>26</sup> Preventing the equating of Soviet totalitarianism with Nazi totalitarianism and diluting the narrative proving the USSR's cooperation with the Third Reich before 1941 is also a priority.<sup>27</sup> Researchers emphasize that the historical policy implemented by the Kremlin is shaped by the current interests of the ruling regime<sup>28</sup> and closely linked to its actions in the international arena, while its goal is to mobilize public support and create an atmosphere of approval for the aggressive actions of the state.<sup>29</sup> Suffice it to mention here that the portrayal of manipulated historical facts about Ukraine effectively influences the consciousness of Russian society, a significant part of which has come to believe the narrative about the fascist takeover of Kiev.<sup>30</sup>

V. Putin, as the main architect of the Kremlin's historical policy, has for many years been eager to refer to Russia's history in official speeches and other types of public statements, often presenting his own interpretation of the sensitive events.<sup>31</sup> He openly expressed the opinion that the collapse of the USSR was "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century" in his address to the Federal Assembly on April 25, 2005.<sup>32</sup> B. Yeltsin's successor made sure that his vision of history was reflected in the works of Russian historians. Indeed, it is known about his unofficial meetings with academics, during which he most likely presented them with decisions regarding the focus of their studies and the interpretation of history they presented, setting them the goal of popularizing events that build a positive and sympathetic image of Russia.<sup>33</sup> One can point to numerous authors defending the idea of USSR's peaceful policy before the outbreak of World War II, or justifying the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. For example, the pro-Kremlin historian Alexander Diukov assumes that this agreement was the result of other countries ignoring the actions of the Soviets aimed at stopping the aggressive policy of Adolf Hitler. In doing so, he rejects arguments supporting J. Stalin's aspirations for territorial expansion, treating the seizing of the lands of the Second Polish Republic and the Baltic states as a manifestation of Soviet state security strategy, under which it was necessary to prevent their seizure by the Third Reich.<sup>34</sup> The policy of remembrance, constantly emphasizing the USSR's triumph over Germany in World War II, has been closely linked to the interpretation embedded in this optic. This victory is commemorated as part of Victory Day, the solemn celebrations of which are used by the Kremlin to emphasize its contribution to the "liberation" of Europe from Nazi occupation and to arouse citizens' pride in their country's past.<sup>35</sup> In addition, new monuments commemorating J. Stalin's contribution to the construction of the Soviet empire are constantly being built in Russia – 95

26 W. Marciniak, *Refleksje o historycznych reminiscencjach i podstawowych celach polityki międzynarodowej Rosji w przemówieniu Władimira Putina z 18 marca 2014 r.*, "Społeczeństwo i Polityka", 2020, No. 2, p. 161.

27 M. Domańska, J. Rogoża, *Naprzód, w przeszłość!*..., pp. 33–34; A. Nowak, *Putin jako (anty)historyk*, <https://wszystkoconajwazniejsze.pl/prof-andrzej-nowak-putin-jako-antyhystoryk-polityka-histyczna-federacji-rosyjskiej/> [accessed 05.11.2023].

28 M. Domańska, J. Rogoża, *Naprzód, w przeszłość!*..., pp. 12–13.

29 O. Wasiuta, S. Wasiuta, *Przywłaszczenie historii*..., p. 33.

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 34–35.

31 W. Marciniak, *Refleksje o historycznych reminiscencjach*..., pp. 152–153; A.И. Миллер, *Выступления президента В.В. Путина по историческим вопросам в 2019–2022 гг.: анализ мотивов и адресатов*, "Политическая наука", 2023, No. 2, pp. 46–62.

32 A. Nowak, *Rewanż na historii, albo o postsowieckim potencjale totalitarnym*, [w:] A. Nowak, *Putin. Źródła imperialnej agresji*..., p. 201.

33 L. Wyszczelski, *Putin i jego wersja "polityki historycznej"*..., pp. 135–136.

34 B. Gajos, *Rosyjscy historycy o początkach II wojny światowej – przypadek Aleksandra Diukowa*, "Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej", 2015, Vol. 50, No. 1, pp. 189–199.

35 J. Darczewska, *"Wojny pamięci": historia, polityka i służby specjalne Federacji Rosyjskiej*, "Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego", 2019, No. 20, p. 20.

monuments in honor of the dictator were unveiled under Vladimir Putin's reign.<sup>36</sup> In this context, it is also important to mention the tightening of regulations governing how specific issues from 1939–1945 are presented to the public. As part of these regulations, it was forbidden to compare the actions of the USSR with the policies of the Third Reich, to undermine the contribution of the Soviet state to the victory over Nazism, and to “underestimate the importance of the achievements of the Russian people in defense of the homeland”, with the Kremlin attempting to extend these regulations to citizens of other countries as well.<sup>37</sup> It has deconstructed the myth of the revolution's threatening power by replacing the main state holiday, the Day of the Great October Socialist Revolution, with National Unity Day, established to commemorate the expulsion of the Polish troops occupying the Kremlin in 1612.<sup>38</sup> The purpose of this was to emphasize that Russia has sometimes been the victim of hostile invasions in the past, and to draw attention to the importance of internal cohesion, thanks to which the aggressor was defeated.<sup>39</sup> In the case of this holiday, one can note the consistent efforts of the state to promote the idea of its establishment in mass culture, a manifestation of which was the appearance in cinemas of the historical-fantasy film “The Year 1612”, which portrays the events that led to the expulsion of the Poles from Moscow.<sup>40</sup> Naturally, the activities of the authorities aimed at supporting historical policy with the use of cinematography are not limited to this production – in the last two decades, for example, many series glorifying Russian and Soviet power structures have been filmed.<sup>41</sup> It is also worth mentioning that content in line with the “state” vision of history can also be found in popular music.<sup>42</sup>

The historical policy of the Russian Federation is also perfectly evident in the content of school textbooks, which, in line with the new concept of teaching knowledge of the past proposed by V. Putin in 2013, have been standardized not only for the purposes of its dissemination, but also for the formation of the identity of young people and the consolidation of society. Accordingly, education omits any facts that may put the history of the USSR or Russia in a negative light.<sup>43</sup> Wojciech Materski sees in this the authorities' aspirations to “salvage everything possible from the Soviet period”. It should further be mentioned that for the purpose of promoting the vision of history presented in this text, subordinated the Federal Archives Agency, formerly subordinated to the Minister of Culture, V. Putin extended the period during which documents of the Soviet services are to be kept secret until 2044 and issued a decree emphasizing the need to create a special institution to popularize the Russian past at home and abroad (2016), which led to the creation of the “History of the Fatherland” Foundation.<sup>44</sup> One should also not forget the

36 *Kult Stalina – renesans w Rosji Putina*, <https://wszystkoconajwazniejsze.pl/pepites/kult-stalina-renesans-w-rosji-putina/> [accessed 05.11.2023]; K. Chawryło, *Stalin w dzisiejszej Rosji. Popularny i potrzebny*, “Komentarze OSW”, 2017, No. 252, pp. 1–8, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/komentarze-osw/2017-10-31/stalin-w-dzisiejszej-rosji-popularny-i-potrzebny> [accessed 10.11.2023].

37 M. Domańska, J. Rogoża, *Naprzód, w przeszłość!...*, pp. 51–54; O. Wasiuta, S. Wasiuta, *Przywłaszczenie historii...*, p. 37.

38 J. Darczewska, “*Wojny pamięci*”..., p. 20.

39 T. Bohun, *Polacy na Kremlu: fakty i mity*, “Sensus Historiae”, 2013, vol. 11, No. 2, p. 71.

40 W. Materski, *Polityka historyczna Federacji Rosyjskiej po 2000 r.*, “Dzieje Najnowsze”, 2014, r. 46, pp. 104–105. The film received negative reviews from Russian critics and disappointed viewers there. For more on this production and opinions on it, see G. Stachówna, *Hetman i carówna – polsko-rosyjskie romanse w cieniu wielkiej polityki. Rok 1612 Władimira Chotiniński*, “Historyka”, 2011, Vol. 41, pp. 76–78.

41 M. Domańska, J. Rogoża, *Naprzód, w przeszłość!...*, pp. 80–81.

42 *Ibid.*, pp. 82–83.

43 D. Moskwa, “*Putiniowska wizja przeszłości*”. *Nowa koncepcja nauczania historii w świetle polityki historycznej Federacji Rosyjskiej*, “Historia i Polityka”, 2014, No. 18, pp. 97–99, 105; M. Domańska, J. Rogoża, *Naprzód, w przeszłość!...*, pp. 59–62. The first steps towards unifying the content of history textbooks were taken in 2000, when the Moscow government approved the National Education Program aimed at “restoring Russia's status as a great power”. A. Nowak, *Rewanż na historii, albo o postsowieckim potencjale totalitarnym*, [in:] A. Nowak, *Putin. Źródła imperialnej agresji...*, p. 199.

44 O. Wasiuta, “*Russki mir*” jako narzędzie imperialnej polityki Kremla, „Przegląd Geopolityczny”, 2017, Vol. 21, p. 80; M. Domańska, J. Rogoża, *Naprzód, w przeszłość!...*, pp. 55–59.

numerous organizations that support the Kremlin's historical narrative, which include veterans' associations or social organizations that often take the form of nationalist-imperialist militias, an example of which is the "Night Wolves" motorcycle club.<sup>45</sup>

Consolidating society and building its identity is not the only goal of historical policy. Properly conducted, it can also significantly affect the image of a country in relations with other countries. An example of this may be Germany, which, by emphasizing that the "Nazis" are to blame for the outbreak of World War II and the crimes committed during it, consistently tries to dilute its own responsibility.<sup>46</sup> Suffice to mention, for example, the use of the term "Polish concentration camps" in German media.<sup>47</sup> The Kremlin, on the other hand, is using historical policy to rebuild Russia's superpower position in the international arena.<sup>48</sup> As part of these efforts, it has made the historical past an important element of its foreign policy.<sup>49</sup>

When considering the historical policy of the Russian Federation, one should not forget the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation, established by V. Putin in 2007 to popularize the Russian language and local culture, especially in the countries created after the collapse of the USSR. In the establishing decree, he presented a new concept of Russian identity, not limited to questions of origin and citizenship, but also including foreigners who speak or learn Tolstoy's language, as well as all those showing interest in the Russian state and its future.<sup>50</sup> As Stanislav Belen points out, *russkiy mir* was soon portrayed as a civilizational project aimed at erasing differences in the Russian cultural space, characterized by inter-civilizational "bridging" and far-reaching tolerance<sup>51</sup>. As Olga Wasiuta points out, this initiative, despite its official focus on supporting the Russian-speaking diaspora, is actually a tool of foreign, economic and military expansion, providing a pretext for interference in the internal affairs of other countries. According to the researcher, its purpose is also to create a myth of Russia's superiority over the countries of the former USSR and to consolidate its leadership position in the post-Soviet area.<sup>52</sup> One of the basic pillars of this "Russian peace" is a shared historical memory (along with Orthodox Christianity and Russian culture and language).<sup>53</sup> Reference to the imperial past and ethnic ties with neighboring states, dating back to the medieval Rus', should be seen as a manifestation of the pan-Russian ideology, which, as S. Bieleń points out, is another incarnation of Moscow's aspirations to subjugate other nations, created to legitimize its claims to dominance in the post-Soviet space.<sup>54</sup> According to him, Russians find in it a mirage of national greatness and compensation for historical humiliations.<sup>55</sup>

45 *Ibid.*, pp. 70–73.

46 K. Marzęda-Młynarska, *Europeanization of Polish Historical Policy – From Ignorance To Understanding?*, "Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio M – Balcaniensis et Carpathiensis", 2021, Vol. 6, pp. 37–39.

47 J. Lubecka, *Spór o słowa. Rola semantyki w polsko-niemieckim krajobrazie historycznym*, [in:] *Krajobraz wsi i miast*, eds. J. Marecki, L. Rotter, Kraków 2016, pp. 275–277.

48 L. Wyszczelski, *Putin i jego wersja...*, p. 127.

49 W. Marciniak, *Refleksje o historycznych reminiscencjach...*, p. 161.

50 J. Kot-Wojciechowska, *Polityka Władimira Putina a kwestia rosyjskiej tożsamości narodowej*, "Historia@Teoria", 2018, vol. 1, No. 7, pp. 217–218; M. Delong, "Ruski mir" jako narzędzie rosyjskiej ekspansji geopolitycznej na terytorium Ukrainy, "Przegląd Geopolityczny", 2020, Vol. 33, pp. 59–61.

51 S. Bieleń, *Panrosjanizm w rosyjskiej tożsamości...*, pp. 87–88.

52 O. Wasiuta, "Ruski mir" jako narzędzie imperialnej polityki Kremla..., pp. 72; O. Wasiuta, S. Wasiuta, *Przywłaszczenie historii...*, p. 30; M. Delong, "Ruski mir"..., pp. 62.

53 Y. Makar, L. Novoskoltseva, *Rosyjska wizja Ukrainy i Ukraińców przejawem wojny hybrydowej*, "Ante Portas – Studia nad Bezpieczeństwem", 2018, No. 2, pp. 187–188.

54 S. Bieleń, *Panrosjanizm w rosyjskiej tożsamości...*, pp. 91–92.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 92.

As emphasized by M. Domanska and J. Rogozha, in creating a vision of history convenient to themselves, the Russian government does not shy away from distorting historical facts, by omitting in its narrative elements unfavorable to their own image, denying them, falsifying the real picture of events, exaggerating or embellishing selected facts, or manipulating their meaning.<sup>56</sup> In the case of the latter, a frequently used method is to rearrange interpretations intended to evoke the public mood expected at the time.<sup>57</sup> This does not mean, by any means, that the message coming from the Kremlin is completely devoid of true information about the past, but it is not uncommon for it to be portrayed in a way that encourages false conclusions.<sup>58</sup> Stereotypes, myths, rumors, and disinformation are used to achieve this goal.<sup>59</sup> These activities are recognized by Western European countries and interpreted unequivocally negatively, as exemplified by the position of the UK Ministry of Defense. In response to the Russian State Archive's publication of a collection of historical documents showing foreign interventions throughout history to harm Russian-Ukrainian ties and justifying Moscow's policy toward Kiev, along with Putin's comments, the ministry forwarded the British intelligence service's view of the increasing use of history by Russian leaders to instill anti-Western sentiment in their country and intimidate Western neighbors.<sup>60</sup>

56 M. Domańska, J. Rogoża, *Naprzód, w przeszłość!...*, pp. 25–26, 42–48.

57 O. Wasiuta, S. Wasiuta, *Przywłaszczenie historii...*, p. 38.

58 *Ibid.*

59 M. Wódka, *Relacje polsko-rosyjskie, czyli manipulacja faktami i narzucanie stereotypów przez media i polityków*, [in:] *Polska–Rosja. W świecie globalnych przeobrażeń*, eds. D. Jamicki, A. Piskorz, Warszawa–Siedlce 2018, p. 45.

60 *Intelligence update, November 11, 2023*, <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1723266619751739784> [accessed November 13, 2023]; *Brytyjski resort obrony: nasila się instrumentalizacja historii przez rosyjskich liderów*, <https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/brytyjski-resort-obrony-nasila-sie-instrumentalizacja-historii-przez-rosyjskich-liderow> [accessed 13.11.2023].

## I. RUSSIAN HISTORICAL POLICY TOWARDS POLAND AND UKRAINE

According to a National Security Bureau analysis of Russian historical propaganda from 2004–2009, the Kremlin has been taking steps to undermine the Polish narrative about the events of the last World War. In line with the “liberator” myth of the Red Army, the demand for an apology for its passivity during the Warsaw Uprising, made in 2004 by Prime Minister Marek Belka and Foreign Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, was considered “blasphemy”. There were also voices undermining Polish contributions to the fight against the Third Reich, both in occupied Poland and abroad, and accusing the Home Army of looting and terrorizing civilians in Western Ukraine and Belarus.<sup>61</sup> In addition, they also began to relativize the responsibility of the USSR for the Katyn massacre and raise the issue of the so-called “Anti-Katyn”, i.e. the responsibility of the Second Polish Republic for the deaths of Bolsheviks taken prisoner in 1920, who died in Polish prisoner of war camps as a result of starvation and infectious disease.<sup>62</sup> These issues were raised again by the Kremlin in 2009 in response to Polish support for Georgia, which was attacked by Russia. At that time, opinions linking the outbreak of World War II with the Second Polish Republic’s superpower ambitions emerged in the public space. Poland was portrayed as an aggressor allied with A. Hitler, ready to partition Czechoslovakia and Lithuania and to invade the Baltic states and the USSR, equating it with the Third Reich. On the other hand, Moscow’s cooperation with Berlin within the framework of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was consistently presented as a legitimate element of the defensive strategy pursued by J. Stalin.<sup>63</sup> As A. Nowak points out, there was no shortage of voices according to which the Soviet dictator was supposed to protect the Baltic countries from the fascist intentions of their rulers.<sup>64</sup> At the same time, *Gazeta Wyborcza* published a letter to Poles, in which V. Putin bemoaned the propagation of half-truths in some countries that put “victims and executioners, liberators and occupiers in one line”.<sup>65</sup> This narrative was present not only in statements by politicians and experts linked to the Kremlin, but also became part of the interpretation of history in Russian school textbooks,

61 *Propaganda historyczna Rosji w latach 2004–2009...*, pp. 10–12.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

63 *Ibid.*, pp. 25–27; J.R. Sielezin, *Post-prawda jako element polityki historycznej Rosji wobec Polski – kontekst międzynarodowy*, “Facta Simonidis”, 2020, No. 1, pp. 50–51.

64 A. Nowak, *Liberalne imperium...*, p. 187.

65 *List Putina do Polaków – pełna wersja*, <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75399,6983945,list-putina-do-polakow-pelna-wersja.html> [accessed 05.11.2023].

which included paragraphs accusing the Second Polish Republic of countering Moscow's peaceful policies and justifying the September 17, 1939 aggression with the collapse of the Polish state.<sup>66</sup>

In 2010–2011, the Kremlin, in an attempt to weaken the Polish narrative related to the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre, once again began to emphasize in the public space the fate of the Bolshevik prisoners of war from the period of the Battle of Warsaw.<sup>67</sup> During the April 7, 2010 memorial ceremony for those killed in the Katyn forest, V. Putin attempted to relativize the mass murder, by comparing the blood sacrifice of Poles exterminated by the NKVD with the suffering of the Russian people in the 20th century. He stated that in no way could this crime be justified, but at the same time stressed that his compatriots were not responsible for it.<sup>68</sup> He elaborated on this thought a few hours later at a joint press conference with Prime Minister Donald Tusk, stressing that Katyn was the personal revenge of J. Stalin, who felt responsible for the deaths of Red Army soldiers who were taken into Polish captivity in 1920.<sup>69</sup>

Another issue is the narrative about the supposed sympathy showed by the Polish government towards Germany's aggressive policy, propagated by V. Putin in his public speeches. In a speech delivered on December 20, 2019 at the informal summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States in St. Petersburg, he relativized the issue of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, stressing that the USSR was not the only state to sign an agreement with the Third Reich in the 1930s. To confirm this, the Russian president first cited the Polish-German declaration of nonviolence of January 26, 1934, concluded under different political circumstances, referring to it as the "Pilsudski-Hitler pact", in an attempt to create a parallel to August 1939.<sup>70</sup> Later in the speech, he also referred to the issue of the Third Reich's aggressive claims against Czechoslovakia in 1938 and the position taken by Poland in the face of the existential threat to its southern neighbor. In this context, he referred to a cryptic message from a Soviet diplomat extracted from the archives, according to which French Prime Minister Edouard Daladier was said to have doubted the Poles' support for measures to neutralize German aspirations, and even did not rule out them assisting Hitler's army. Moreover, according to this account, the Polish ambassador to France, Juliusz Łukasiewicz was said to have responded negatively to questions from the head of the French government about allowing Soviet troops and aircraft to cross Polish territory.<sup>71</sup> On this basis, the Russian president attempted to portray the USSR as willing to provide assistance to Czechoslovakia in fulfillment of its Allied obligations and the unreliable attitude of Poland, whose negative stance on this issue resulted in France eventually refusing to support Prague, resulting in the country's partition in the Munich Agreement of 1938.<sup>72</sup> He also referred to the claims made by the Polish authorities demanding that Czechoslovakia hand over Zaolzie after it was signed, claiming that they were in fact "imitating Hitler's methods".<sup>73</sup> In addition, V. Putin

66 S. Borodzenko, *Polityka historyczna Federacji Rosyjskiej i Związku Radzieckiego wobec Polski na przykładzie opisu agresji ZSRR na Polskę w świetle narracji podręcznikowej*, "Athenaeum. Polskie Studia Politologiczne", 2019, Vol. 61, pp. 86–88.

67 J.R. Sielezin, *Post-prawda jako element polityki historycznej Rosji...*, p. 53.

68 *Przemówienie premiera Rosji Władimira Putina w Katyniu*, <https://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/przemowienie-premiera-rosji-wladimira-putina-w-katyniu> [accessed 05.11.2023]; A. Nowak, *Putin jako (anty)historyk...*

69 *Ibid.*; *Катынь без тайн и сведения счетов*, <https://ria.ru/20100407/219247301.html> [accessed 05.11.2023].

70 *Неформальный саммит СНГ, 20 декабря 2019 г.*, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62376> [accessed 05.11.2023].

71 *Ibid.*

72 *Ibid.*

73 *Ibid.*



mentioned Polish Foreign Minister Jozef Beck's alleged expression of gratitude to Third Reich's Ambassador to Warsaw, Hans Adolf von Moltke for his "loyal treatment of Polish interests at the Munich Conference, as well as for the sincerity of relations during the Czech conflict". According to the Russian president, this was proof that the government and people of the Polish Republic accepted and appreciated the Munich Agreement appreciation and fully honored it. The fact that Poland had no representative at the meeting in the Bavarian capital was presented by V. Putin as proof that A. Hitler represented Polish interests.<sup>74</sup> In his speech, he also shared the alleged contents of J. Beck's conversation with the Führer, which took place in Berchtesgaden on January 5, 1939. According to the record of the meeting known to him, the German leader was said to have convinced the diplomat of the two countries' common interests related to, among other things, the "Jewish question". In addition, he allegedly expressed the opinion at the time that keeping the Polish state strong and independent from the USSR was beneficial to his country, if only because it reinforced its eastern border, allowing the Third Reich to reduce spending on providing security on that direction.<sup>75</sup> In light of these arguments, V. Putin confidently stated that relations between Warsaw and Berlin looked like a "military alliance against the Soviet Union".<sup>76</sup> In support of this conclusion, he also mentioned Hermann Göring's alleged opinion of November 5, 1937; in a conversation with Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Jan Szembek, he was said to have remarked that the Third Reich needed a strong Polish Republic and expressed the opinion that it should have access to the Black Sea.<sup>77</sup> The Russian president also cites an J. Beck's alleged declaration of January 6, 1939, stating, in response to a question from his German counterpart, Joachim von Ribbentrop whether J. Piłsudski's ambitions had been abandoned in his country. J. Beck was said to have replied that "the Poles have already visited Kiev and similar plans are undoubtedly still alive".<sup>78</sup> V. Putin also mentioned that, at the time, the attitude of Polish society towards Russians, Belarusians and Ukrainians, seen as barbarians, was a manifestation of "racism and contempt for subhumans". Thus, V. Putin tried to prove the commonality of Polish and German interests not only in the context of expansionist ambitions, but also against an ideological background.<sup>79</sup>

A few days later, during a meeting of the expanded collegium of the Defense Ministry, the Russian president again referred to alleged pro-German sentiment in interwar Poland. This time, he accused the Polish ambassador to Germany, Józef Lipski, of sharing A. Hitler's views on the Jewish question, and bluntly referred to the diplomat as a "slovenly anti-Semitic pig". With this provocative statement, he made it clear that the Polish authorities were hostile to this minority, with which he expected to deepen the growing conflict between Warsaw and Tel-Aviv, weaken the relations linking Poland with Washington and provoke the indignation of Polish authorities and society.<sup>80</sup> In doing so, he also alluded to the priorities of Russian historical policy, declaring that he possessed materials allegedly capable of effectively preventing "the destruction of the

74 *Ibid.*

75 *Ibid.*

76 *Ibid.*

77 *Ibid.*

78 *Ibid.*

79 *Ibid.*

80 Путин назвал сволочью идеолога установки памятника Гитлеру в 1930-х за высылку евреев, <https://tass.ru/politika/7414407> [accessed 03.11.2023]; W. Marciniak, *Refleksje o historycznych reminiscencjach...*, p. 161.

memory of our fathers, our grandfathers and all those who laid down their lives on the altar of victory over Nazism". In this context, V. Putin criticized Polish authorities for removing monuments erected in honor of the Red Army from public space, stating that Soviet soldiers liberated Europe from Nazism, and the demolition of these monuments is supported by followers of politicians supportive of A. Hitler.<sup>81</sup>

Historians and sociologists advising V. Putin on memory policy and its use in the international arena have taken aim at the Polish Republic. During their 2019 working meeting, it was argued that Russia, in the name of defending "European cosmopolitan culture", should make efforts to deconstruct the narrative of history introduced into European memory by Poland and other countries afflicted by the Nazi and Communist regimes.<sup>82</sup> Aleksey Miller of the Central European University in Vienna lamented Warsaw's effective promotion of the figure of *Rotmistrz* Witold Pilecki as a victim of German and Soviet totalitarianism. He also proposed seeking to link the memory of the Holocaust with the suffering of the Russians during World War II and to combat, in alliance with Israel, the policy of remembrance pursued by the Polish authorities.<sup>83</sup> In turn, Fyodor Gajda of Lomonosov University in Moscow, providing a prescription for relativizing Germany's responsibility for the outbreak of World War II, advised emphasizing that the actions of racist, dictatorially ruled Central and Eastern European states, led by fascist Poland, contributed just as much to the conflict.<sup>84</sup>

A manifestation of the implementation of a historical policy aimed against Poland was, for example, the creation of the widely publicized and promoted publication "Poland in the Struggle for Eastern Europe 1920–2020", which was released on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Warsaw. As Mirosław Minkina notes, the intention of this initiative was to provoke a discussion around issues related not only to Poland's past, but also to its current politics. According to the researcher, the opinions of the authors of the articles published in this work can be reduced to the statement that "contemporary eastern Polish policy is a renaissance of combined old geopolitical concepts and still living national complexes".<sup>85</sup> In these texts, there was a clear emphasis on seeking to demonstrate Poland's aggressive actions since its independence. They emphasized its disregard for international agreements and the position of the Entente on the question of the course of its borders, which the Poles in particular wanted to expand in an eastern direction, i.e. into the territories of Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus. In turn, the source of these aspirations was seen in the concepts of Józef Piłsudski, who saw an offensive course toward neighbors as an essential instrument for ensuring the security of his country. The publication also reports on Poland's preparations for war in the east, as evidenced by statistics showing the development of its military potential in the 1920s and opinions on Warsaw's Russophobic and anti-Soviet policy.<sup>86</sup> According to M. Minkina, the apparent resentment of Russians against Poland is closely related to the interwar period and the then popular concept of Prometheism, which assumed that Poles would bestow freedom on nations under the yoke of the USSR, like

81 *Путин назвал сволочью идеолога...*

82 A. Nowak, *Putin jako (anty)historyk...*

83 *Ibid.*

84 *Ibid.*

85 M. Minkina, *Rosyjskie instrumentarium wpływu, nękania i prowokacji*, Siedlce 2023, p. 193.

86 *Ibid.*, pp. 193–194.



the mythical Prometheus bringing fire to humanity.<sup>87</sup> Another reason for it, according to the researcher, is Warsaw's policy towards the Russian state after 1989, under which the Polish Republic radically transformed its political system and moved away from a socialist economy.<sup>88</sup>

Another element in the implementation of a strategy that strikes at Poland's image is the portrayal of Poland in Belarusian and Russian media since the beginning of the 2021 migration crisis, as the "sick man of Europe", i.e. a state in constant conflict with Brussels over compliance with EU law.<sup>89</sup> This is manifested in some official statements by Russian politicians, accompanying various historical anniversaries. A clear example of this is the defamatory article by former President and Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, which appeared in *Rossiyskoy Gazeta* on the occasion of the Day of National Unity in 2023. The text overwhelmingly reproduces half-truths and lies about Polish history that had appeared in Russian online media over the previous few months, suggesting a single line between the interpretation of the authorities in Moscow and experts and journalists speaking on the subject. His argument is a perfect example of the nature of Kremlin's historical policy. It clearly embodies the strategy of related propaganda, abounding in misrepresentation, manipulation and various socio-technical tricks. The politician, in slanderous terms, accused Poland of "rabid Russophobia" that led to ruining relations with Russia and an aggressive geopolitical strategy.<sup>90</sup> Among other things, the text also states that Russia did not occupy ethnically Polish lands as a result of the partitions, and that Catherine II, Paul I and Alexander I did not persecute the Polish language and the Catholic religion, seeking only to restore the Uniates to the bosom of Orthodoxy. Also telling is the opinion about the historical injustice of and Poland's responsibility for the extermination of Bolshevik prisoners of war taken in 1920.<sup>91</sup> Medvedev also pointed out that Poland received compensation for the loss of the Eastern Borderlands in the form of the so-called Recovered Territories thanks to the benevolence of the USSR, which the authorities in Warsaw are ungratefully forgetting about. In his opinion, the communist period was the best time for bilateral Polish-Russian relations.<sup>92</sup> An interesting element of the article are the carefully chosen references to the opinions of representatives of Polish science and culture intended to bolster and give credibility to his narrative.<sup>93</sup> Medvedev even mentioned John Paul II's 1979 visit to the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, remarking on the respect the pope paid to the Russian people at the time, stopping in front of a memorial inscription.<sup>94</sup> Summing up the argument presenting a vision of Poland's history and its historical relations with Russia, he concluded that Warsaw's policy of remembrance is based on selective facts. He assessed the demands it is making to obtain reparations from Moscow as "quintessential historical paranoia", and noted that it is his country's "full legal right to ask international bodies to investigate the Polish state. And even to convene an ad hoc tribunal that would determine the subject of the crimes committed by the former Polish regimes."<sup>95</sup>

87 *Ibid.*, pp. 195–199.

88 *Ibid.*, p. 204.

89 M. Pieczyński, *Granica propagandy. Łukaszenka i Putin na wojnie hybrydowej z Polską*, Warszawa 2022, p. 49.

90 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша: заметки к 4 ноября. Польша: мегаломания, комплекс неполноценности и фантомные боли несостоявшейся империи*, <https://rg.ru/2023/11/02/rossiia-i-polsha-zametki-k-4-noiabria.html> [accessed 06.11.2023].

91 *Ibid.*

92 *Ibid.*

93 *Ibid.*

94 *Ibid.*

95 *Ibid.*

The politician also devoted a lot of space to the alleged partitionist ambitions and megalomania of the Poles, a manifestation of which, according to him, is supposed to be Warsaw's support for Kiev. In his opinion, the Republic of Poland only ostensibly puts itself in the role of an ally of Ukraine, while actually looking for a convenient opportunity to take over its western lands. In this context, he stated that current Polish historical policy resembles "the strategy of the Third Reich on the eve of World War II". Continuing this thought, he acknowledged that "by choosing Hitler's adventurous policies as a model, the Third Republic has consistently followed the path of geopolitical revanchism, which ultimately led the German people to disaster. However, this does not stop the Poles in their expansionism".<sup>96</sup> Concluding his argument, he stated that "Poland's current Russophobic, revisionist policy gives no reason for optimism. The country is still waiting for a convenient moment to once again shed blood in Eastern Europe to achieve its own goals", while the attachment of Polish politicians to "Duchinski's stinking idea and Piłsudski's despicable political legacy is a serious threat to Poland's own national security".<sup>97</sup>

For a number of reasons, the Kremlin's attitude towards the Ukrainian state also occupies an important place in its historical policy.<sup>98</sup> According to S. Bielen, Pan-Russianism is a response to, among other things, the Ukraine's drive towards independence from Russia its own historical and geopolitical identity.<sup>99</sup> Olga Wasiuta, on the other hand, believes that the doctrine of *russskiy mir*<sup>100</sup> is directed against Ukraine. According to the researcher, it is Russia's attempt to undermine the historical and cultural foundations of the existence of this state and to manipulate or destroy the national memory and traditions of its citizens.<sup>101</sup>

Russians perceive Kievan Rus as the protoplast of their own state, whose society appears to them as having grown out of an identical ethnic stem.<sup>102</sup> As Olga and Sergey Wasiuta point out, referring to this is intended to create a specific historical mythology proving the brotherhood of Slavic peoples. Another historical fact used as an argument to justify expansion into Ukraine, due to it belonging to the "Russian civilization", is the Pereyaslav settlement of 1654, presented as an act of Ukraine's unification with the state of the tsars.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, in the official narrative coming from the Kremlin, the element that unites the two states is the dominant Orthodox faith and the use of Russian as a mother tongue by some ¼ of Ukrainians. Propaganda there also claims that as a result of Russian-Ukrainian mixed marriages, some have dual identities. A separate issue is the economic relations linking Kiev and Moscow.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, through historical interdependence, Ukraine's territories are seen by Russia not only as its field of influence, but also as a part of its historical lands, which include numerous memorials related to events of the tsarist and Soviet era.<sup>105</sup>

96 *Ibid.*

97 *Ibid.*

98 J. Zielińska, *Ruska (русская) czy rosyjska (российская)...*, p. 110.

99 S. Bieleń, *Panrosjanizm w rosyjskiej tożsamości...*, p. 92.

100 O. Wasiuta, "Russki mir" jako narzędzie imperialnej polityki Kremla..., p. 70.

101 *Ibid.*

102 *Geostrategiczny wybór Rosji u zarania trzeciego tysiąclecia*, t. 1: J. Dec, *Doktryna rosyjskiej polityki zagranicznej. Partnerzy najbliżsi i najdalsi*, Kraków 2015, p. 114.

103 O. Wasiuta, S. Wasiuta, *Przywłaszczenie historii...*, p. 29.

104 *Geostrategiczny wybór Rosji...*, p. 114.

105 J. Zielińska, *Ruska (русская) czy rosyjska (российская)...*, pp. 108, 110.

V. Putin also invoked historical motives in his March 18, 2014 speech to justify the annexation of Crimea. The Russian president emphasized Russia's historical ties to the peninsula, stressing, among other things, the fact that Vladimir Rurykovich was baptized in the Tauride Kherson, the existence of burials of tsarist soldiers fighting the Tatar revolts of 1777–1782, and cities considered by Russians to be symbols of their wartime glory and heroism.<sup>106</sup> He also mentioned the circumstances of the transfer of lands to Ukraine in 1954, pointing out that it was then an inherent part of the USSR and expressing bitterness over the collapse of the Soviet empire. In his view, the Russian Federation, which is the political and legal heir to the Soviet state, was “robbed” by, among other things, giving Crimea to Kiev.<sup>107</sup> Putin's address was laid out in such a way as to give the impression that its seizure was seen as integrating Russian territory, unifying the nation and righting historical wrongs.<sup>108</sup> In addition to claims based on historical ties, the speech also contains allegations embedded in Ukraine's past. As a reason for the Kremlin's intervention in the country's internal affairs, V. Putin pointed to the actions of Ukrainian “nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophobes and anti-Semites”, while describing the authorities there as “ideological heirs of Bandera-Hitler's World War II henchman”.<sup>109</sup>

As V. Putin points out, Russians see the territory of Ukraine as an area belonging to their cultural and spiritual space, while they treat its history as an integral part of their own history.<sup>110</sup> According to his vision, the Ukrainian state is an artificial creation, owing its existence to the USSR, the population living there has no right to call itself a nation, while partition by Russia is an act of historical justice.<sup>111</sup> He emphatically laid out his views on the subject in an article titled “On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians”, published on the Kremlin's website on July 12, 2021. Referring to historical arguments dating back to the Middle Ages, he emphasized the issue of the unity of Rus and the integrating factors of tradition, language and the Orthodox faith. He considered the Khmelnytsky uprising a turning point in Ukrainian history, viewing it as a national liberation movement of the Orthodox population. He expounded that its leader asked Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich to accept the Cossacks into his protection, while after the approval of the Territorial Council, their surrender to Moscow was confirmed by the decision of the Pereyaslav council of 1654. Significantly, he noted that individual cities of left-bank Ukraine took an oath of allegiance to the Romanovs at that time, and stressed that similar declarations did not take place in the case of the Union of Lublin.<sup>112</sup> This argument, which is not free from manipulation and ignores the element of coercion on the part of the tsarist authorities, was intended to contrast the voluntary nature of the mid-17th century decision with the top-down act of 1569. V. Putin also referred to the provisions of the 1686 perpetual peace between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Moscow, by virtue of which left-bank Ukraine, including Kiev, formally came under the authority of the Romanovs. According to him, this led to the reunification of its inhabitants with the main part of the Orthodox Rusyns, symbolized by the region's voluntary

106 W. Marciniak, *Refleksje o historycznych reminiscencjach...*, pp. 151–152.

107 *Ibid.*, pp. 153–154.

108 *Ibid.*, p. 154.

109 *Ibid.*, p. 155.

110 *Обращение Президента Российской Федерации, 21 февраля 2022 г.*, <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/statements/67828> [accessed 10.11.2022].

111 O. Wasiuta, S. Wasiuta, *Przywłaszczenie historii...*, pp. 22–23.

112 *Статья Владимира Путина “Об историческом единстве русских и украинцев”*, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181> [accessed 10.11.2023].

adoption of the name “Lesser Ruthenia” (Lesser Russia). In his opinion, this a turning point for the area, which, after its incorporation into the Moscow State, began to develop rapidly, while linguistic and religious fraternization made it a refuge for Orthodox Christians from the Right Bank, which had remained under the rule of the Polish Crown, where social and religious oppression had intensified.<sup>113</sup> He portrayed Alexander II’s 1876 Ems Ukaz banning the use of the Ukrainian language and the name “Ukraine” itself in print as an attempt to prevent the exploitation of the “Ukrainian question” by the leaders of the Polish national movement, which promoted the idea of the separation of Ukrainians from Russians. At the same time, V. Putin stressed that at that time there was an active and unhindered development of “Lesser-Russian cultural identity within the framework of the great Russian nation uniting the Greater-Russians, Lesser-Russians and Byelorussians”.<sup>114</sup> According to him, at the turn of the 19th century, Austria-Hungary also sought to distinguish between the two nations, seeing Ukrainians as a force to counter Poles and pro-Russian sympathies within Galicia.<sup>115</sup> The successor to B. Yeltsin recalled that Ukraine’s independence, proclaimed in January 1918, resulting from the signing of an agreement by its rulers with the German Empire and Austria-Hungary, was short-lived, as these powers were motivated solely by the use of its resources and *de facto* occupied it, as demonstrated, for example, by the imposition of Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky, who was loyal to them, on the Ukrainians, as head of state. In 1919, following the defeat suffered in the war with Poland, the lands of the West Ukrainian People’s Republic were incorporated into the Second Polish Republic, which was further confirmed by the 1921 Treaty of Riga, establishing the eastern border of the Polish state in Galicia on the Zbruch and Dniester rivers. However, the situation changed in 1939, when the area was occupied by the USSR, and the areas occupied in the interwar period by the Poles mostly fell to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.<sup>116</sup> On the back of this, V. Putin states that: “modern Ukraine is entirely a product of the Soviet era. We know and remember that it was largely created at the expense of historic Russia. It is enough to compare which lands reunited with the Russian state in the 17th century, and with which territories the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic left the Soviet Union”.<sup>117</sup> In the second part of the text, the Russian president addressed the issue of international politics, accusing the United States and Brussels of intervening in Ukraine’s internal affairs by supporting the 2014 coup and pressuring Kiev to limit its economic cooperation with Moscow. According to him, the aim of these actions was to create a “barrier between Europe and Moscow” on the Dnieper River. According to the V. Putin, these aspirations were modeled on “the former exploits of the Polish-Austrian ideologues of the creation of a ‘Moscow Rus’”.<sup>118</sup> Undoubtedly, he thus wanted to build a historical parallel proving that, as in the past, so now the states supporting Ukraine are not concerned with its national interests, but with using it for their own aggressive policies against the Russian Federation. V. Putin claims that the imperialist West is thus trying to implement the “Anti-Russia” project, aimed at the disintegration of this country by tearing off its historical lands and “strategically paralyzing”

113 *Ibid.*

114 *Ibid.*

115 *Ibid.*

116 *Ibid.*

117 *Ibid.*

118 *Ibid.*

Moscow.<sup>119</sup> In Ukraine this text was received without much emotion, since it refers to views that have been present in Russian propaganda for two centuries, and does not fundamentally differ from the earlier opinions propounded by B. Yeltsin's successor.<sup>120</sup> According to Maria Domanska, the article was aimed primarily at his own people, to whom he wanted to demonstrate his determination to defend national interests and emphasize the threat from the Western states.<sup>121</sup> The arguments raised in it are often repeated by the Russian president in various public speeches. Suffice it to mention the address of February 21, 2021, delivered to Russians before the full-scale aggression against Ukraine, in which he stressed that the state with its capital in Kiev was created by the Bolsheviks to the detriment of their own country, which was thus deprived of a part of its historic territory.<sup>122</sup> In the speech, announcing Moscow's recognition of the independence of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic, he did not fail to mention that Vladimir Lenin's directives "squeezed" the Donbas into the borders of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, and stressed that despite this undoubted boon, ungrateful Ukrainians are now destroying his monuments as part of decommunization.<sup>123</sup> V. Putin also accused them of pushing out of historical consciousness even earlier ties with Russia and selective perception of these relations. Referring to the removal of a monument to Alexander Suvorov from the urban space in Poltava, he recalled that without the courage of the tsarist commanders and soldiers who seized Crimea in the late 18th century, today's Ukraine would not have numerous cities on the shores of the Black Sea, or even access to that body of water.<sup>124</sup>

According to Adam Daniel Rotfeld, the essence of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is a struggle over principles. In his opinion: "the attack on Ukraine is dictated by an attempt to turn back the wheel of history. This means, in practice, an effort to restore imperial Russia, based on the conservative principles of Great Russian chauvinism and nationalism".<sup>125</sup> O. and S. Wasiuta, on the other hand, believe that "the purpose of Russia's war against Ukraine is not only the physical destruction of the opponent, but also the informational and psychological impact on the population, which is not at all ready for physical confrontation with the enemy, delegating this function to the state".<sup>126</sup> In their view, the long-term goal of the Kremlin's historical propaganda targeting Kiev is to limit its international activity and prevent it from moving closer to the West.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, it also targets Ukrainian society itself, above all those parts of it in which myths and stereotypes originating from the Soviet period are ingrained, and which are thus prone to separatism and inclined to contest legitimate authority.<sup>128</sup> Researchers rightly point out that this is the result of omissions on the part of those in power on the Dnieper, who for more than 20 years failed

119 *Ibid.*; V. Putin reiterated this point in his address to the Federal Assembly on February 21, 2023, *Послание Президента Федеральному Собранию, 21 февраля 2023 года*, <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70565> [accessed: 10.11.2023]; A. Szabaciuk, *Orędzie Władimira Putina z 21 lutego 2023 r. i jego znaczenie*, „Komentarze IES”, No. 795 (43/2023), <https://ies.lublin.pl/komentarze/orędzie-wladimira-putina-z-21-lutego-2023-r-i-jego-znaczenie/> [accessed: 10.11.2023].

120 M. Riabczuk, „Jeden naród” czy „zderzenie cywilizacji”? *Ukraińsko-rosyjskie spory o tożsamość*, „Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny”, 2021, No. 4, p. 129. According to Mykola Ryabchuk, Ukrainian historians decided that there was no point in discussing Vladimir Putin's theses due to their absurdity and the lack of a definition of nation in his text. *Ibid.*

121 M. Domańska, *Putin: Ukraińcy to Rosjanie, Ukraina to „anty-Rosja”*, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2021-07-13/putin-ukraincy-to-rosjanie-ukraina-to-anty-rosja> [accessed 10.11.2023].

122 *Обращение Президента Российской Федерации, 21 февраля 2022 г....*

123 *Ibid.*

124 *Ibid.*

125 A.D. Rotfeld, *Wojna bez końca?*, „Rocznik Strategiczny”, 2022/2023, Vol. 28, p. 363.

126 O. Wasiuta, S. Wasiuta, *Przywłaszczenie historii...*, p. 25.

127 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

128 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

to establish institutions that could effectively counter the vision of history imposed on them and promote their own narrative.<sup>129</sup> It is also difficult to deny the correctness of the scholars' accusation, directed at some Ukrainian historians, of being influenced by ideological patterns imposed by Russia and pressure from Russian elites, as well as the appeal for them to formulate their own opinions free of this influence.<sup>130</sup> It is also worth quoting the opinion of Yuri Makar and Liudmila Novoskoltseva, according to which Ukrainians should get rid of the entrenched younger brother complex and realize the threat to their national existence posed by Moscow.<sup>131</sup>

Largely because of the historical ties linking Ukraine with Russia, the country's past has become an important element in Moscow's information war that has accompanied the conflict since 2014.<sup>132</sup> Thanks to its control of the mass media, its propaganda reaches not only broad swaths of Russian society,<sup>133</sup> but also Russian-speaking residents of neighboring countries, among whom pro-Kremlin TV stations<sup>134</sup> are popular. Their coverage is widely available in the West through the multilingual *Russia Today* channel, as well as in the Middle East through its Arabic-language broadcasting branch. Thanks to the ubiquity of this medium and its persuasive narrative, many of its viewers unreflectively accept the content it presents.<sup>135</sup> In addition, Russian propaganda is relayed to the international public through the government radio station *Sputnik*, which broadcasts in multiple languages. This kind of mass media acquires particular importance in a situation of hybrid conflicts, an essential element of which is information warfare, conducted on the basis of propaganda and disinformation.<sup>136</sup> However, according to O. and S. Wasiuta, the Kremlin in its information strategy against Ukraine primarily uses the possibilities of the Internet, spreading, for example, its own point of view in social media, where, with the participation of specially hired "trolls" or taking advantage of the gullibility of "useful idiots", it tries to manipulate public opinion.<sup>137</sup>

The distortion of Ukraine's past is aimed not only at controlling memory and pushing a particular narrative, but also at creating a reference point based on the past for a vision of the future.<sup>138</sup> Due to Poland's staunch support for the government in Kiev and providing it with extensive military, diplomatic and humanitarian assistance, Warsaw has also found itself in the cross-hairs of Russian propaganda. Its architects, in an effort to divide Poland and Ukraine, began to refer not only to current events, but also to the difficult past of their mutual relations, aiming to resurrect historical animosities, often using disinformation and manipulation in the process.

129 *Ibid.*, pp. 33–34.

130 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

131 Y. Makar, L. Novoskoltseva, *Rosyjska wizja Ukrainy i Ukraińców...*, p. 195.

132 For more on the Russians' use of cyberspace for propaganda, hybrid operations and security policy, see M. Minkina, *Rosyjskie instrumentarium wpływu...*, pp. 21–43.

133 For more than 60% of Russians, television is the primary source of information, and the most popular channels (Rossiya 1, Rossiya 24, Perviy Kanal) are directly controlled by the state. K. Chawryło, *Propaganda masowego rażenia. Rosyjska telewizja w obliczu wojny*, "Komentarze OSW", 2022, no 443, p. 1, [https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/Komentarze\\_OSW\\_443\\_0.pdf](https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/Komentarze_OSW_443_0.pdf) [accessed: 16.11.2023].

134 S. Bieleń, *Panrosjanizm w rosyjskiej tożsamości...*, p. 88.

135 A. A. Goszczyński, *Raport z Przeglądu "Przeszłość/Przyszłość". Wokół wpływu polityki historycznej na stosunki międzynarodowe Polski po 1989 roku*, Warszawa 2021, p. 22.

136 *Ibid.*

137 O. Wasiuta, S. Wasiuta, *Wojna hybrydowa Rosji przeciwko Ukrainie*, Kraków 2017, pp. 163–179, 203–204.

138 E. Ponczek, E. Ponczek, *Polityka wobec pamięci...*, pp. 15–16.



## **“SHIELD OF HISTORY”**

The Janusz Kurtyka Foundation, facing the threat of Russian disinformation, has initiated the project “Shield of History, or Together Against Untruth. A four-area counteraction to Russian disinformation in the area of historical narratives about Poland and Ukraine”. Its goal is to counteract Kremlin’s propaganda distorting the past of these countries in the public space, prevent Moscow from antagonizing Warsaw and Kiev, work to improve the image of Poles in Ukraine and Ukrainians in Poland, and improve the awareness of citizens of both countries about the hypocrisy of their history. In carrying out the project, from April to November 2023, Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian media space was monitored, with a particular focus on content appearing on Internet portals. Messages detrimental to the image of Poland and Ukraine were identified, unmasked, and a scientifically accurate picture of misrepresented or manipulated facts was presented in opposition to them. The tool for disseminating the results of this work took the form of infographics containing concise messages quoting and debunking untruths spread by Russian propaganda. These materials were made public on the social media of the Janusz Kurtyka Foundation. The organization also established a Polish-Ukrainian Forum for Counteracting Russian Disinformation in the Area of Polish and Ukrainian History, which invited recognized researchers from the countries mentioned, dealing with the past of Poland, Ukraine and Russia in different historical periods. As part of its deliberations, experts debated the contentious issues arising in Polish-Ukrainian relations throughout history, pointing out the goals and methods of Kremlin’s propaganda and drawing attention to the elements that can be exploited by it. The scholars looked at the possibility of integrating the two countries in the field of history, noting the common past and examples of events and figures treated positively by historical memory in each country. The culmination of the entire project is this report, which aims to summarize the work of the project, raise awareness of Russian disinformation among Polish citizens and strengthen the counter-information activities undertaken in the Internet space that expose it.

The report was produced as part of the project: Shield of History or together against untruth. Counteracting Russian disinformation around historical narratives about Poland and Ukraine in four areas. Public task financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland in the competition “Public Diplomacy 2023”.<sup>139</sup>

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## **II. POLISH-UKRAINIAN FORUM FOR COUNTERACTING RUSSIAN DISINFORMATION IN THE AREA OF POLISH AND UKRAINIAN HISTORY**

Twelve historical researchers from Poland and Ukraine were invited to participate in the initiative, and were divided into working groups according to their preferred historical periods. These groups deliberated separately in the formula of three thematic “tables”. Within the framework of the first, they debated, among other things, the past of the aforementioned countries in the Middle Ages and the modern era, and its use in Russian propaganda. Problems related to the perception of the history of Ukraine in the mentioned epochs by ancient and modern historiography were widely considered in this context. These issues were taken up by Natalia Starchenko (M.S. Hrushevsky Institute of Ukrainian Archaeography and Source Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine), Vitaliy Mikhalovsky (Kiev’s Boris Grinchenko University), Vitaliy Nagirnyy (Jagiellonian University), while the work of this team was moderated by Piotr Kroll (Warsaw University). The second “table” dealt with Polish-Ukrainian relations in the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, the influence of the Russian empire on the functioning of both societies, and the Kremlin’s historical policy, both carried out by the tsarist authorities and pursued today by those in power in Moscow. It was joined in his work by Olena Arkusha (I. Krypjakiewicz Institute of Ukrainian Studies at the National Academy of Sciences in Lviv), Andriy Szabaciuk (Catholic University of Lublin), Yuriy Fedoryk (Berdyansk State Pedagogical University) and Artur Górak (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw), who moderated. The third working group, meanwhile, debated Polish-Ukrainian relations in the twentieth century, in particular taking into account the antagonisms and resentments, as well as examples of their exploitation by Russian propaganda. The group included Marek Wojnar (Polish Academy of Sciences), Damian Karol Markowski (Jan Karski Institute for War Losses in Warsaw), Oleh Razyhraev (Lesia Ukrainka Volyn National University) and Jan Jacek Bruski (Jagiellonian University), who moderated the debates. The sessions of the working teams were organized between September 20 and October 20, 2023 in an online format. Each of them held two approximately two-hour sessions, and the series of meetings culminated in a general meeting of all Forum members on November 10, 2023, during which the conclusions developed as a result of the deliberations of each thematic “table” were summarized.



## TABLE I: THE LONG TERM (MEDIEVAL AND MODERN)<sup>140</sup>

Statements by Russian politicians unequivocally confirm that the Kremlin's historical policy toward Poland and Ukraine refers not only to events of the last two centuries, but also to the times of the ancient Middle Ages and the modern period. As the experts invited to the Forum pointed out, it is often based on myths or insufficiently verified theses portraying the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in a negative light or denying Ukraine's separateness from the state of the tsars, taken from 19th-century Russian historiography.

- In principle, there are no disagreements between Polish and Ukrainian historians around the interpretation of the history of Kievan Rus' and its relations with the Piast state.
- Russia is attempting to appropriate the history of Kievan Rus, recognizing that Vladimir the Great, by adopting Christianity from Byzantium, laid the foundations for the establishment of the Russian state. On the back of this, Kremlin propaganda and the scholars who support it are trying to prove that Ukraine and the nation that inhabits it are an artificial creation established only in the late 19th century.
- Despite the period of history separating modern times from the Middle Ages, some issues in the relationship between Kievan Rus and the Piast state may provide fodder for Russian propaganda attempting to emphasize Polish-Ukrainian antagonism. In this context, experts mentioned the issue of the course of the common border, i.e. the rivalry over the Cherven Cities and the expeditions of Bolesław Chrobry and Bolesław Śmiały against Kiev; the fact that some Polish cities remained within the borders of the Duchy of Halych and Volodymyr, above all Przemyśl, Chełm (the burial place of Daniel Romanowicz) and Drohiczyn (the place of Daniel Romanowicz's coronation), and the related demands of radical Ukrainian circles claiming them, as well as the annexation of Halych and Volodymyr Ruthenia to the Polish Kingdom by Casimir the Great.
- Due to the operation in modern Russian politics and science of claims taken from 19th-century historiography, their veracity should be verified based on a sound interpretation of the surviving sources and new conclusions should be properly disseminated.
- Content relating to Polish-Ruthenian relations during the Middle Ages, contained in Polish and Ukrainian history textbooks, has for some time been characterized by an objective narrative that does not suggest the existence of an age-old antagonism between Poles and Ukrainians.

<sup>140</sup> Prepared on the basis of the deliberations of the relevant working team and notes taken by moderator Piotr Kroll (Documentation of the "Shield of History" project at the Janusz Kurtyka Library), as well as the debate summarizing the activities of the Polish-Ukrainian Forum for Countering Russian Disinformation in the Area of History.

- Russian history textbooks show elements of propaganda that distort the issue of Polish-Ukrainian relations during the Middle Ages, which affects the way the youngest generations of Russians view Polish and Ukrainian history.
- Ukrainian researchers parsing the history of their country often duplicate the views contained in 19th-century works of their predecessors drawing on imperial traditions and Cossack sources and therefore portraying the Commonwealth and the Poles as the main enemy of their nation. An example of this is, for example, the work of Mykhailo Hrushevsky, considered the “father” of Ukrainian studies of the past, who believed that everything “non-Cossack” is fundamentally un-Ukrainian.
- Ukrainian scholars’ emphasis on the Polonization and Catholicization carried out by the nobility in the modern era reinforces the vision of Polish expansion and feudal oppression. As a result, it can be used by Russian propaganda to emphasize the legitimacy of the 1654 Pereyaslav settlement surrendering Ukraine to the tsars.
- It is necessary to create a new narrative about the history of Ukraine within the Commonwealth, based on reliable research of sources and free from stereotypes and historical myths taken from the works of 19th century scholars. In this context, several sensitive issues were pointed out:
  - Polish historians should emphasize the fundamental difference related to the ethnic identification of the Polish Kingdom, where one nation clearly dominated, and the Commonwealth, inhabited by many nations, where the traditions of its various areas interacted with each other.
  - Contrary to modernist theories about the emergence of nations at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, nation-building processes began in Europe as early as the 15<sup>th</sup>–16th centuries and included the lands of Ukraine within the borders of the Commonwealth.
  - Polish and Ukrainian historiography should accentuate the universality of the state character of early modern states and reject viewing the Cossack uprisings solely from the perspective of social conflict.
  - Efforts should be made to deconstruct the myth of the expansion of the Crown nobility into the lands of Ukraine in the 16th/17th centuries, which was *de facto* a settlement action focused on populating empty lands and is often wrongly compared with the colonizing activities of Spain or Portugal on the American continent. This problem is important not only in the context of the “new peasantry” trend currently popular in Polish historiography, which creates a negative image of social relations in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but also in terms of memory and historical policy. According to experts invited to participate in the Forum, because of the latter, Polish historical researchers should shy away from using the term “Ukrainian lands” and the concept of “Southern Borderlands”, which

are perceived by Ukrainians as a manifestation of Polish revisionism and can be used by Russian propaganda to expose Warsaw's alleged territorial claims to Kiev.

- Ukrainian historians should present the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as part of their country's history, eschewing a narrative based on proving the nobility's imposition of Polish culture and Catholicism in favor of emphasizing the supranational character of the Polish-Lithuanian state (especially since it did not push a systemic policy of violence against representatives of other nations in its internal politics).
- The issue of the distinctiveness of the nobility living in the southeastern provinces of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as having its own traditions, laws and language should be emphasized. It is also worth exposing its participation in the political life of the state, which can contribute to refuting the theses about the deficit of elites in Ukrainian society in modern times and the oppressive policies of the Polish Crown against it.
- One should not treat the Union of Brest of 1596 as a manifestation of the anti-Ukrainian stance of Sigismund III and the Polish nobility, but analyze it as the result of a tangle of various phenomena of a political and religious nature. Regardless, however, one cannot overlook the reluctant stance of the authorities of the Commonwealth towards the demands to grant seats in the Senate to Orthodox bishops and to give the Orthodox Church equal status with the Catholic Church.
- When presenting the situation of the peasantry in the southeastern areas of the Commonwealth in the modern era, the term "slavery", which often appears in the works of Ukrainian researchers, should be decisively rejected in favor of using the concept of "serfdom", which is adequate to the actual state of affairs. The experts agreed in this context that it is also worth changing the paradigm of research on the landowners, showing their situation from the point of view of the authorities, while moving away from focusing on examples of oppressiveness on the part of the state.
- There is a need for a reanalysis and in-depth presentation of the nature of the Khmelnit-sky uprising, which was transformed from a Cossack rebellion bearing the hallmarks of a soldier confederation and peasant rebellion into a national liberation movement.
- The consequences of the Pereyaslav agreement of 1654, portrayed by 19th-century historiography as a legitimate and rightful decision by the Cossacks to place themselves under the authority of the tsar, should be analyzed in depth. In addition to academic arguments, it is also important because the Kremlin's propaganda proclaiming the slogan of *russskiy mir* exposes this issue in order to prove and emphasize Ukraine's historical belonging to "Russian civilization".
- In the context of Polish-Ukrainian relations in the modern era, the project of the Hadziac Union and the presence of the traditions of the Commonwealth in the Hetmanshchyna

deserve mention, manifestations of which can be found in the “constitution” of Filip Orlyak and the reforms of Kirill Razumovsky.

- In the study of Polish-Ukrainian relations within the Commonwealth, it is necessary to move away from focusing on the confrontation of the two elements in favor of attaching more importance to the issue of their cooperation and coexistence in one rather specific state with a *de facto* federal character.
- It is necessary to thoroughly analyze the issue of the Russian Empire’s interference in the Commonwealth’s internal affairs in the 18th century, paying attention to the growing resentment in the Polish-Lithuanian state against Orthodox Christians and Protestants, resulting from the growing threat from Russia, Prussia and Sweden.
- Concepts produced by 19th-century historiography for the purpose of erasing the separateness of Ukrainian lands from Russia (e.g., “Novorossiya”) should be erased from the modern study of history.
- A proposal was raised to form a Polish-Ukrainian team of historians to write a joint synthesis of the history of the two countries, both in academic and popular form.
- Aiming to reduce the influence of Russian propaganda and disinformation in the area of Polish and Ukrainian history, it is necessary to popularize knowledge about the mutual past on both sides of the river Bug. The scholars invited to participate in the Forum pointed in this context to the great importance of social media, which, due to their accessibility, can be used to popularize a common vision of history and effectively contradict the narrative propagated by the Kremlin.

## TABLE II: A CENTURY OF NATIONS (19TH CENTURY)<sup>141</sup>

In Russian historical policy, one can find numerous references to the events of the 19th century. This is particularly noticeable in the context of its presentation of the national identity of Ukrainians, solidifying in the second half of this century.

- With the Russian-Ukrainian conflict ongoing since 2014, the Kremlin has begun to seek in its propaganda to challenge Ukraine’s existence as a state. Among other things, historical arguments are used for this purpose, proving that its lands are an immanent part of Rus understood as Russia.

<sup>141</sup> Prepared on the basis of the deliberations of the relevant working team and notes taken by Artur Górak, who moderated them (Documentation of the “Shield of History” project at the Janusz Kurtyka Library), as well as the debate summarizing the activities of the Polish-Ukrainian Forum for Countering Russian Disinformation in the Area of History and Ukraine.

- Historical propaganda, present in the policies of successive incarnations of the Russian state since the 19th century, has each time appealed to imperial and supranational slogans. One of its characteristic elements is the portrayal of Russian lands as occupied by the Republic. These views, which were present in earlier historiography, did not go unnoticed in the perception of history by the people of Russia and Ukraine. What's more, 19th-century theses, often lacking support in historical sources, have constantly affected the results of studies by new generations of researchers in these countries, and thus affect the condition of the local study of the past. This seems important in the conditions of hybrid warfare, which is particularly relevant from the perspective of Ukraine, which Kremlin's propaganda consistently portrays as a part of the "Russian civilization" and tries to undermine all attempts at rapprochement with Poland as vitally threatening to its interests.
- The process of integrating the Kievan Rus within the borders of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Ukraine within the Commonwealth is disavowed by Russian historiography, as is the Polish-Ukrainian rapprochement in the 19th century within Galicia.
- Throughout history, there are numerous examples of conjunctures conducive to the strengthening of Polish-Ukrainian relations, which occurred, if only in the face of a common threat.
- Since the late 18th century, the tsarist authorities had been trying to erase traces of Polish-Ukrainian historical ties resulting from functioning within the framework of a single state, which was a rival idea to the Russian Empire, and to discredit the memory of this period. In this context, censors tried to erase the times of the Commonwealth from the consciousness of Poles and Ukrainians, as exemplified by the removal from Nikolai Gogol's work "A View of the History of Malorossiia" of the section devoted to the incorporation of Ukrainian lands into the Polish Crown. The image of Poles as invaders was promoted, while the censors were obliged to remove any mention that might arouse a favorable attitude toward them and their state.
- In the absence of an opportunity for 19th-century Russian historiography to negate the existence of the Polish-Lithuanian state, it focused on portraying the Commonwealth as a country gripped by permanent disorder and racked by internal conflicts.
- It reduced the history of Ukraine to that of the Cossacks, who voluntarily surrendered to the Tsar's protection, and treated it as a kind of "introduction" to its proper history under the Tsars.
- At the same time, they tried to convince Ukrainians that they had always been a part of the "Ruthenian nation", from which they had been artificially separated, and tried to develop in them a sense of obligation to return to the motherland.
- The tsarist government tried to prevent any attempt to raise the Polish and Ukrainian issues internationally, taking the position that they were internal problems of the Russian empire.

- Russian historians clearly exaggerate the antagonism dividing Poles and Ukrainians, failing to see the possibility of understanding between them, which was fostered at least by correct relations in everyday life between representatives of the two nations.
- It was in the interest of the partitioning powers to prevent a Polish-Ukrainian alliance. Today, the Kremlin's historical propaganda seeks to expose examples that undermine the possibility of such rapprochement, such as Russophilia in the Ukrainian national movement, the contacts of local politicians with Vienna and Berlin, or the basing of Polish National Democracy's political concepts on Russia.
- “• The Ukrainian question” in the 19th century was used instrumentally by the Russian government. The development of culture on banks of the Dnieper River was possible during this period only as an element of folklore or in the fight against Polishness. An excellent example of this is its inhibition through the ban on publications in Ukrainian following the 1876 Ems Ukaz.
- Russia has emphasized in its propaganda since the 19th century that an alliance with it is the only chance for Ukrainians to develop, prosper, be free and preserve their traditions and identity.
- The dominant view in modern Russian historiography is that there was no division between Russia and Ukraine in the 19th century, and that they were integrated through the belief in the existence of a single nation and civilization of the “Ruthenian world”. At this point, it should be mentioned that it emphasizes the artificiality of the adjective “Ukrainian” and allows its use only for the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
- Russian scholars often ignore Polish-Ukrainian ties in the 19th century, overlooking, among other things, the interaction of national movements there, which they treat as an insignificant phenomenon. Instead, they focus on exposing the priorities that differentiate the two nations, including portraying the Orthodox population living in the Russian partition as allies of the tsar, bent on resisting the Polish elite. Their propaganda narrative in this regard has found favor with Western historians, such as Daniel Beauvois and Malte Rolf, who unreflexively reproduce it in their works.
- According to Alexandra Bakhturina, before the outbreak of World War I, the Russians noticed that despite the success of the Russification policy in the Kingdom of Poland, separatism among its inhabitants had not been overcome. Because of this, some politicians began to view the area as a “foreign body” to which autonomy could be granted in the future and thus offset its harmful influence on the rest of the state. The Ukrainian and Belarusian lands, on the other hand, were seen as unequivocally Russian and subject to full integration, and as a result, the authorities sought to counteract the penetration of Polish influence there.
- According to Russian historians, the problem of separatism in the Russian empire was not solved because of the ambiguity and inconsistency of the tsar's national policy.

- The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has rekindled interest in Ukraine's past among Russian historical researchers. Their studies, regardless of the results, reliability and political views of individual authors, can be used in the Kremlin's historical policy to arouse negative emotions among the Russian public. After all, it should be borne in mind that propaganda does not focus solely on presenting a manipulated picture, but can equally well refer to facts that, when presented in a specific context, can elicit the social reactions desired by the authorities.
- The modern version of the Russian imperial narrative has been created by Alexei Miller, who portrays Russification and other actions of the tsarist government aimed at taming the nations that were part of the Romanov empire as an element of national integration, which in his view are comparable to the unification processes of Italy and Germany. The theses he puts forward about Russia's creation of conditions for spontaneous assimilation and criticism of its passivity in combating nationalism are fodder for today's Kremlin's propaganda. Miller's work contains views drawn from 19th-century historiography, evident in his assertions about the perception of Poles as enemies by both educated "Malorussians" and the local peasants, who saw them as hated "masters". In his view, this resentment was a factor in accelerating their rapprochement with Russia.
- Russian historical policy takes the position of portraying Ukraine's statehood as the result of a "Polish intrigue", the actions of local nationalists or hostile agents. In turn, the involvement of other countries in the internal affairs of this country is treated as a manifestation of hostile actions aimed at separating it from Moscow.
- According to the vision of history presented by V. Putin, the Ukrainian state did not exist before the outbreak of World War I and was only established by the Bolsheviks, and its current borders do not coincide with the area inhabited by ethnic Ukrainians. These views are a manifestation of the "Great-Russian" point of view, aimed at appropriating the heritage of Kievan Rus' by Russia.
- Russian historical policy not only denies the historical basis of Ukraine's existence, but also denies its citizens the possession of an independent nationality. Opinions on the Ukrainians' lack of a culture separate from Russia's remain a separate issue.
- These views are legitimized by the authority of some scholars, not infrequently creating theses for the historical propaganda needs of the Kremlin. For example, in the opinion of the well-known Russian historian and publicist Alexei Kochetkov, supporting the concept of an independent and "separatist" Ukraine and "Ukrainianness" is tantamount to "modern Nazism". Political scientist Ivan Skorikov, on the other hand, argues that the authorities in Kiev reject everything Ruthenian and Orthodox, and pursue the idea of a "godless Ukraine", in which faith in God and Christ will be replaced by worship of the state. He describes these policies as satanic. Skorikov's theses are firmly rooted in the concept of *russskiy mir*, which treats Orthodoxy as a key element of unity in the area of "Russian civilization". Proving Ukraine's departure from the Orthodox Church and its negative consequences, he points to the spread



of evil coming from the West, the manifestation of which is the “satanism” and “fascism” allegedly present there.

- Just as nineteenth-century Russian nationalists raised the need to defend the Ruthenian and Orthodox population from the harmful influence of the West (e.g., “Polish-Latin propaganda”), so now politicians there believe that they should oppose the demoralization flowing from there.
- Forum members unanimously stressed that Ukraine is an independent, sovereign and internationally recognized state, and therefore undermining its existence is groundless, which does not require historical justification.
- Ukrainian right-wing circles insist that nationalism is the mainstream of state-building in their country, with which they give fodder to Russian propaganda portraying it as fascist.
- The Kremlin’s propaganda seeks to prove that the Ukrainian state persecutes ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities by contrasting it with its own country, which it portrays as tolerant of such distinctiveness.
- As in the 19th century, the Russian message is now aimed at, among others, pitting the Ukrainian people against their elites. This is manifested in accusations by top Kremlin officials against the government in Kiev, stating that it has adopted a subservient attitude toward Western countries and is acting to the detriment of its own citizens. In reference to this, they stress that the Russian army is fighting in Ukraine not only in the interests of their country, but also of Ukrainians themselves.
- According to Russian propaganda, the Ukrainian state had a chance to come into being only on territories liberated by Russia from Polish rule. In turn, modern Ukraine, with its capital in Kiev, owes its existence to the Bolsheviks, who saw it as a tool for fighting Poland. On the other hand, the course of the administrative borders of the Russian gubernias is seen as an important factor shaping the area of this country and proving its artificial character.
- The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate speaks out against Ukraine’s independence from Russia, both religiously and politically. At least some of its clergy support this position and carry out anti-state activities favorable to the Kremlin, such as reproducing anti-Ukrainian propaganda, accusing the authorities in Kiev of intolerance and even openly collaborating with the enemy.
- Russian history textbooks contain information about the destructive potential of 19th-century non-state national movements, which upset the system of international balance established at the Congress of Vienna and led to the formation of the harmful idea of nationalism, which boils down to recognizing the superiority of one’s own nation over other nations. As the experts invited to participate in the Forum noted, in the materials that reach young people when discussing this problem, the issue of Russian nationalism, which also developed



during this period, is not addressed. The national idea is presented in them as a factor that promotes in Western Europe the strengthening of states (England, France) or their integration (Italy, Germany). In the Eastern and Southeastern parts of the continent, or areas of the Russian empire, on the other hand, it was supposed to be a destructive element, contributing to the development of separatisms ruining stability and internal order.

- Russian textbooks often use the term “cultural space of the empire”, supposedly uniting all its inhabitants.
- The past of Poland and Ukraine, as international subjects, is covered marginally in materials for Russian students and presented alongside the history of the Baltic States, or the countries of Transcaucasia and Central Asia. Slightly more extensive treatment is given to the fate of their eastern territories, seen as the outskirts of the tsarist empire and therefore presented as part of Russian history. There is no mention of the Russification conducted there, other than a general mention of the steps taken by the authorities to integrate the state. Comments about Polish-Russian antagonisms, primarily in the territories of Ukraine and Belarus, are also present. Researchers invited to participate in the Forum stressed that such a choice of content makes it impossible for young people pursuing a history course based on it to get a full picture of the history of Poland and Ukraine.

### **TABLE III: IN THE FACE OF TOTALITARIANISMS (20TH CENTURY)<sup>142</sup>**

The twentieth century, due to the tragic events of two world wars, is a key period for the historical memory of most European countries. It is no different for Russia emphasizing the key role of the USSR in the victory over the Third Reich, Ukraine striving for independence and the Polish state, reborn after 123 years of partitions, which lost parts of its territory and sovereignty as a consequence of the 1939-1945 conflict. In addition, for the latter, the past century is inextricably linked with bloody conflicts, the memory of which for long decades has affected their relations by building mutual distrust and prejudice. The difficult past and the animosities dividing Poles and Ukrainians are not forgotten by Russian propaganda, which, in connection with the war in Ukraine and the support given to Kiev by Poland, tries to prevent rapprochement between the two nations by referring to the “demons of the past”.

- Soviet and Russian historiography presents the state-building “Ukrainian Revolution” of 1917-1921 as an internal “revolution in Ukraine”, thereby giving it a regional character within the broader Russian Revolution. The Kremlin uses similar arguments when referring to the past of Georgia, Azerbaijan, or Kazakhstan. According to V. Putin, Ukrainian separateness was plotted by the Bolsheviks as a tactical ploy against Poland. The propaganda presented in this way, striking at the essence of Ukrainians’ aspirations to independence, has many

<sup>142</sup> Prepared on the basis of the deliberations of the relevant working team and notes taken by moderator Jan Jacek Bruski (Documentation of the “Shield of History” project at the Janusz Kurtyka Library), as well as the debate summarizing the activities of the Polish-Ukrainian Forum for Countering Russian Disinformation in the Area of History and Ukraine.

weaknesses, but it most likely suits the views and needs of the target group at which it is directed.

- It is worth popularizing the term “Ukrainian Revolution”, which is insufficiently emphasized in Polish historiography. This is because the term perfectly captures the atmosphere of national awakening in Ukraine during World War I, especially since there are no substantive contraindications to its use.
- The narrative that Ukrainians had no national identity in the 19th century, while the creation of Ukraine was a project carried out by Austria-Hungary, is designed to create a myth negating the country’s national revolution at the end of World War I.
- Russia, aiming to fracture the unity of the Ukrainians, is using the method of creating quasi-republics, proven in the early 20th century. In March 1918, during the national revolution in Ukraine, the Bolsheviks created the Donetsk-Kryhorosk Soviet Republic and the Soviet Socialist Republic of Taurida, while in the early 1920s they considered the possibility of establishing such separatist entities in the Volhynia area in order to detach parts of its territory from Poland. Less than a century later, after the events of Euromaidan, the Donetsk People’s Republic and the Lugansk People’s Republic, whose population the Kremlin seeks to exploit for its own political interests, were established as a counter to Kiev, under the auspices of Moscow.
- Soviet and Russian historiography portrays Symon Petlura as a traitor to his country who sold Western Ukraine to the Poles. Today, Ukrainian scholars assess his activities and the project of alliance with Poland with a much greater degree of objectivity. The cooperation between him and Józef Piłsudski carried the internationalization of the Ukrainian cause in the political and military fields. Moreover, it provides a good example of the two countries’ understanding against Russia. Nevertheless, as sociological studies conducted in Ukraine indicate, the person of Petlura does not arouse unambiguously positive emotions in the Ukrainian society, noticeable, for example, when evaluating Stepan Bandera.
- It is worth illuminating more broadly the motives that prompted Piłsudski and Petlura to cooperate, i.e. to refer to their political visions and the way they perceived the geopolitical situation.
- Soviet and Russian historians see the fact that Western Ukraine belonged to the Republic of Poland in the interwar period as an occupation, try to prove that repressions befell the population living there during that period, and emphasize that they expected liberation from the “Polish yoke”. Soviet aggression against Poland on September 17, 1939, on the other hand, is portrayed as a kind of civilizational mission to save Ukrainians, Belarusians and Jews from the eastern provinces of the Polish Republic from misery.
- Russian propaganda often uses emotionally charged terminology, including mentioning Polish occupation of Ukrainian lands in the interwar period. In a legal sense, the use of the

term is justified only for the period up to 1921 in Volhynia and up to 1923 in Eastern Galicia, since later these territories formally became part of the Polish Republic.

- Poland in the interwar period pursued a harsh policy towards the Ukrainian minority, which was manifested in discriminating against them, carrying out Polonization measures or settlement operations. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that Ukrainians were able to freely exercise their right to vote, legally develop political activity and create their own social and economic institutions. In comparison, at the same time in the territory of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic there was incomparably heavier persecution, terror and the imposition of forced collectivization, which led to the tragedy of the Great Famine. However, the mere fact of experiencing a "lesser evil" from the Poles does not lead Ukrainians to view Poland in a positive context, as reflected in the narrative presented by integral nationalism, according to which Ukraine was occupied by the USSR, the Second Polish Republic and the Third Reich.
- Russian propaganda, carried out for both internal and external use, equates the entire Ukrainian national movement with integral nationalism, which in its narrative equals fascism. In an attempt to arouse negative emotions towards the government in Kiev and the people of Ukraine, the official message coming from the Kremlin uses numerous terms clearly associated with criminal ideologies, i.e. "fascist", "Nazi", "Bandera", without distinguishing their specifics.
- Ukrainian integral nationalism in the interwar period was not a coherent movement, but brought together several strands that to some extent intermingled. Russian propaganda often refers to it as "Ukrainian Nazism", which is conceptual manipulation. Suffice it to mention that anti-Semitism did not occupy a prominent place in its ideology. In academic discourse, there are different opinions on the legitimacy of recognizing Ukrainian integral nationalism as fascism, so this problem should become the subject of a broader discussion at the academic level. Due to the fact that not all the currents that formed it had a fascist character, it is far less controversial and even more appropriate to use the term "Ukrainian radical nationalism" in this context. Showing the entire spectrum of the national movement and the circumstances of its functioning can serve to expose the "ideological labels" assigned to Ukrainians by Russian propaganda.
- An example of a contemporary Ukrainian nationalist organization is the Azov Movement, formed in Kharkiv in 2014, which is not at all often targeted by Russian propaganda. Through the person of the founder of the "Azov" regiment, Andriy Biletskyi, formerly involved in the radical nationalist organizations Patriots of Ukraine and the Socio-National Union, it is associated with racist views and imperialist inclinations. However, the influx of new people into its structures has led it to lose its ideological radicalism. Moreover, as an organization operating in eastern Ukraine, the Azov Movement has no ties to Bandera and Melnykovists, which is worth emphasizing in contrast to the Kremlin's narrative.

- The most sensitive point of the common past for Poles and Ukrainians is the conflict fought by these nations during World War II and the first years after its end, with particular reference to the Volhynian massacre and the “Vistula” action, which are used in the construction of memory policy and the shaping of historical policy by Kiev and Warsaw.
- Russian propaganda seeks to revive mutual resentment between the peoples living on both sides of the Bug River. In order to do so, it seeks to remind them of their past animosities and to reinforce mutual stereotypes. On the one hand, it emphasizes that the Poles were victims of Bandera, who sought to murder them, while on the other, it stresses that they simultaneously sought to Polonize the Ukrainians and reduce them to the rank of serfs. These claims are sometimes supported by publications by Russian historians. For example, in 2013, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Volhynian massacre, an extensive volume of documents on the activities of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army was published, among which were also materials full of drastic details related to them murdering Poles.
- Joint research on the number of victims of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict, in which historians and experts from both countries would give credence to each other’s findings, can contribute to developing an understanding of the difficult past. It is important that such a dialogue include as wide a group of researchers with different views as possible, since the problems associated with this dispute are often politicized, and the scholars dealing with them may feel pressure from public opinion. Within the framework of such cooperation, it is also worth resolving the issue of the use of the terms “genocide” and “ethnic cleansing” appearing in both historiographies in relation to the Volhynian massacre and the Polish retaliatory actions, naturally without forgetting the different scale of the actions and the disproportion in the number of victims and the semantics accompanying them.
- As long as particularly painful contentious issues concerning the Polish-Ukrainian conflict in the 20th century are not settled, they may resurface in public discourse with varying intensity, if only on the occasion of related anniversaries.
- Dangerous for the Polish-Ukrainian reckoning with the past may be the temptation to shift responsibility for the World War II conflict to the Soviets pitting the two nations against each other.
- There are fundamental discrepancies between the memorial policies pursued by Warsaw and Kiev, which is not without its impact on Polish-Ukrainian relations. Examples of this include the issue of mutual protection of monuments and memorials from vandalism, and the controversy over the commemoration of OUN/UPA members involved in actions against Poles.
- There is a perceptible lack of coherence in Polish remembrance policy towards Ukraine, which is difficult to prevent, given the high level of political polarization in Poland and the apparent resentment between intellectual circles supporting the main parties. For a long time, the problem of incoherence in the politics of remembrance was faced by Ukrainians,

who referred to the traditions of battles waged by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army or surrounded the Red Army with veneration. However, this changed after the Russian invasion of their country, following which the memory of Soviet soldiers ceased to be an element with which they would readily identify.

## SUMMARY<sup>143</sup>

- Modern Russia overtly instrumentalizes the past and manipulates it as part of its historical policy, seeing it as a factor in ensuring the persistence of the current regime and as a tool to intimidate its closest neighbors. The propaganda that supports it resorts not only to disinformation in this regard, but also appeals to interpretations of past events that are confirmed by reliable research, which, depending on the context, can work in favor of the narrative promoted by the Kremlin.
- Russia is trying to influence the perception of the history of Poland and Ukraine in its own society by drawing a negative picture of their history and portraying its own state as victimized by these countries. These actions should be seen as hostile to Warsaw and Kiev and part of the hybrid war being waged against them. Separately, the Kremlin is seeking to impede the Polish-Ukrainian rapprochement that has become apparent in recent months, which it is trying to prevent by stoking historical resentments that arouse negative emotions and mutual distrust between the two nations.
- Russian propaganda portraying Ukraine as an artificial creation and questioning the existence of the Ukrainian nation has remained unchanged since the 19th century and appears as a continuum of views repeating “from Denikin to Putin”. Moscow’s contemporary rulers also emphasize that the country lacks popular support, is characterized by instability and pervasive corruption, persecutes minorities and displays expansionist ambitions.
- The history of Ukraine is presented by the Kremlin in the context of the class struggle of the people there against the “Polish masters”, which over time took on a national liberation character. In doing so, Russia is portrayed as an ally that led the Ukrainians to throw off the yoke of the Commonwealth and the associated noble feudal oppression, and then took them under its protection.
- Kremlin’s propaganda recognizes Russian culture as superior in the area of the former Russian Empire and the USSR, and sees Ukrainians as part of their nation.
- A constant element of Russian propaganda in the area of Polish-Ukrainian history has been the perpetuation of the narrative of the Poles’ desire to seize or subjugate Ukrainian lands,

<sup>143</sup> Prepared on the basis of the debate summarizing the Polish-Ukrainian Forum for Countering Russian Disinformation in the Area of Polish and Ukrainian History and general conclusions emerging from the meetings of the working teams. *Polish-Ukrainian Forum for Countering Russian Disinformation*, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F\\_kJeEFs-14](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_kJeEFs-14) [accessed 30.11.2023].

which has been noticeable since the end of World War I. Emphasizing Warsaw's alleged partitionist ambitions toward its eastern neighbor stems from the Kremlin's decades-long invariable perception of Polish-Ukrainian cooperation as a vital threat to Russian interests.

- It is part of the internal policy of any empire to combat emerging nationalisms within it. Soviet and then Russian propaganda demonized movements of this nature and traced them to all nations living in the USSR except Russians. The term "nationalism" has over time acquired an unambiguously negative character and is now used by the Kremlin to defile the image of individuals, governments or entire societies.
- "Official" Russian historiography is closely linked to propaganda aimed at divesting its recipients of critical thinking and instilling in them the conviction of Russia's historical importance, its civilizing mission and permanent threat from external enemies. As part of this, its architects distort the historical truth, not shying away from selective selection of facts or keeping silent about sources that are inconvenient from the perspective of the narrative they are disseminating.
- The findings produced by these "methods" are inculcated into Russian society not only through propaganda, but also through the education system, through which the younger generation is taught content intended to shape its identity. Particularly important in this regard is the content of history textbooks, currently devoid of a critical look at the foundations of the Russian Federation's imperial policy and reinforcing the official message of its ruling regime. In the case of Ukraine, this amounts to negating the foundations of its existence as a state and denying its citizens the right to nationhood.
- One should not respond with "propaganda to propaganda", and instead should rather deconstruct the message coming from Moscow by illuminating the goals of the Russian narrative, the context of the facts cited in it, and demonstrating the accompanying manipulation and disinformation. In doing so, scholars should not bend the facts in a particular direction, but describe the past in an objective manner. In this context, it is worthwhile for Polish and Ukrainian historians to shy away from entering into discussion with the claims disseminated by Russian propaganda and instead try to prevent them by honestly analyzing the difficult past relations between their peoples and emphasizing the positive aspects of mutual relations. In doing so, it is necessary that researchers of history, dealing with this sensitive matter, be guided by objectivity, rejecting emotional considerations that could impinge on their conclusions.
- It is necessary to popularize knowledge about Russia's relations with neighboring countries by publishing the results of reliable academic research and popular texts, exposing the Kremlin's fake narrative based on theses present in Soviet and Russian historiography, which have been coined for the historical policy of successive regimes. Also important in this context is the publication of sources containing information that stands in contrast to the message coming from Moscow. As part of this, it is also worth juxtaposing current Russian propaganda and its methods with their long discredited prototypes.

### III. TRUTHS, HALF-TRUTHS AND UNTRUTHS. THE HISTORY OF POLAND AND UKRAINE IN THE LIGHT OF RUSSIAN AND PRO-RUSSIAN ONLINE MEDIA IN 2023.

The word “propaganda” originally had a neutral meaning. Only twentieth-century totalitarianism (including Soviet) distorted its meaning, reducing it to manipulation and falsehood.<sup>144</sup> Today the term is pejoratively characterized and associated with the dissemination of lies.<sup>145</sup> A propaganda message, however, does not have to be wholly false, in which case it would, moreover, be questionable to the audience, easy to challenge and thus short-lived in its impact. Therefore, in order to make it credible and at the same time effective in influencing the target group, it is often constructed from both authentic information and manipulation and confabulation. Creating the appearance of authenticity of a narrative by combining truths, half-truths, and untruths into one coherent picture is the most dangerous weapon of propaganda. A narrative that partially coincides with the recipient’s knowledge or generally accepted facts puts the reader’s “vigilance” to sleep, making it easier to “smuggle” in false information or blur the line between it and reality. In addition, referring to real events gives arguments to the defenders of propaganda, who can try to defend its pronouncements on their basis. What’s more, by creating the appearance of credibility, a message of this nature also more easily sows doubts in the minds of the public, and even shatters existing beliefs in those susceptible to suggestion. Disinformation created in this way is accompanied by various socio-technical methods, such as invoking scientific or moral authorities to confirm one’s own opinion, or constructing the message in a way intended to evoke feelings of prejudice against a particular person or state.

This section contains a list of selected information about the history of Poland and Ukraine that appeared in Russian and pro-Russian Internet portals in 2023. These excerpts were divided into several groups, based on their content. This makes it possible to clearly observe the strategy of the Kremlin’s historical policy towards Warsaw and Kiev, and to note areas where manipulated or distorted messages are particularly frequent.

#### POLISH-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

One of the more frequently discussed matters in the analyzed publications was Polish-Russian relations throughout history. A reading of these texts reveals that the Jagiellonians taking power in the Kingdom of Poland in the 14th century and the resulting Polonization of Lithuania, which the Russians perceive as an area dominated by Ruthenian tradition from time immemorial, contributed to the antagonization of the two states. This approach is also evident in references to the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 18th century, where it is emphasized that Russia did not occupy ethnically Polish lands. However, far more references are made to the 19th and 20th centuries, with emphasis on the benefits Poland obtained from Russia or the USSR, primarily the inclusion of the so-called Recovered Territories within its borders. In this

144 *Propaganda*, [in:] A. Zwoliński, *Słowo w relacjach społecznych*, Kraków 2003, pp. 238–255.

145 G. Dudek-Waligóra, *Propaganda jako termin naukowy polskiej politolingwistyki*, “Studia z Filologii Polskiej i Słowiańskiej”, 2018, Vol. 53, pp. 12–14.



aspect, there is a clearly visible manipulation of facts in order to portray Poles as ungrateful, underestimating the goodwill of the Russians and their contribution to Poland's development. It is worth quoting the most common hypocritical claims of the Kremlin's historical policy.

- Poland appropriated the victory at the Battle of Grunwald (1410), actually won by Ruthenians fighting under its banners, who are identified in the Kremlin's propaganda as Russians.<sup>146</sup>
- Polish-Russian antagonism was born as a consequence of the progressive Polonization, since the Battle of Grunwald, of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which had previously been a *de facto* West Ruthenian state with the dominant role of Orthodoxy and Ruthenian tradition and language.<sup>147</sup>
- Peaceful relations between the Piasts and the Rurikids were interrupted by the Jagiellons taking the Polish throne (in 1386).<sup>148</sup>
- The Lithuanians asked Ivan IV the Terrible to take the throne of the Commonwealth after the death of Sigismund II Augustus (1572). However, the tsar made it dependent on strict conditions, including border changes in favor of Moscow, which ultimately ruled out his candidacy.<sup>149</sup>
- The rapid decline of the Commonwealth's position internationally and the destruction of its political and administrative structures were caused by devastating wars, the deterioration of the internal situation as a consequence of noble and magnate self-rule, and Russian intervention.<sup>150</sup>
- The cause of the third partition of the Commonwealth (1795), which abolished its statehood, was the unsuccessful Kosciuszko uprising, which broke out under the influence of a growing national consciousness.<sup>151</sup>
- As a result of the partition, Russia did not take over ethnically Polish lands.<sup>152</sup>

146 О. Хавич, *Как русские победили немцев под Грюнвальдом, но в результате проиграли полякам*, <https://ukraina.ru/20230714/1047954879.html> [accessed 15.11.2023].

147 *Ibid.* Lithuania remained in the orbit of influence of Ruthenian culture, but this by no means implies the dominance of Moscow's customs or sympathy for its rulers, as the author of the article tries to suggest. There is also no way of finding the genesis of Polish-Russian antagonism in the Battle of Grunwald or the period immediately after it - until the Union of Lublin (1569) the wars with the Grand Duchy of Moscow were waged by Lithuania as a sovereign state only assisted by allied Polish troops. H. Łowmiański, *Polityka Jagiellonów*, ed. by K. Pietkiewicz, Poznań 1999, pp. 236–246; M. Plewczyński, *Koalicja antymoskiewskie Jagiellonów w XVI wieku*, "Wschodni Rocznik Humanistyczny", 2005, Vol. 2, pp. 83–93.

148 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...* The conflicts between the Piasts and the Rurikids have a much older pedigree. As an example, it suffices to mention the expedition of Bolesław Chrobry to Kiev (1018) and the seizure of the Cherven Cities by Jarosław Mądry in 1031. S. Szczur, *Historia Polski. Średniowiecze*, Kraków 2007, pp. 70–74, 79.

149 С. Рогов, *О военных угрозах России от Речи Посполитой до НАТО*, [https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/comments/o-voennykh-ugrozakh-rossii-ot-rechi-pospolitoy-do-nato/?phrase\\_id=102455843](https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/comments/o-voennykh-ugrozakh-rossii-ot-rechi-pospolitoy-do-nato/?phrase_id=102455843) [accessed 15.11.2023]. The Lithuanians, seeing a guarantee of peace with Moscow in the election of Rurikovich to the throne of the Commonwealth, considered the possibility of electing Ivan IV's son Fyodor. The tsar most readily saw himself as the ruler of the Polish-Lithuanian state, but he also did not reject the possibility of his descendant taking the throne in Cracow. This candidacy, however, had no chance of success, for the tsar not only did not agree to the border adjustment proposed by the Lithuanians, but also demanded that Moscow be given Kiev and the Inflants, and demanded that the Commonwealth be transformed into a hereditary monarchy, to be *de facto* annexed to his state. H. Wisner, *Król i car. Rzeczpospolita i Moskwa w XVI i XVII wieku*, Warszawa 1995, pp. 21–23; W. Polak, *Trzy misje. Rokowania dyplomatyczne pomiędzy Rzeczpospolitą a Moskwą w latach 1613–1615*, Toruń 2014, p. 17.

150 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...*

151 *Ibid.*

152 *Ibid.* While the Partition Treaties granted ethnically mixed territories to Russia, they also eventually came into possession of indigenous Polish territories - this occurred as a consequence of the Vienna Congress (1815), whose decision gave the Tsar authority over 2/3 of the area of the liquidated Duchy of Warsaw (Lubelskie, Kielce, Mazovia and a patch of Greater Poland with Kalisz). A. Chwalba, *Historia Polski 1795–1918*, Cracow 2000, p. 249.



- Catherine II, Paul I and Alexander I did not persecute the Polish language or the Catholic religion and did not seek to introduce changes in the ethnic structure of the Polish territories. Over time, they only made attempts to get the Uniates to return to the Orthodox church.<sup>153</sup>
- In 1815 Tsar Alexander I resurrected the Kingdom of Poland and granted it wide autonomy guaranteed by a constitution, the first in the Russian Empire and one of the most liberal in Europe. The Poles clearly did not appreciate this, for even during the reign of this monarch they began to enter into disputes with the Russian authorities.<sup>154</sup>
- Russian authorities favored the development of Polish-language education, as evidenced by the activities of the Vilnius University and the establishment of the Warsaw University (1816).<sup>155</sup>
- Thanks to the introduction of the tariffs in 1850, Poles were able to get rich from trade with Russia and subsequently develop their industry and pursue other interests.<sup>156</sup>
- The Polish lands developed economically under the tsars even after the defeat of the January Uprising, as evidenced by the expansion and flourishing of Łódź, whose population increased 600 times over the century (from 1815 to 1915).<sup>157</sup>
- Socrates Starynkiewicz, while serving as mayor of Warsaw from 1875 to 1892, undertook extensive modernization measures, thanks to which the city gained waterworks, a sewage system, horse-drawn streetcars, and street lamps. Tsar Alexander III personally participated in financing these projects.<sup>158</sup>
- Poland “received independence on a platter” as a consequence of the outbreak of revolution in Russia.<sup>159</sup>
- The demolition of Warsaw’s Alexander Nevsky Cathedral (1924–1926) and the destruction of Orthodox churches in the Second Polish Republic exemplify the Russophobia of Poles and their violation of Christian values.<sup>160</sup>

153 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...* Catherine II forbade Polish priests and monks from having contact with the Roman Curia and foreign clergy. A. Barańska, *Miedzy Warszawą, Petersburgiem i Rzymem. Kościół a państwo w dobie Królestwa Polskiego (1815–1830)*, Lublin 2008, p. 69. In addition, during her reign, property was confiscated from those who took part in the Kościuszko Uprising (1794) and then transferred to tsarist officials. I. Walentynowicz, *Represje Imperium Rosyjskiego wobec uczestników Powstania Kościuszkowskiego*, “Studia i Materiały Centralnej Biblioteki Wojskowej im. Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego”, 2021, No. 1, pp. 66–67. This ruler had unequivocal views with regard to policy toward non-Russian territories within the borders of her state: “Malorossiya, Inflants and Finland [the latter meant Karelia – note A.G] are provinces that govern themselves on the basis of confirmed privileges; it would be wrong to violate them by abrupt erasure, but to call these lands foreign and to deal with them on such a basis is more than a mistake – such an action should be called foolishness. The aforementioned provinces, including Smolensk, should be Russified in the mildest way possible, and especially so that they do not look see us as a wolf. It will be easy to do this if we appoint sensible people as the heads of these provinces; once there is no Hetman in Malorossiya, every effort should be made to obliterate the concept of Hetmanism completely and to no longer appoint any person as Hetman”. Quoted in W. Serczyk, *Katarzyna II*, Wrocław 2004, p. 171.

154 О. Хавич, *Королевство Конгрессовое. Как русский царь возродил Польшу и чем она за это отплатила*, <https://ukraina.ru/20231128/1029695534.html> [accessed 22.11.2023].

155 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...*

156 М. Колеров, *К истории правящего русского идиотизма*, 4 Nov. 2023, [https://t.me/Modest\\_A\\_KoleroV/7888](https://t.me/Modest_A_KoleroV/7888) [accessed 15.11.2023].

157 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...*

158 *Ibid.*

159 *Россия в лице президента Путина указала Польшу на историческую правду*, <https://iarex.ru/articles/104678.html> [accessed 15.11.2023].

160 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...*

- Poland's aggressive policy during the interwar period ended with the loss of its independence following the 1939 aggression of the Third Reich. Its sovereignty and statehood, however, were restored thanks to the USSR.<sup>161</sup>
- Polish-Soviet relations in the interwar period determined the position of the USSR towards the Republic and its authorities in exile during World War II – Moscow wanted a friendly and predictable neighbor beyond its western border.<sup>162</sup>
- The decision to create Polish armed forces in USSR was made by J. Stalin even before the Sikorski-Mayski pact (1941). The 1st Tadeusz Kosciuszko Infantry Division formed there wore Polish uniforms, used Polish symbols and the Polish language. During the assault on Berlin (1945), it stormed the center of the German capital, so that after the victory, the white and red flag was raised in this city, as the only one besides the Soviet flag.<sup>163</sup>
- The Red Army liberated Poland from Nazi occupation (1944–1945), during which 600,000 Soviet soldiers were killed and one and a half million wounded.<sup>164</sup>
- The shape of today's borders of Poland and the Baltic States is the result of an agreement between the USSR and the USA (1943–1945), which made arbitrary territorial divisions adequate to their strategic interests.<sup>165</sup>
- Poland owes the USSR the incorporation of the so-called Recovered Territories, which constitute approx. 30% of its territory. Russian propaganda ignores the issue of the destruction done to the area during World War II, describing it as having a developed infrastructure, industrial plants, and rich natural resources.<sup>166</sup>

161 *Совещание с постоянными членами Совета Безопасности*, 21 июля 2023 г., <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/security-council/71714> [accessed 15.11.2023]; *Польша хотела бы заполучить часть земель в Беларуси и на Украине - Путин*, <https://sputnik.by/20230721/polsha-khotela-by-zapoluchit-chast-zemel-v-belarusi---putin-1077695654.html> [accessed 15.11.2023].

162 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...*

163 О. Хавич, *Сталин – создатель Войска Польского: 80 лет дивизии им. Костюшко*, <https://ukraina.ru/20230715/1047962622.html> [accessed 15.11.2023].

164 *Косачев: Русофобия вытраивает из человека остатки совести и и исторической памяти*, <https://rg.ru/2023/09/14/kosachev-rusofobia-vytravliaet-iz-cheloveka-ostatki-sovesti-i-istoricheskoy-pamiat.html> [accessed 16.11.2023]; М. Шейнкман, *Гены "гиены". Польша решила свести счеты с Россией за Вторую мировую*, <https://radiosputnik.ru/20230523/polsha-1873667057.html?in=t> [accessed: 16.11.2023]; Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...* The alleged "liberation" of Poland was not a selfless act by the USSR in the interest of Polish citizens, but a means to defeat the Third Reich and subjugate Central and Eastern Europe. In historical sources one can find numerous accounts of murder, rape and pillage committed on a massive scale by Red Army soldiers „liberating” Poland. A. Czubiński, *Wojny w dziejach świata XIX i XX wieku*, [in:] *II wojna światowa i jej następstwa*, ed. A. Czubiński, Poznań 1996, p. 30; M. Golon, *Terror Armii Czerwonej i NKWD na ziemiach polskich w latach 1944–1945*, "Fides, Ratio et Patria. Studia Toruńskie", 2019, No. 10–11, pp. 70–94.

165 Т. Бордачев, *Искусственные границы Польши формируют ее комплексы*, <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/comments/iskusstvennye-granitsy-polshi-formiruyut-ee-kompleksy/> [accessed 15.11.2023].

166 В. Володин, *Польша предала историческую память*, [https://t.me/vv\\_volodin/646](https://t.me/vv_volodin/646) [accessed 15.11.2023]; С. Рогов, *О военных угрозах...*; *Совещание с постоянными членами Совета Безопасности*, 21 июля 2023 г., <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/security-council/71714> [accessed 15.11.2023]; *Россия в лице президента Путина указала Польшу на историческую правду*, <https://iarex.ru/articles/104678.html> [accessed 15.11.2023]; Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...* The Recovered Territories were well-developed and abundant in natural resources; however, they were devastated by the war and, moreover, the occupation by the territory by the Red Army, which dismantled much of the infrastructure located there. The Soviets, in accordance with Stalin's decrees, removed, among other things, equipment for industrial plants and railroad tracks. According to estimates, by mid-1945 they had seized industrial goods worth between \$500 and \$750 million (calculated at 1938 prices). It should also be remembered that the lands lost by the Poland in the Eastern Borderlands were more extensive in area and had more fertile soils. J. Kaliński, *Gospodarka w PRL*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 33–35; the same, *Węgiel w polsko-radzieckich stosunkach gospodarczych*, "UR Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences", 2021, No. 3(20), p. 94. As Andrzej Leon Sowa argues, "in general, as a result of the change of territory, Poland gained economically, but due to its dependence on the USSR it could not take advantage of this situation". A.L. Sowa, *Od Drugiej do Trzeciej Rzeczypospolitej (1945–2001)*, Kraków 2001, p. 28.

- Poland after World War II received more than \$750 billion from the USSR for reconstruction and development, at the cost of which more than 800 industrial, energy and transportation facilities were built, and the reconstruction of Warsaw's Old Town was financed.<sup>167</sup>
- The People's Republic of Poland, under the aegis of the USSR, became part of the community of socialist countries. Thanks to this, the Poles quickly rebuilt their country from the destruction of the war, and then carried out rapid industrialization.<sup>168</sup>
- The latest Russian research, based on rich archival material, allegedly refutes the "primitive view prevailing in Polish science and journalism" that the Polish People's Republic was under Soviet occupation during the socialist period. According to the author of this opinion, Dmitry Bunevich, this is contradicted by the complex, dynamic and interdependent (albeit asymmetrical) nature of relations between Warsaw and Moscow.<sup>169</sup>
- The communist period was the best for bilateral Polish-Russian relations in history.<sup>170</sup>
- The Third Republic, while declaring it would continue the historical traditions of the Polish state, at the same time recognized the nationalist policy of J. Piłsudski and J. Beck.<sup>171</sup>
- The Soviets, in the name of loyalty to Poland, withheld information about its shameful actions in the past century, and "it was only with the collapse of the USSR that the truth about the 'hyena of Europe', into which the Polish elite had been transformed as a result of the Germanization of Polish-Slavic popular principles and Catholicization, began to come to light".<sup>172</sup>
- No country in Central and Eastern Europe has as much hatred for Russia as Poland.<sup>173</sup>

## POLAND'S RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

Russian propaganda, referring to Poland's relations with other countries, accentuates the issue of Poland's failure to maintain agreements with its allies and raises the issue of alleged concerns about Germany's demand for border revision.

167 В. Володин, *Польша предала...*; С. Рогов, *О военных угрозах...*; М. Шейнкман, *Гены "гиены"*... The USSR, through agreements unfavorable to Poland, drained Poland financially. In the first years after the end of World War II, this involved, for example, Poland supplying coal at discounted prices. As a result, the Polish economy lost at least \$525 million by 1953. A.L. Sowa, *Od drugiej do Trzeciej Rzeczypospolitej...*, p. 28. As a result of the actions of the Soviets during World War II, a lot of Polish cultural assets were destroyed or seized, and are now irretrievably lost or located in Russia. The USSR treated works of art, book collections, archives, etc. in Poland as war booty. According to Dariusz Matelski, "the total losses suffered by Poland (in economic and cultural property and demographic dimensions) from the Soviet Union are estimated at \$560 to \$700 billion (according to the exchange rate of May 2005). D. Matelski, *Polityka eksterminacji obywateli drugiej Rzeczypospolitej przez Trzecią Rzeszę i Związek Sowiecki w latach 1939–1945. Część II: Polityka Związku Sowieckiego*, "Nowa Polityka Wschodnia", 2017, No. 4 (15), p. 216.

168 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...*

169 Д. Буневич, *Quo vadis, Polonia? Польша и поляки сегодня сдают экзамен на государственную, политическую и нравственную зрелость*, <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/quo-vadis-polonia/> [accessed 16.11.2023].

170 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...*

171 *Ibid.*

172 *Россия в лице президента Путина...*

173 Ю. Рябинина, *Myśl Polska: Ненависть к России привела Польшу к отчаянию*, <https://rg.ru/2023/08/28/obozrevatel-mysl-polska-belen-nenavist-k-rossii-privela-polshu-k-otchaianiu.html> [accessed 17.11.2023].

- London's failure to keep its alliance commitments to Warsaw is a kind of tradition in Polish-British relations. Periods when the agreement between the two countries was maintained have been only brief episodes throughout history.<sup>174</sup>
- Almost half of the territory of today's Poland was inhabited by Germans before the war. Poland did not come into their possession as a result of a military victory, but as a result of an arbitrary decision of the superpowers, which may raise concerns among Poles about the possibility of a revision of the borders. Timofey Bordachev links this to Warsaw's demands for the payment of war reparations by Berlin.<sup>175</sup>
- Poles today want to maintain close relations with Americans for fear of Germans, who may claim East Prussia in the future, which was the cradle of their country's unification in 1871.<sup>176</sup>
- Belarusian nationalists are positively oriented toward Poland, treating the period of belonging to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as the most distinguished in the history of their state. They see heroes in "Polish chauvinists", such as Tadeusz Kosciuszko, pride themselves on conquering Moscow with the Poles (1610), while the "European and enlightened" Polish Republic is for them the opposite of "Asian and barbaric" Russia.<sup>177</sup>
- When Poland joined the European Union (2004), it expected to enter a community guided by the ideas of Charles de Gaulle's Europe of homelands or the thought of John Paul II. Meanwhile, it turned out that this structure is now closer to the values guiding the French students who went on strike in 1968, which are at odds with the "widespread Catholic and nationalist worldview in Poland".<sup>178</sup>

## SHOWING POLAND AS AN EXTREMELY AUTHORITARIAN AND AGGRESSIVE STATE OPPRESSING NATIONAL MINORITIES AND SEEKING TO EXPAND ITS TERRITORY

Russian propaganda attempts to portray Poland as a state that has shown expansionist inclinations in its history and has discriminated against and oppressed ethnic minorities. In doing so, the alleged anti-Semitism and Russophobia of the Poles is emphasized. The following historical manipulations are noteworthy:

174 С. Стремидловский, *Конъюнктурная любовь. Где находятся истоки антипольской политики Лондона*, <https://regnum.ru/opinion/3819962>, [accessed 15.11.2023].

175 Т. Бордачев, *Искусственные границы Польши...*

176 "Любой конфликт в Европе заканчивается разделом Польши". *Богодель о последствиях польской политики*, <https://www.belta.by/society/view/ljuboj-konflikt-v-evrope-zakanchivaetsja-razdelom-polshi-bogodel-o-posledstvijah-polskoj-politiki-578741-2023/> [accessed 15.11.2023].

177 А. Агафонов, *Не дать вновь опоязать Белоруссию*, <https://www.politnavigator.net/ne-dat-vnov-opolyachit-belorussiyu.html> [accessed 15.11.2023].

178 Д. Буневич, *Quo vadis, Polonia?...*

- Already in the Middle Ages, The Kingdom of Poland was “an aggressive vanguard of the expansion of Catholicism to the East”.<sup>179</sup>
- As a consequence of the Union of Lublin of 1569, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was annexed by the Kingdom of Poland.<sup>180</sup>
- The Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, after the Union of Lublin, focused on two issues – subjugating Ukraine and waging wars with the Muscovite State.<sup>181</sup>
- The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 16th century conducted propaganda efforts to portray the Muscovite state as a savage and aggressive country.<sup>182</sup>
- In the composition of the parliament of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, there was discrimination against the nobility from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which had fewer representatives.<sup>183</sup>
- The Republic has made repeated attempts since the early 17th century to install its monarch in Moscow.<sup>184</sup>
- The intervention of the Poles in the Duchy of Moscow during the Time of Troubles exemplifies their barbarism<sup>185</sup>.
- The Commonwealth persecuted Orthodox Christians living in its territory and refused to make its Ruthenian subjects equal in rights with Poles and Lithuanians.<sup>186</sup>
- From 960 to 1795 Poles took part in some 247 conflicts, meaning that they fought someone on average once every three years.<sup>187</sup>
- Regardless of their apparent adherence to “enlightened” European values, the Polish nobility viewed expansion to the East as natural and legitimate.<sup>188</sup>
- Adam Mickiewicz was one of the staunchest Russophobes in the 19th century.<sup>189</sup>

179 Ю. Глушаков, *Польский национализм. Как комплекс “пострадавшей нации” преобразовался в неистовую русофобию*, <https://ukraina.ru/20230715/1048037481.html> [accessed 15.11.2023]. The annexation of the Duchy of Halych-Vlodzimier to the Kingdom of Poland in 1387 by Queen Jadwiga of Anjou was part of the Polish-Hungarian rivalry. Almost all the towns (except Halicz) submitted to the ruler at that time. S. Szczur, *Historia Polski. Średniowiecze...*, pp. 480-481.

180 Ю. Глушаков, *Польский национализм...* The Union of Lublin united the Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania on the basis of compromise and partnership, so it was not an act of annexation. As noted in the 1569 document, the two states were to form “one inseparable and undifferentiated body”. Lithuania retained a separate army, treasury, offices, laws and official language. A.A., Witusik, *Tu było serce Polski. Wielki sejm lubelski 1569 roku*, [in:] *Unia lubelska 1569 roku w dziejach Polski i Europy*, ed. A.A. Witusik, Lublin 2004, pp. 29–38.

181 Д. Волкова, *Польша покусилась на результаты Переяславской рады*, <https://vz.ru/world/2023/2/1/1197455.html> [accessed 17.11.2023].

182 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...*

183 *Марзалюк: белорусские земли до Рижского мирного договора не были частью польского государства*, <https://www.belta.by/society/view/marzaljuk-belorusskie-zemli-do-rizhskogo-mirnogo-dogovora-ne-byli-chastju-polskogo-gosudarstva-579673-2023/> [accessed 15.11.2023].

184 Ю. Глушаков, *Польский национализм...*

185 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...*

186 *Ibid.*; И. Шишкин, *Освободительный поход: Сталин Польшу не делил – СССР вернул свое*, <https://pda.iarex.ru/articles/111645.html> [accessed 22.11.2023].

187 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...*

188 *Ibid.*

189 К. Аверьянов, *Что означает установка памятника русскому князю в центре Минска*, <https://vz.ru/world/2023/11/18/1240184.html> [accessed:22.11.2023].

- Despite the Republic regaining independence thanks to the revolution in Russia, the ungrateful Poles invaded it to seize Ukraine (1918–1919).<sup>190</sup>
- Belarus was, according to the authorities in Warsaw, “a part of Polish territory inhabited by people who have not yet learned Polish”, and was occupied by Poland until July 1919. While the Poles in some ways recognized Semen Petlura’s Ukrainian People’s Republic, they “did not consider the Belarusians as a people”. Because of their resistance to embracing Catholicism and using the Polish language, the counterintelligence of the Second Republic was to treat them as one of two internal enemies (along with the Communists).<sup>191</sup>
- The Republic in 1919 deceived the Lithuanians with the mirage of a joint struggle against “Russian nationalism”, but when the opportunity arose, the Poles occupied Vilnius.<sup>192</sup>
- The Poles armed and organized their army in 1920 with the support of the “collective West”. Enlisting civilians were indoctrinated in the spirit of “rabid chauvinism”.<sup>193</sup>
- During the 1920 Kiev offensive, the Poles destroyed more Orthodox churches than the Bolsheviks did during their subsequent five-year plans (they were also alleged to have committed similar acts during the Napoleonic campaign of 1812).<sup>194</sup>
- Poland, incited by Western countries, took advantage of the civil war in Russia and annexed parts of the land belonging to them, which Moscow had to recognize in the Treaty of Riga (1921), due to its difficult situation.<sup>195</sup>
- J. Piłsudski was a Russophobe who assumed that the ultimate goal of the war against the Bolsheviks (1919–1921) would be “to write in the ruins of the Kremlin ‘it is forbidden to speak Russian’”.<sup>196</sup>

190 *Россия в лице президента Путина...*; С. Рогов, *О военных угрозах...* The prelude to the Polish-Bolshevik war was the clashes between the two armies in early 1919. Polish forces fighting for the favorable course of the borders of the resurgent state began to enter the territories east of the Bug River abandoned by the German army at that time. They encountered resistance from the Red Army seeking to control areas once belonging to tsarist Russia and to spread the proletarian revolution to the West. Initially, clashes occurred in Lithuania and Belarus, where the forces of the Republic managed to retake Vilnius and Minsk, among others. With the aim of strengthening Poland’s position and building around it a federation of states constituting a buffer separating it from Russia, Piłsudski reached an agreement with ataman Semen Petlura at the head of the Ukrainian People’s Republic. This agreement stipulated the independence of Ukraine within the borders running east of the Zbruch River, the affiliation of Eastern Galicia and Western Volhynia to the Polish Republic, and a military alliance against the Bolsheviks. L. Wyszczelski, *Warszawa 1920*, Warszawa 1995, p. 4; N. Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star. The Polish-Soviet War 1919–20 and ‘the miracle on the Vistula’*, London 2003, pp. 38–61; Cz. Brzoza, A.L. Sowa, *Historia Polski 1918–1945*, Kraków 2007, pp. 30–32.

191 *Платошкин: контрразведка межвоенной Польши называла главными врагами коммунистов и белорусов*, <https://www.belta.by/society/view/platoshkin-kontrrazvedka-mezhvoennoj-polshi-nazyvala-glavnymi-vragami-kommunistov-i-belorusov-600818-2023/> [accessed 22.11.2023].

192 *Совещание с постоянными членами...*

193 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...* It is difficult to speak of indoctrination of Polish society, primarily systemic, since until 1918. The Poland did not exist as a state. The widespread enlistment of citizens in the army at that time was driven by a sense of duty to defend the homeland reborn after 123 years, with volunteers not lacking in fighting spirit and faith in victory. Cz. Brzoza, A.L. Sowa, *Historia Polski 1918–1945...*, pp. 33–34. The ammunition and military equipment reinforcements received from France were very important for strengthening the military potential of the Polish army, but they remained far from sufficient, especially since at the end of June 1920 the government in Warsaw had exhausted the loans granted to it by Paris. Moreover, the inconsistent armaments available to the soldiers caused problems with the supply of ammunition. A. Podolska-Meducka, *Problemy gospodarcze Polski w okresie wojny z bolszewikami – zarys problematyki*, “Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Krakowie”, 2019, No. 6, pp. 27–28; J. Odziemkowski, *Przygotowanie logistyczne bitwy nad Wisłą*, “Przegląd Geopolityczny”, 2020, Vol. 33, pp. 15–16.

194 *Россия в лице президента Путина...*

195 *Совещание с постоянными членами...*

196 *Россия в лице президента Путина...*



- J. Piłsudski sought to recreate a Polish-Lithuanian state “from sea to sea”.<sup>197</sup>
- During the war with the Bolsheviks, Poles carried out pogroms, created concentration camps for prisoners of war, where they were abused or killed.<sup>198</sup>
- POW camps for Bolshevik soldiers taken prisoner in 1920 are described by Russian propaganda as “concentration camps”. The Poles allegedly held 60,000 men from Mikhail Tukhachevsky’s army in them, which “is impressive even compared to Stalin’s ‘alleged execution of Polish officers at Katyn’”.<sup>199</sup>
- Polish soldiers, with the knowledge of their commander General Władysław Sikorski, murdered Soviet prisoners of war near Mława.<sup>200</sup>
- The internal and external policies of the Second Republic were openly anti-Soviet.<sup>201</sup>
- The Poles, with money from the British, tried to implement the concept of Prometheism, which involves supporting the national movements of minorities living in the USSR.<sup>202</sup>
- The Sanation regime introduced an extreme right-wing authoritarian dictatorship in Poland with strong elements of xenophobia.<sup>203</sup>
- The Second Polish Republic carried out ethnic persecution by oppressing the Ukrainian, Belarusian and Jewish minorities.<sup>204</sup>
- Anti-Semitic sentiment in the Second Polish Republic had grown to the point of demanding the deportation of Jews.<sup>205</sup>

197 C. Рогов, *О военных угрозах...* The essence of Jozef Piłsudski’s federation policy was not expansion to extend the borders of the Polish Republic „from sea to sea”, but instead “to be content with smaller territorial acquisitions [...], and to ward off Russia with states federated with Poland - Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania”. Cz. Brzoza, A.L. Sowa, *Historia Polski 1918-1945...*, p. 29.

198 C. Рогов, *О военных угрозах...*; Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...*

199 *Россия в лице президента Путина...* In the prisoner-of-war camps in the Republic in 1919–1920 there was a large number of Red Army soldiers, which could reach up to 85 thousand. Due to the terrible conditions in the places of confinement, which were overcrowded and afflicted with epidemics of infectious diseases, some of them died. Polish historians estimate their number at 16-17 thousand. In 1921, however, there was an exchange of prisoners of war, with the result that 65 thousand of them returned to Russia. D. Nałęcz, T. Nałęcz, *Stosunki polsko-sowieckie w latach 1917–1918*, [in:] *Białe plamy – czarne plamy. Sprawy trudne w polsko-rosyjskich stosunkach 1918–1920*, eds. A.D. Rotfeld, A.W. Torkunow, Warszawa 2010, pp. 53–55.

200 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...* The message concerns the events that took place near Chorzele. According to Jozef Mackiewicz’s account, Poles executed East Prussian Germans belonging to the Revolutionary Madziar-German Regiment. These, having joined the Red Army, murdered the wounded located in the local Polish military hospital, and then dumped their corpses on a nearby road. Captured by General Władysław Sikorski’s soldiers, they were brought before a field court and sentenced to death by the court. This sentence was a consequence of the crime committed, so it can hardly be considered an example of the murder of prisoners of war. In addition, it should be noted that Medvedev mentions that this situation took place on August 24, 1920, meanwhile, on that day near Chorzele, it was Soviet soldiers from Gaik Bzhishkian’s III Cavalry Corps who killed Polish servicemen who, having no possibility of continuing the fight, decided to lay down their arms. A. Achmatowicz, *Strzałków to nie Katyń, Tuchola – nie Miednoje. Kwestia jeńców sowieckich wojny 1919–1920 w Polsce*, “Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej”, 1995, Vol. 30, pp. 107–108.

201 И. Шишкин, *Освободительный поход...*

202 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...*

203 Ibid. In addition to the desire to introduce strong executive power and the primacy of the state, which are right-wing elements of the Sanation camp’s political program, it should be remembered that there was also a postulate of social solidarity, characteristic of left-wing groups. In addition, until 1930, great influence in the ruling group was held by five-time Prime Minister Kazimierz Bartel, who, together with his circle, advocated a „liberal program”. Standing at the head of the government, he declared, for example, that his cabinet would respect the rights of workers and would take up the fight against unemployment by financing public works from the state budget. It should also not be forgotten that many of the leaders of the „sanation” came from the left-wing Polish Socialist Party. W.T. Kulesza, *Koncepcje ideowo-polityczne Kazimierza Bartla i jego ekipy w latach 1926–1930*, “Przegląd Historyczny”, 1981, Vol. 72, pp. 75–92.

204 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...*; А. Стаценко, *Польская евроинтеграция Украины: попытка №2 – „нацификация”*, <https://ukraina.ru/20230825/1048809917.html> [accessed 17.11.2023].

205 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша.*



- The Soviet press referred to the Polish Republic as a “fascist” state in the 1930s, as there were no major differences between the German SS and its Polish counterpart, the Riflemen’s Association. Indeed, both of these formations were security services designed to support the army and suppress anti-government speech in peacetime.<sup>206</sup>
- Russian propaganda manipulates the words of Winston Churchill, attributing to him the description of the Republic as the “hyena of Europe”.<sup>207</sup> These words are recalled not only in relation to history, but also current politics in order to highlight the alleged hypocrisy and greed of the Polish state, taking advantage of the difficulties of neighboring countries to advance its own interests.<sup>208</sup>
- Thanks to an military alliance with the Third Reich, Poland took part in the partition of Czechoslovakia.<sup>209</sup>
- The Poles, after the occupation of Zaolzie, closed Czech institutions and public organizations, residents of the region had their names polonized and were fined for using their native language. A campaign to expel the population was also launched.<sup>210</sup>
- In 1938, the Poles issued an ultimatum to Lithuania, with the aim of forcing it to restore diplomatic relations and to delete the passage about Vilnius being the state capital from its constitution. Under threat of force, the Lithuanians were forced to accept these demands.<sup>211</sup>
- Poland in the interwar period pursued a colonial policy in the Eastern Borderlands, as demonstrated, for example, by the state of the Polish minority in Western Ukraine, to which “almost the majority of all movable and immovable property” belonged there.<sup>212</sup> Accordingly, the annexation of these areas by the USSR on September 17, 1939 was a liberation for the population

206 О. Кривошапов, “Поляки хвастаются, что превратили локальный конфликт в мировую войну”, <https://regnum.ru/article/3830334> [accessed 16.11.2023]. Members of the Riflemen’s Association focused on raising the level of military training and civic education of young people, but they did not take part in any kind of purges, as members of the SS did, for example, during the Night of the Long Knives (1934). It should also not be forgotten that SS men were an instrument of spreading terror during World War II and committed numerous crimes, including against inmates of concentration and extermination camps. M. Jabłonowski, *Wobec zagrożenia wojną. Wojsko a gospodarka Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1935–1939*, Warszawa 2001, p. 240. J.W. Bendersky, *A Concise History of Nazi Germany*, Lanham–Boulder–New York–Toronto–Plymouth 2007, pp. 135–151.

207 Е. Панина, Почему „гиена Европы” никогда не станет „имперским тигром”, <https://pda.iarex.ru/articles/104268.html> [accessed 15.11.2023]; Косачев: Русофобия вытравляет из человека... Winston Churchill never called Poland the “hyena of Europe”, only stating after its occupation of Zaolzie in 1938, that it had “the appetite of a hyena”. P.J. Buchanan, *Churchill, Hitler, and the Unnecessary War: How Britain Lost Its Empire and the West Lost the World*, New York 2008, p. 258.

208 К. Двинский, “Гиена Европы” действует в привычном стиле - наживаясь на трудностях соседей, <https://pda.iarex.ru/articles/117164.html> [accessed 30.11.2023]; О. Хавич, “Гитлер обещал больше”: Польша как “гиена Европы”, <https://ukraina.ru/20231001/1049780182.html> [accessed 22.11.2023].

209 Совецание с постоянными членами...; Россия в лице президента Путина... The seizure of Zaolzie in 1938 was dictated by Poland’s desire to vindicate the unfavorable 1920 decision of the Council of Ambassadors, which granted the economically attractive Spisz and Orava areas inhabited by a Polish majority to the Czechs. With this, Warsaw by no means sought to support Berlin in its aggressive actions, but to take advantage of the political circumstances following the Munich Conference, as a result of which a part of Czechoslovakia was annexed to the Third Reich. Cz. Brzoza, A.L. Sowa, *Historia Polski 1918–1945...*, p. 487; D. Miszewski, *Zaolzie w stosunkach polsko-czechosłowackich w czasie II wojny światowej*, “Wieki Stare i Nowe”, 2018, Vol. 13, pp. 219–220.

210 О. Хавич, “Гитлер обещал больше”...

211 О. Хавич, Чей Вильнюс? Какие территории Литва получила от Сталина и “советских оккупантов” [accessed 16.11.2023].

212 Кочетков: по версии Польши весь Львов - это украденное у поляков имущество, <https://sputnik.by/20231108/kochetkov-po-versii-polshi-ves-lvov-eto-ukradennoe-u-polyakov-imuschestvo-1080987638.html> [accessed 16.11.2023]; А. Стаценко, Польская евроинтеграция Украины...

there.<sup>213</sup> The aggression is presented by Russian propaganda as a “liberation campaign”, the result of a stubborn struggle waged by the local population against the Polish authorities.<sup>214</sup> The Russians also justified seizing these lands pointing to the lack of resistance from the Polish troops and the flight of the Polish government, treated as tantamount to the collapse of statehood.<sup>215</sup>

- Polish authorities in the interwar period pursued a harsh policy toward the population living in the area of present-day Belarus. This was manifested in the imposition and ruthless enforcement of high taxes, closing Belarusian schools, ethnic discrimination and repression, and persecution of the Orthodox Church.<sup>216</sup>
- Political prisoners held in Bereza Kartuska (1934–1939) were subjected to mistreatment and torture, as a result of which some of them lost their lives.<sup>217</sup>
- Poles, unlike Russians, do not tolerate any national and cultural diversity and seek to assimilate minorities.<sup>218</sup>
- Anti-Semitism in Poland has historically competed with Russophobia, which is far more common today.<sup>219</sup> The former, however, remains a “deep national identifier” of Poles,<sup>220</sup> who live the “centuries-old dream of ruining Russia”.<sup>221</sup>
- The international ambitions of the Second Republic and its claims to dominance in Eastern Europe led to the country’s collapse at the beginning of World War II and its reduction to a bargaining chip in the great powers’ game.<sup>222</sup>
- The Second Republic was a semi-fascist ethnocracy that did not reach the socio-economic level of Western European countries.<sup>223</sup>

213 Г. Василевский, *Белорусские партизаны против маршала Пилсудского*, <https://ukraina.ru/20230923/1049559231.html> [accessed; 15.11.2023]. Some of the population in the areas of the Republic attacked by the USSR in September 1939 initially believed that the Red Army had come to help them. There was an enthusiastic reaction, especially from members of national minorities, who, welcoming the Soviet soldiers, set up triumphal arches, waved red banners, handed them flowers, embraced and kissed them and gave them traditional bread and salt. However, the USSR’s ruthless imposition of its authority and the beginning of repressions in the occupied areas quickly made people realize the real intentions of the “liberators”. As is known from eyewitness accounts, this came as a surprise to all who saw the Soviets as benefactors. The initial joy at the removal of Polish power was replaced by shock and disbelief mixed with despair. The Soviet Union ruthlessly implemented the provisions of the secret protocol to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which assumed the division of Poland and Central and Eastern Europe between it and the Third Reich. The Soviets proceeded very quickly to establish an occupation system. K.R. Jolluck, *Exile & Identity. Polish Women in the Soviet Union During World War II*, Pittsburgh 2002, pp. 4–6; P. Waingertner, *Niemiecka i sowiecka okupacja ziem drugiej Rzeczypospolitej (1939–1941). Refleksje na marginesie dyskusji dotyczących prób porównywania polityki okupantów*, “Studia Rossica Gedanensia”, 2020, No. 7, pp. 190–196.

214 Г. Василевский, *Охота на провокаторов: как подпольщики Западной Белоруссии боролись с польскими карателями*, <https://ukraina.ru/20230928/1049632631.html> [accessed 15.11.2023].

215 *Освободительный поход РККА осенью 1939 года: как это было*, <https://radiosputnik.ru/20230912/vasserman-1895970894.html> [accessed 16.11.2023].

216 *Ibid.*

217 Г. Василевский, *Охота на провокаторов...*

218 А. Агафонов, *Не дать вновь ополячить Белоруссию...*

219 Ю. Глушаков, *Польский национализм...* Т. Стоянов, “Сувальский коридор”. Как польский миф превращается в кошмарную реальность, <https://ukraina.ru/20230905/1049159970.html> [accessed 17.11.2023].

220 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...*

221 М. Шейнкман, *Гены “гены”...*

222 Д. Буневич, *Quo vadis, Polonia?...*

223 *Ibid.*

- The Poles carried out forced deportation of one million Germans living in the Recovered Territories, looting their property and killing many of them.<sup>224</sup>

## POLAND AS AN ALLY OF THE THIRD REICH

Russia is trying to demolish the image of Poland as a victim of World War II by portraying it as an ally of Germany, using the following manipulations:

- Józef Lipski, the ambassador of the Polish Republic to Berlin after A. Hitler came to power told him that J. Piłsudski saw him as a guarantor of the inviolability of Polish borders.<sup>225</sup>
- J. Piłsudski was a habitual fascist who was the first in Europe to conclude a non-aggression pact with A. Hitler, which constituted a *de facto* military alliance. In turn, this agreement was to lead to the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia in 1938. Russian propaganda often refers to it as the “Hitler-Piłsudski” pact.<sup>226</sup>
- The USSR allowed the possibility of intervening to defend Czechoslovakia against the aggressive inclinations of the Third Reich in 1938, but Poland prevented this intervention by refusing to allow the Red Army to march through its territory.<sup>227</sup>
- Poles planned to cooperate with the Germans against the USSR and to divide it with them.<sup>228</sup>
- J. Beck declared to the Third Reich that he would consider joining the Anti-Comintern Pact in exchange for German support for Poland’s intentions to take over the lands of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and gain access to the Black Sea.<sup>229</sup>
- More than 150,000 Poles served in the Wehrmacht, 60,000 of whom were taken prisoner on the Eastern Front. For this reason, they are at least as much to blame as the Germans for the deaths of 3 million Jews, whom they murdered by plundering villages and towns and serving as concentration camp crews.<sup>230</sup>

224 *Россия в лице президента Путина...* Germans displaced from Poland after World War II suffered poor living conditions, but there is no evidence of them being murdered by the Poles.

225 О. Хавич, *Польша между Третьим Рейхом и Великобританией: искусство исчезать с карты Европы*, <https://ukraina.ru/20230825/1048923288.html> [accessed 17.11.2023].

226 The same, *“Гитлер обещал больше”...*; Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...*; *Россия в лице президента Путина...* The Republic signed a declaration of nonviolence with Germany in 1934, an act that bore no signs of a military agreement. This decision was part of the so-called “policy of balance” pursued by Jozef Piłsudski, which entailed maintaining an “equal distance” between Poland and the USSR and the Third Reich, without tying itself to either side in an alliance against the opposing side. M. Koniecko, *Polsko-niemiecki pakt o nieagresji z 1934 r. – geneza i przegląd postanowień*, “Miscellanea Historico-Iuridica”, 2021, Vol. 20, issue 1, pp. 81–95. The Russians obliquely omit that in 1932. The Republic concluded a non-aggression treaty with the USSR.

227 С. Рогов, *О военных угрозах...*

228 О. Хавич, *Польша между Третьим Рейхом и Великобританией...*

229 *Ibid.*

230 *Россия в лице президента Путина...* It should be remembered that some Poles were conscripted into the German army under duress. See R. Kaczmarek, *Polacy w Wehrmachcie*, Kraków 2010, pp. 126–153. Poles were sometimes members of death camp crews. Although this issue should not be relativized, it is worth noting that in addition to collaborators, people for whom this was a means of survival also chose to do so. Much in such situations depended on the individual attitudes of those. The opinion that Poles were jointly responsible for the Holocaust of 3 million Jews has no justification. Even if one takes into account cases of pogroms, murders, or blackmail, the number of their victims does not warrant systemic blaming of Poles for the Holocaust. Besides, a counterbalance to such attitudes can be found in the numerous cases of Poles saving Jews at the risk of their lives, a clear testimony to which is the awarding of more than 7,200 Righteous Among the Nations medals.

- Poles denounced fugitives escaping from the Sobibor death camp during the 1943 revolt to the Germans and murdered them themselves.<sup>231</sup>
- Poland failed to cover up the participation of its citizens in the Holocaust.<sup>232</sup>

## POLISH COMPLEXES AND DREAMS OF RETURNING TO FORMER POWER

Russians portray Poles as a nation gripped by megalomania and a past power complex. These opinions are meant to hurt the image of the Republic on the one hand, and on the other to warn Ukrainians and Belarusians of Poles' alleged expansionist inclinations. Examples of these manipulations include:

- Poles are a nation driven by nationalistic megalomania, fondling past greatness, and dreaming of regional leadership.<sup>233</sup>
- Polish Russophobia is the result of complexes and neuroses related to the partitions of the Commonwealth in the late 18th century.<sup>234</sup>
- Poles, obsessed with rebuilding their lost empire,<sup>235</sup> have not come to terms with the loss of the Eastern Borderlands and are looking for a way to regain them.<sup>236</sup> Polish elites allegedly dream of absorbing or making Ukraine and Belarus dependent on them and thus reviving a "Greater Poland".<sup>237</sup> This is supposed to be achieved through a planned invasion, occupation and annexation in cooperation with Lithuania,<sup>238</sup> under the pretext of defending the borders,<sup>239</sup> possibly as a result of the entry of the Polish national guard or its other internal forces into the area.<sup>240</sup> Above all, Poles will want to claim Lviv, seen by them as a city taken

231 О. Хавич, *Кого не расстреляли украинцы, тех добились поляки. 80 лет победе из Собибора*, <https://ukraina.ru/20231014/1050158784.html> [accessed 16.11.2023].

232 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...*

233 *Ibid.*

234 *Ibid.*

235 Ibid. С. Стремидловский, *"Милитаристский спектакль". Польша готовит армию к распаду НАТО и ЕС*, <https://regnum.ru/article/3831329> [accessed 17.11.2023].

236 М. Рябов, *Путин напомнил слова Сталина о Варшаве в составе России*, <https://www.politnavigator.net/putin-pripomnil-slova-stalina-o-varshave-v-sostave-rossii.html> [accessed 15.11.2023]; А. Агафонов, *Не дать вновь ополочить Белоруссию...; Годовщина трагедии. Как Польша готовит Украине мейст за события на Волыни*, <https://baltnews.com/v-mire/20230711/1026030015/Godovschina-tragedii-Kak-Polsha-gotovit-Ukraine-mest-za-sobytiya-na-Volyni.html> [accessed 15.11.2023].

237 *Поддержка Польшей Украинских неонацистов – не причина, а следствие проблем Варшавы*, <https://iarex.ru/articles/113196.html> [accessed 22.11.2023]; Е. Острякова, *Польша мечтает захватить и Западную Украину, и Западную Белоруссию*, <https://www.politnavigator.net/polsha-mechtaet-zakhvatit-i-zapadnuyu-ukrainu-i-zapadnuyu-belorussiyu.html> [accessed 17.11.2023].

238 А. Казанцев, *Полковник Макгрегор: Польшу удивит, что Путин уже в курсе ее планов по аннексии Львова*, <https://rg.ru/2023/07/14/polkovnik-makgregor-polshu-udivit-cto-putin-uzhe-v-kurse-ih-planov-po-annexsii-lvova.html> [accessed 15.11.2023]; *Полковник Макгрегор рассказал, чем Путин удивит Польшу и Литву*, <https://regnum.ru/news/3819678> [accessed 15.11.2023]; А. Рыбин, *Макгрегор: Польша и Литва могут создать свой анклав на Западной Украине*, <https://rg.ru/2023/08/09/makgregor-polsha-i-litva-mogut-sozdat-svoj-anklav-na-zapadnoj-ukraine.html> [accessed 16.11.2023]; М. Копорушкин, *Полковник Макгрегор: Польша и Литва планируют вторгнуться на Украину*, <https://rg.ru/2023/08/27/polkovnik-makgregor-polsha-i-litva-planiruiut-vtorgnutsia-na-ukrainu.html> [accessed 16.11.2023]; *Шойгу заявил о создании Польшей военного соединения для оккупации Западной Украины*, <https://pda.iarex.ru/news/106218.html> [accessed 16.11.2023].

239 А. Лапин, *Под прикрытием угрозы "Вагнера" Польша хочет оттяпать Восточные Кресы - эксперт*, <https://www.politnavigator.net/pod-prikrityem-ugrozu-vagnera-polsha-khochet-ottyapat-vostochnye-kresy-ehkspert.html> [accessed 15.11.2023].

240 М. Рябов, *Путин напомнил слова...; А. Лапин, Польша поджигает войну и выжидает момент - эксперт*, <https://www.politnavigator.net/polsha-podogrevaet-voynu-i-vyzhidaet-moment-ehkspert.html> [accessed 17.11.2023].

from them after World War II,<sup>241</sup> or all of Western Ukraine,<sup>242</sup> the recovery of which would be a kind of resurrection of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.<sup>243</sup> According to Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, Kiev is even ready to give the Poles a part of its territory.<sup>244</sup> According to Russian “experts”, Warsaw, in preparing for the annexation of the aforementioned territory, is attempting to “take at least partial revenge for 1654” [i.e., the Pereyaslav settlement – note A.G.]. Part of the preparation for this is improving Poland’s image among Ukrainians, which is to be facilitated by giving them support and softening the rhetoric regarding their common history.<sup>245</sup> One can also encounter opinions that, from Warsaw’s point of view, Kiev’s loss of statehood would favor assertions of territorial claims to lands detached from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by the Soviets and incorporated into Ukraine.<sup>246</sup> A factor preventing Poles from colonizing the western areas of Ukraine is fear of Russia.<sup>247</sup>

- The return of Poland’s eastern border to the 1772 borders was a fetish for many generations of Poles, as was access to the Black Sea.<sup>248</sup> According to one opinion, Poland is pursuing such a project today, albeit not through territorial annexation, but by gathering the Baltic states, Belarus and Ukraine around itself and creating a confederation with them.<sup>249</sup>
- After the collapse of the communist system in 1989, Poland, governed by nationalists, guided by sentiment and longing for the power of the First Republic and the military successes of the interwar period, began to return to J. Piłsudski’s concept of recreating a Polish-Lithuanian state from sea to sea.<sup>250</sup> Warsaw has not given up its “retaliatory” intentions by supporting Ukraine, but it is doing so only in order to detach a part of its territory from it in due course.<sup>251</sup>

241 Кочетков: по версии Польши...; В Польше напомнили украинцам чей Львов, <https://ukraina.ru/20231128/1051561622.html> [accessed 30.11.2023]; В Польше выступили с требованием к Украине вернуть Львов, <https://iz.ru/1612413/2023-11-28/v-polshe-vystupili-s-trebovaniem-k-ukraine-vernut-lvov> [accessed 30.11.2023]; М. Копорушкин, Журналист Джексон Хинкл: Украина потеряет выход к Черному морю и Львов, <https://rg.ru/2023/08/21/zurnalist-dzhekson-hinkl-ukraina-poteriaet-vyhod-k-chernomu-moriu-i-lvov.html> [accessed 22.11.2023]; А. Русин, Польша хочет Львов. И это взаимно, <https://www.discred.ru/2023/01/15/polsha-hochet-lvov-i-eto-vzaimno/> [accessed 22.11.2023].

242 Г. Сотников, Захарова: Киев подозревает, что западная часть Украины может утонуть в “дружеских объятиях Польши”, <https://rg.ru/2023/08/01/zaharova-kyev-podozrevaet-cto-zapadnaia-chast-ukrainy-mozhet-utonut-v-druzheskih-obiatiih-polshi.html> [accessed 16.11.2023]; А. Казанцев, Полковник Макгрегор: Польша захватит Западную Украину для выселения беженцев, <https://rg.ru/2023/08/01/polkovnik-makgregor-polsha-zahvatit-zapadniu-ukrainu-dlia-vyseleniia-bezhencev.html> [accessed 16.11.2023]; О. Хавич, “Политика свершившихся фактов”: как Сталин провёл советско-польскую границу, <https://ukraina.ru/20230816/1048677616.html> [accessed 16.11.2023]; Е. Поздняков, Конфедерация Польши и Украины станет серьезным вызовом для России, <https://vz.ru/world/2023/4/6/1206253.html> [accessed: 17.11.2023]; В. Кондратьева, В США заявили о планах Польши вторгнуться на Украину, <https://lenta.ru/news/2023/08/14/vtorzheniye/> [accessed 22.11.2023]; Романов объяснил причины ухудшения отношений между Польшей и Украиной, <https://news.sb.by/articles/romanov-obyasnil-prichiny-ukhudsheniya-otnosheniy-mezhdu-polshey-i-ukrainoy.html> [accessed 22.11.2023]; Д. Медведев, Россия и Польша...

243 Украину предупредили о готовящейся интервенции и Речи Посполитой, <https://pda.iarex.ru/news/113690.html?fbclid=IwAR1Ldvko2Ly-nKpr6gP7gRCndjrv9jkhSRwnLnZcbeiJcpAbh7QJ4yq6lus> [accessed 22.11.2023].

244 Лукашенко порассуждал о будущем Западной Украины и польских амбициях, <https://www.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-porassuzhdal-o-buduschem-zapadnoj-ukrainy-i-polskih-ambitsijah-583078-2023/> [accessed 16.11.2023].

245 Д. Волкова, Польша покусилась...; Д. Медведев, Россия и Польша...

246 Носович: Польшу устроит, если Украина прекратит свое существование, <https://sputnik.by/20231002/nosovich-polshu-ustroit-esli-ukraina-prekratit-svoe-suschestvovanie-1079897417.html> [accessed 22.11.2023].

247 В. Гладков, “Галичане перейдут в третий сорт” - Польша начала колониальный поход на Украину, <https://www.politnavigator.net/galichane-perejdut-v-tretyj-sort-polsha-nachala-kolonialnyj-pokhod-na-ukrainu.html> [accessed 16.11.2023]; *id.*, Только страх превратится в Украину сдерживает Польшу от колонизации Галичины - Иценко, <https://www.politnavigator.net/tolko-strakh-prevratitsya-v-ukrainu-sderzhivaet-polshu-ot-kolonizacii-galichiny-ishhenko.html> [accessed 16.11.2023].

248 Польша стремится расширить своё влияние на Украине, <https://iarex.ru/news/105112.html> [accessed 15.11.2023].

249 К. Курбатов, Богдан Безпалько: “Вазнер” “локально” спасает Белоруссию от Польши, пока Россия выбивает ВСУ из Одессы, <https://ukraina.ru/20230727/1048281385.html> [accessed 15.11.2023].

250 С. Рогов, О военных угрозах...

251 Совецание с постоянными членами...

It is also likely that Poland is planning a military operation against Belarus.<sup>252</sup> Warsaw's part in building the Trilateral initiative is also a manifestation of these ambitions.<sup>253</sup>

- It cannot be ruled out that Poland will want to use the tense situation related to the migration crisis on the EU border with Belarus as a pretext to enter Lithuania and occupy Vilnius, formally to protect the region.<sup>254</sup>
- Every major armed conflict in Europe ends up dividing Poland, as Poles should remember.<sup>255</sup> This trend is due to Warsaw's susceptibility to manipulation by its allies, who ultimately forget its interests.<sup>256</sup> Regardless of the bravery and past battle successes of the Poles, Poland is currently not a state that could decide anything in Europe, and as soon as it begins to set its sights on Germany and Russia, it will end up with another partition. Russian writer and columnist Dmitry Lekuch described dividing Poland as a "national pastime".<sup>257</sup>
- In Belarusian propaganda, one can find information about the "union of Warsaw with Kiev", which in fact would lead to the restoration of the First Republic through the slow incorporation of Ukraine into Poland.<sup>258</sup>
- The unification of Poland and Ukraine could lead to the creation of a "mini version of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth". In such a situation, the Kremlin would have to respond with a rival Russian-Ukrainian project.<sup>259</sup>
- Poles regard the loss of left-bank Ukraine in 1654 as one of the major geopolitical defeats in their history, comparable to the partitions of the late 18th century. Polish elites are currently trying to change the attitude of the Ukrainians toward the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by "masking the bloody crimes of the past", such as portraying the Pereyaslav settlement as a parting of ways of the two states.<sup>260</sup>
- "Megalomania and an obsessive loser complex are a consequence of Poland's departure from Greater Russia".<sup>261</sup>

252 *Ibid.*; Г. Сотников, Нарышкин: Польша изучает возможность разместить войска на западе Украины, <https://rg.ru/2023/07/21/naryshkin-polsha-izuchaet-vozmozhnost-razmestit-vojska-na-zapade-ukrainy.html> [accessed 15.11.2023]; Экс-аналитик ЦРУ Джонсон: Польша из-за поражения Украины планирует напасть на Беларусь, <https://rg.ru/2023/07/23/eks-analitik-cru-dzhonson-polsha-iz-za-porazheniia-ukrainy-namerena-napast-na-belarus.html> [accessed 15.11.2023]; Польша хотела бы заполучить часть земель в Беларуси и на Украине – Путин, <https://sputnik.by/20230721/polsha-khotela-by-zapoluchit-chast-zemel-v-belarusi---putin-1077695654.html> [accessed 15.11.2023].

253 Греция стала членом инициативы "Трёхморье", <https://regnum.ru/news/3831408> [accessed 17.11.2023].

254 Т. Стоянов, "Суваляский коридор"...

255 "Любой конфликт в Европе заканчивается разделом Польши". Богодель о последствиях польской политики, <https://www.belta.by/society/view/ljuboj-konflikt-v-evrope-zakanchivaetsja-razdelom-polshi-bogodel-o-posledstvijah-polskoj-politiki-578741-2023/> [accessed 15.11.2023].

256 Д. Буневич, *Quo vadis, Polonia?*...

257 Л. Смирнова, Военные претензии Польши закончатся её очередным разделом – Лекух, <https://www.politnavigator.net/voennye-pretenzii-polshi-zakonchatsya-ejo-ocherednym-razdelom-lekukh.html> [accessed 16.11.2023].

258 Н. Левчук, Вертолетная площадка белого орла: зачем Польше новое обострение с Беларусью, <https://sputnik.by/20230808/vertoletnaya-ploschadka-belogo-orla-zachem-polshe-novoe-obostrenie-s-belarusyu-1078311893.html> [accessed 16.11.2023].

259 Е. Поздняков, Конфедерация Польши и Украины...

260 Д. Волкова, Польша покусилась...

261 Д. Медведев, Россия и Польша...



- The political immaturity of the Poles is accompanied by an adventurous, obsessive desire to consolidate their dominant position in Eastern Europe.<sup>262</sup>
- Poles generally have a selective approach to history,<sup>263</sup> a result of, among other things, their Russophobia.<sup>264</sup>
- Poles do not learn from their own history, but constantly cultivate the myth of their historical victories.<sup>265</sup>
- Poles have the besieged fortress syndrome, as evidenced by their search for a threat from Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, or Germany.<sup>266</sup>

## CRITICISM OF THE POLICY PURSUED BY THE POLISH STATE

Russians are attempting to portray Poland as an immature country without an elite that can conduct an effective international policy. The manipulated allegations include, for example, the following:

- Poland's ruling class has never been characterized by the ability to rationally analyze the international situation and its own potential.<sup>267</sup>
- Poland has very little experience of functioning independently in the international arena and conducting effective domestic policy.<sup>268</sup>
- "Instead of blaming and insulting their neighbors, Poles should recognize that the main culprits of their historical troubles and today's difficulties are not "cruel Germans", "treacherous Russians", "ungrateful French", "treacherous British and Americans", "godless Eurocrats", but their own incompetent elites, sometimes leading people to tragedy".<sup>269</sup>

## POLISH HISTORY – VARIA

Russians focus their propaganda primarily on the World War II period, attempting to emphasize the role of the USSR in the "liberation" of Europe from Nazism. This narrative is hindered by the

262 Д. Буневич, *Quo vadis, Polonia?*...

263 Россия в лице президента Путина...

264 Косачев: Русофобия вытравляет из человека...

265 В. Гладков, "Поход на старые грабли". – Польша повторяет ошибки столетней давности, <https://www.politnavigator.net/pokhod-na-starye-grabli-polsha-povtoryaet-oshibki-stoletnej-davnosti.html> [accessed 17.11.2023].

266 *Ibid.*

267 Е. Панина, Почему "гигиена Европы"...

268 Д. Буневич, *Quo vadis, Polonia?*...

269 *Ibid.*



Polish vision of history, which emphasizes the consequences of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the crime committed by the Soviets at Katyn. False interpretations tend to belittle Poland and its statehood in European history:

- The struggle for the survival of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth ended with its collapse in the 18th century. In turn, the rebirth of Poland was not the result of national aspirations, but of the decisions of other countries, resulting from specific circumstances.<sup>270</sup>
- French General Maxime Weygand had a significant influence on Poland's victory in the war against the Bolsheviks.<sup>271</sup>
- Belarusian lands, which were a part of the Second Republic, were economically much less developed than the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, where a policy of intensive industrialization and urbanization was pursued. Indeed, not a single large industrial enterprise was established in the area administered by Warsaw between the wars.<sup>272</sup>
- World War II actually began on September 3, 1939, when France and England declared war on Germany. The Poles see their merit in the fact that a local dispute grew into a global conflict.<sup>273</sup>
- The narrative that the Partition of the Second Polish Republic was carried out by the Third Reich and the USSR is pure demagoguery, since the lands of Belarus and Ukraine, seized by the Red Army on September 17, 1939, had *de facto* always been Russian, and the Poles occupied them in 1920, disregarding the fact that their compatriots were a minority there.<sup>274</sup> According to another argument, there was no "Polish colonization" in the Belarusian lands in the period prior to the 1921 Riga Treaty, and therefore these lands should be considered never to have been an integral part of the Polish state.<sup>275</sup>

270 Т. Бордачев, *Искусственные границы Польши...* The Poles, despite the collapse of the state in 1795, preserved a continuity of language and culture that made them a nation. In addition, they organized uprisings against the partitioners, carried out political, diplomatic, socio-economic and cultural activities aimed at regaining independence, and undertook initiatives aimed at strengthening Polishness among their compatriots, which emphatically demonstrates their efforts to "break out into independence". B. Suchodolski, *Dzieje kultury polskiej*, Warszawa 1980, pp. 387–397; P. Wandycz, *Rola powstań w dziejach nowożytnych Polski*, "Kwartalnik Historyczny", 1994, Vol. 101, No. 4, pp. 73–86; H. Samsonowicz, J. Tazbir, T. Łepkowski, T. Nałęcz, *Polska. Losy państwa i narodu do 1939 roku*, Warszawa 2003, p. 342; K. Łastawski, *Historyczne i współczesne czynniki kształtowania polskiej tożsamości narodowej*, "Doctrina. Studia społeczno-polityczne", 2006–2007, No. 3–4, pp. 9–36.

271 Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...* French military advisor Gen. Maxime Weygand indeed made suggestions to J. Piłsudski on how to conduct the war effort, but they were consistently rejected by the Polish command. N. Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star...*, p. 221.

272 Г. Василевский, *Белорусские партизаны...*

273 О. Кривошапов, "Поляки хвастаются, что превратили локальный конфликт в мировую войну"... Given the area and population of the Polish Republic, it is difficult to reduce German aggression on its territory to a local conflict. The actual beginning of a war of a global nature can only be talked about from the moment it was declared on September 3, 1939, by France and Great Britain, on the Third Reich. However, it should be remembered that these countries thus responded to the Allied commitments to Poland attacked by the Germans, and therefore, the attack on the Republic of Poland can be considered the beginning of World War II. In addition, it is an abuse to say that the Poles boast of having unleashed this conflict. A.P. Adamthwaite, *Making of the Second World War*, New York–Abington 2011, pp. 94–95.

274 *Освободительный поход РККА осенью 1939 года...*; А. Стаценко, *Польская евроинтеграция Украины...* The narrative presented omits the fact that the lands seized by the Soviets as a result of the September 17, 1939 aggression were within the borders of Czarist Russia as a result of the Second and Third Partitions of the Republic (1793, 1795), and the reborn Polish state regained them following the war with the Bolsheviks (1919–1921). Thus, during World War II, they were not reattached to the USSR, but were again seized by it.

275 *Маршалюк: белорусские земли...*

- Commanding the Polish Armed Forces in the USSR, General Władysław Anders was in no hurry to fight the Nazis; instead, he counted on the defeat of the Soviets and made plans on how to exploit it.<sup>276</sup>
- Some officers from Anders's Army did not support their commander's reluctant attitude toward the USSR. Along with a part of the army advocating participation in the hostilities on the side of the Soviets, they left its ranks three days before the evacuation to the Middle East.<sup>277</sup>
- The Communist Party of the Russian Federation is demanding the restoration of the "truth" about the Katyn massacre. Its representatives recognize that the narrative of the execution of Polish officers by the NKVD is a duplication of Nazi propaganda, and therefore call for the removal of information about it from school textbooks and the repeal of a 2010 State Duma resolution expressing "deep sympathy for all the victims of unjustified repression". In doing so, they blithely emphasize that the responsibility of the Third Reich for this murder was confirmed by Polish experts and German soldiers, and was further proven during the Nuremberg Trial.<sup>278</sup>
- The *Ria Novosti* agency, citing the testimony of Nazi prisoners of war captured by the Red Army, is trying to prove that Polish officers at Katyn were murdered by the Nazis. To confirm this, it cites the alleged opinions of unnamed historians, according to whom the murder there was a provocation by the secret services of the Third Reich to cause divisions in the Allied camp. The Russians, on this basis, accuse Poland of falsely accusing them of the Katyn genocide.<sup>279</sup>
- According to the official position of the Russian Federation, the current approach to the Katyn massacre "does not meet the principles of objectivity and historicism and should be considered one of the directions of the information-propaganda campaign aimed at blaming the USSR for the unleashing of World War II".<sup>280</sup>
- The Polish nation in the modern sense of the word was formed around 1791 and solidified during the period when it did not have its own state. For the 230 or so years of its existence, Poland was fully sovereign for only about 30 years – its accession to NATO is considered by some Russian publicists as a loss of independence.<sup>281</sup>

276 O. Хавич, *Сталин – создатель Войска Польского...* Gen. Władysław Anders, realizing the political-military importance of his army, did not allow it to be sent to the front before it reached combat readiness and opposed efforts to detach individual divisions from it in order to send them into battle. W. Materski, *Armia Polska w ZSRR 1941–1942*, Warszawa 1992, p. 47; J. Ślusarczyk, *Stosunki polsko-sowieckie 1939–1945*, Warszawa 1993, p. 178.

277 O. Хавич, *Сталин – создатель Войска Польского...*

278 Е. Острякова, *КПРФ требует вернуть правду о "катынском расстреле"*, <https://www.politnavigator.net/kprf-trebuje-vernut-pravdu-o-katynskom-rasstrele.html> [accessed 15.11.2023].

279 Архивы рассекретили признания гитлеровцев о расстреле поляков в Катини, <https://ria.ru/20230622/katyn-1879735507.html> [accessed 16.11.2023]. Many volumes of files on the Katyn massacre are classified as top secret" and indeed are not available to historians. W. Abarinow, *Zbrodnia chroniona całym autorytetem państwa rosyjskiego*, [in:] *Zbrodnia katyńska w oczach współczesnych Rosjan*, ed. M. Tarczyński, Warszawa 2007, pp. 34–35. However, this is not an argument negating the responsibility of the USSR for the Katyn massacre, any more than a single forced confession from a prisoner of war, especially since the highest Russian authorities officially admitted that the murder was carried out by the NKVD. L. Wyszczelski, *Rosyjska "polityka historyczna" wobec Polski. Kwestia "Anty-Katynia"*, "Krakowskie Studia Małopolskie", 2023, No. 3, pp. 82–83.

280 Архивы рассекретили признания гитлеровцев...

281 Д. Буневич, *Quo vadis, Polonia?...*

## RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS THROUGHOUT HISTORY

The Russians refer in their propaganda to Ukraine's ties to their state, primarily emphasizing that it owes the shape of its borders and industrialization to the USSR.

- From the beginning of the Khmelnytsky uprising, the Cossacks sought the patronage of the Moscow State. They eventually surrendered to the Tsar under the Pereyaslav settlement of 1654, which led to the outbreak of the Polish-Moscow war (1654–1667), which ended with the Republic losing left bank Ukraine including Kiev.<sup>282</sup>
- In the mid-19th century, the Ukrainian nation did not yet exist, while the people living in the lands of today's Ukraine referred to themselves as "Ruthenians" or "Malorussians" and felt part of the "Russian world". The former, residing in Eastern Galicia, were staunch Russophiles at the turn of the 20th century.<sup>283</sup>
- The Soviet government created the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, which was the first form of Ukrainian statehood, as its lands had previously been part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.<sup>284</sup>
- Ukraine owes the shape of its borders to J. Stalin, thanks to whom its present territory includes territories belonging to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Hungary before World War II.<sup>285</sup>
- The policies pursued by J. Stalin in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic resulted in its transformation into an industrial country, which even today affects its condition. Therefore, there is no reason to see him as a tyrant who unleashed World War II (as he is currently portrayed by Kiev); instead, Ukrainians should appreciate his contribution to building their statehood.<sup>286</sup>

282 Д. Волкова, *Польша покусилась...*

283 О. Хавич, *"Мы, галицкие русские, принадлежим к великому русскому народу": русины во Львовском университете*, <https://ukraina.ru/20230913/1049304076.html> [accessed 16.11.2023]. Ukrainian identity was formed almost throughout the 19th century. Of great importance for this process was the Romantic era, which became a period of national revival for the local society and had a significant impact on the formation of the modern Ukrainian language. Thus, although in the mid-19th century it is not yet possible to speak of a fully functioning Ukrainian nation, one can note the cultural factors that were conducive to it. W. W. Mokry, *Naród i kwestia ukraińskiej odrębności narodowej w rozumieniu przedstawicieli "ruskiej trójcy"*, "Roczniki Humanistyczne", 1986, Vol. 34, pp. 53–58; M. Kaczmarczyk, *Ukraińskie narracje tożsamościowe. Przykład Iwana Franki i Lesi Ukrainki*, "Teka Komisji Polsko-Ukraińskich Związków Kulturowych", 2018, Vol. 5, No. 13, pp. 81–82. In the territory of Eastern Galicia in the mid-19th century, Russophilia was only one of the national orientations, along with Polonophilia, the Austro-Russianism present among the Ruthenian elite, and the increasingly vocal Ukrainianophilia, particularly prevalent at the end of the century. As Olena Arkusza writes, "over time it became clear that the Russophile orientation was only a stage on the road to a modern Ukrainian identity, while the attempts of some of its ideologues to identify the Pan-Russian space with the Russian one led to a split in Russophile circles and a loss of popularity". O. Arkusza, *Rusini galicyjscy drugiej połowy XIX – początku XX wieku między ukraińskim a wszechruskim wariantem tożsamości narodowej*, "Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Historyczne", 2017, No. 144, p. 298.

284 Т. Плотникова, *"Не было в истории человечества": Путин напомнил историю появления Украины*, <https://www.mk.ru/politics/2023/05/23/ne-bylo-v-istorii-chelovechestva-putin-napomnil-istoriyu-poyavleniya-ukrainy.html> [accessed 16.11.2023].

285 С. Зув, *"Главный враг" Украины. Что Сталин сделал для этой страны 70 лет назад?*, <https://ukraina.ru/20210831/1032159141.html> [accessed 15.11.2023].

286 *Ibid.*

- Accusing the USSR of being responsible for the Great Famine (1932–1933) is an invention of Ukrainian nationalists, as confirmed by the ruling of a local court, which was unable to prove the Soviet government’s evil intentions.<sup>287</sup>
- Following the occupation of the eastern territories of Poland by the USSR and the determination of the course of the border with the Third Reich, elections were held in Western Ukraine and Belarus for people’s assemblies, which then petitioned for their incorporation into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, respectively. The authorities in Moscow treated this as a plebiscite, giving legitimacy to the course of the USSR’s western border.<sup>288</sup>
- Due to Nikita Khrushchev’s weak position in the power structures of the USSR, his handover of Crimea to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (1954) had to be agreed in advance with J. Stalin and approved by the CPSU leadership.<sup>289</sup>
- Ukrainians look for all sorts of historical misdeeds to blame on Russia, while failing to remember the Polish oppression of the interwar period.<sup>290</sup>
- Ukraine is the most successful anti-Russian and Russophobic project of the United States aimed at concentrating all forces opposed to the Kremlin from the area of the former USSR.<sup>291</sup>

## POLISH-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS THROUGHOUT HISTORY AND THEIR MEMORY

The Russians are trying to divide Ukrainians and Poles by referring to the difficult relations between the two nations in the past. On the one hand, they try to remind the former of the policy of oppression carried out by the First and Second Polish Republics in their territory, while on the other hand they emphasize the bestiality and genocidal nature of the Volhynian crime committed by Ukrainians.

- The surrender of the Cossacks to the Tsar resulting in the separation of left-bank Ukraine from the Commonwealth (1654) was a consequence of years of economic, political and religious oppression by the nobility and magnates.<sup>292</sup>

287 *Ibid.* The immediate cause of the Great Famine in Ukraine was Stalin’s policy of forced collectivization and coercive supply of food to the local population. Propaganda attacked the rich peasants - so-called Kulaks - they were deprived of land and livestock in favor of creating kolkhozes and sovkhozes. These actions were not only economically motivated, but also aimed at eradicating national distinctions in the USSR, which were represented by Ukrainian peasants. P. Eberhardt, *Kłęski głodu na Ukrainie w pierwszej połowie XX wieku na podstawie literatury ukraińskiej*, “Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Wschodniej”, 2005, Vol. 40, pp. 272–273. The Ukrainian Court of Appeals on January 13, 2010, found Joseph Stalin guilty of the crime of genocide committed in Ukraine during the Great Famine. *Постанова суду*, Апеляційний Суд Міста Києва, 13 січня 2010 року, <https://holodomormuseum.org.ua/postanova-sudu/> [accessed 16.11.2023].

288 О. Хавич, “Политика свершившихся фактов”...; the same, *Народное собрание Западной Украины: как большевики легализовали результаты Освободительного похода*, <https://ukraina.ru/20231026/1050441319.html> [accessed 22.11.2023].

289 С. Зуев, “Главный враг” Украины...

290 А. Стаценко, *Польская евроинтеграция Украины...*

291 *Украина или Польша: кого выберет белый дом?*, <https://iarex.ru/articles/116496.html> [accessed 22.11.2023].

292 Д. Волкова, *Польша покусилась...*

- The Poles were not going to make concessions to the Cossacks and drowned their successive uprisings in blood and then concluded seemingly compromising settlements with them.<sup>293</sup>
- Petlura's faction betrayed their own national interest by entering into secret treaties with Poland in 1920 and agreeing to cede to it the lands of Galicia and Western Volhynia.<sup>294</sup>
- Polish-Ukrainian relations in the interwar period were exacerbated as a consequence of the terrorist activities of Ukrainian nationalists, which led to retaliatory actions from state authorities.<sup>295</sup>
- Members of the Ukrainian Military Organization in 1921 attempted to assassinate J. Piłsudski and the Governor of Lvov, Kazimierz Grabowski, while in 1924 they attempted to assassinate President Stanisław Wojciechowski.<sup>296</sup> In 1934, in turn, they assassinated Interior Minister, Bronisław Pieracki.<sup>297</sup>
- The Second Polish Republic's policy of discrimination, Polonization and oppression against the Ukrainian population of Volhynia resulted in the area becoming fertile ground for the activities by radical nationalists from Eastern Galicia.<sup>298</sup>
- The Germans had already planned to have Jews and Polish intelligentsia in Western Ukraine exterminated local nationalists at the beginning of World War II, but the signing of the non-aggression treaty with the USSR made these intentions obsolete.<sup>299</sup>
- Ukrainian nationalists carried out massacres against the Polish population in 1943–1947. This process began with the so-called "Bloody Sunday" on July 11, 1943. A characteristic element of the murders carried out at that time was the cruelty of the perpetrators, whose goal was to maximally intimidate the population and force them to flee.<sup>300</sup>
- Ukrainian nationalists carefully prepared the genocide of the Polish population of Volhynia (1943), including an attempt to simulate a spontaneous peasant uprising.<sup>301</sup> The leadership of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists had been planning bloody purges since the

293 *Ibid.*; Д. Медведев, *Россия и Польша...*

294 *Совещание с постоянными членами...*

295 Польша, Украина и их "правильные" враги. Интервью с Алексеем Миллером, <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/polsha-ukraina-i-ih-vragi/> [accessed 22.11.2023]; А. Стаценко, *Польская евроинтеграция Украины...*

296 О. Хавич, *Президент Польши, украинская бомба, еврейские деньги и Гондурас*, <https://ukraina.ru/20230905/1049163780.html> [accessed 17.11.2023].

297 А. Стаценко, *Польская евроинтеграция Украины...*

298 Ю. Борисёнок, *Волынская резня 1943 года. Почему о ней так долго молчали и почему она так неудобна сегодня в Польше и на Украине*, <https://rg.ru/2023/10/25/volynskaia-reznia-1943-goda.html> [accessed 15.11.2023].

299 "Подготовленное преступление": историк Александр Дюков - о причинах и последствиях Волынской резни, <https://russian.rt.com/science/article/1166983-volynskaya-reznia-intervyu/amp> [accessed; 15.11.2023].

300 В. Воронцов, *Кровавое Воскресенье на Волыни: 80 лет со дня резни*, <https://pda.iarex.ru/articles/103741.html> [accessed: 15.11.2023]; "Чёрная книга. Зверства современных бандеровцев - украинских неонацистов 2014-2023", <https://histrf.ru/read/articles/chernaya-kniga-zverstva-sovremennyh-banderovcev-ukrainskih-neonacistov-2014-2023> [accessed 15.11.2023]; В. Володин, *К чему приводит поддержка нацизма*, 11 Jul. 2023, [https://t.me/vv\\_volodin/665](https://t.me/vv_volodin/665) [accessed 15/11/2023]; Мюсли влху, *Сегодня 80-я годовщина "кровавого воскресенья" 11 июля 1943 года*, 11 Jul. 2023, <https://t.me/mysly/21186> [accessed 15 Nov. 2023]; „Подготовленное преступление”...; В. Воронцов, *Три атаки УПА на польский город Бирча*, <https://pda.iarex.ru/articles/115026.html> [accessed 15 Nov. 2023]; О. Герчиков, *Украинский топор для польской шеи. Волынская резня удивила даже гитлеровцев*, [https://aif.ru/society/history/ukrainskiy\\_topor\\_dlya\\_polskoy\\_shei\\_volynskaya\\_reznia\\_udivila\\_dazhe\\_gitlerovcev](https://aif.ru/society/history/ukrainskiy_topor_dlya_polskoy_shei_volynskaya_reznia_udivila_dazhe_gitlerovcev) [accessed: 22.11.2023]; О. Богатеева, *Кровавое воскресенье Волыни забыть нельзя никому*, <https://vechorka.ru/article/krovavoe-voskresene-volyni-zabyt-nelzya-nikomu/> [accessed 22.11.2023].

301 Ю. Борисёнок, *Волынская резня 1943 года...*; Р. Фахрутдинов, *Историк: Польша спросит с Украины за Волынскую резню после поражения ВСУ*, <https://vz.ru/news/2023/7/11/1220639.html> [accessed 15.11.2023].

1930s, creating their ideological underpinnings and attempting to antagonize Ukrainians and Poles.<sup>302</sup>

- The Ukrainian Insurgent Army murdering Polish civilians in 1944 was supported by soldiers from the SS-Galizien Division.<sup>303</sup>
- Russian propaganda emphasizes the genocidal nature of the events in Volhynia.<sup>304</sup>
- After World War II, those who had committed the murders against the Polish population, were covered by an amnesty introduced at the initiative of Nikita Khrushchev to ensure “peace and harmony in Soviet Ukraine”.<sup>305</sup>
- “Peace and order” in Volhynia did not prevail until after the Red Army entered the area.<sup>306</sup>
- After the end of World War II, Ukrainians living within the new Polish borders were resettled in the USSR. Those who avoided this at the time were forcibly relocated to the Recovered Territories during Operation “Vistula” (1947).<sup>307</sup>
- After World War II, the issue of the Volhynian massacre was not raised so as not to shatter the myth of friendship between the nations that were part of the Soviet bloc. In addition, the policy of repatriation caused Poles to be resettled from Ukraine, which gave rise to associations with the aims of S. Bandera.<sup>308</sup>
- Despite the passage of time, the Volhynian slaughter remains an “unhealed wound” for Polish society and invariably evokes great emotions in it. Undoubtedly, one of the reasons for this is that for many families it represents a personal experience, the knowledge of which is passed from generation to generation.<sup>309</sup> It will be difficult to have a full agreement between Poles and Ukrainians until Kiev makes certain gestures,<sup>310</sup> and any disputed issues related to the murder are fully clarified.<sup>311</sup> Currently, the Ukrainian authorities deny that genocide against Poles had been committed.<sup>312</sup>

302 “Подготовленное преступление”...

303 *Ibid.*

304 Польша не забыла про Волынскую резню, но поддерживает нешних националистов, <https://baltnews.com/v-mire/20230712/1026031231/Polsha-ne-zabyla-pro-Volynskuyu-reznyu-no-podderzhivaet-nyneshnikh-natsionalistov.html> [accessed 15.11.2023].

305 Ю. Борисёнок, *Волынская резня 1943 года...*

306 Польша не забыла про Волынскую резню...

307 Польша, Украина и их “правильные” враги. Интервью с Алексеем Миллером, <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/polsha-ukraina-i-ih-vragi/> [accessed 22.11.2023].

308 „Подготовленное преступление”...

309 Польша, Украина и их “правильные” враги...; Ю. Борисёнок, *Волынская резня 1943 года...*; Годовщина трагедии...; Дуда и Зеленский прибыли в Луцк в преддверии 80-летия Волынской резни, <https://regnum.ru/news/3818494> [accessed 16.11.2023]; О. Хавич, *Страх и ненависть на польско-украинской границе*, <https://vz.ru/opinions/2023/11/19/1240077.html> [accessed 22.11.2023].

310 А. Казанцев, *Польша ждет от Украины жестов извинений перед 80-й годовщиной Волынской резни*, <https://rg.ru/2023/07/06/polsha-zhdet-ot-ukrainy-zhestov-izvinenij-pered-80-j-godovshchinoj-volynskoj-rezni.html> [accessed 16.11.2023]; Т. Замакина, *Володин: Варшава предаёт память жертв Волынской трагедии, снабжая Киев оружием*, <https://rg.ru/2023/07/11/volodin-varshava-predaet-pamiat-zhertv-volynskoj-tragedii-snabzhaia-kiiev-oruzhiem.html> [accessed 22.11.2023].

311 Муковозчик – о 80-й годовщине Волынской резни: об этом нужно помнить, <https://news.sb.by/articles/mukovozchik-o-80-y-godovshchine-volynskoy-rezni-ob-etom-nuzhno-pomnit.html> [accessed 15.11.2023]; Кочетков: по версии Польши...

312 А. Гребенников, *Косачев: На Украине отрицают факт геноцида поляков во Вторую мировую*, <https://www.pnp.ru/politics/kosachev-na-ukraine-otricayut-fakt-genocida-polyakov-vo-vtoruyu-mirovuyu.html> [accessed 22.11.2023].



- Polish politicians, by supporting Ukraine in its war with Russia (since 2014/2022), have *de facto* betrayed the memory of the victims of the Volhynian massacre.<sup>313</sup> According to Armen Gasparyan, such behavior bears the hallmarks of a “bipolar disease”, although for Poles it happens to be a political strategy. According to him, after Moscow’s victory in this conflict, Warsaw will inevitably make claims to Kiev on the issue of the 1943 genocide, as well as rebuke the glorification of S. Bandera.<sup>314</sup>
- Ukrainians urged Poles to forget about the Volhynian massacre, taking the position that all divisions should be put aside until the two countries jointly defeat Russia.<sup>315</sup>
- The authorities in Kiev see no reason to settle accounts with the past<sup>316</sup> and instead of recognizing the actions of the Bandera’s supporters as genocide, they elevate them to the rank of heroes, promote their ideology and erecting monuments to them.<sup>317</sup>
- Russia is putting the brakes on any attempts to rehabilitate Bandera’s men and is taking a tough stance against Ukrainian nationalism, but the associated threat can only be effectively eliminated through the complete demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine.<sup>318</sup>

## COOPERATION BETWEEN UKRAINIANS AND GERMANS

Russians emphasize the Ukrainian nationalists’ ties to Germany and portray them as allies of the Third Reich during World War II.

- Ukrainian nationalists in 1917–1919 destroyed their country and then made it a puppet, handing it over first to Germany and then to Poland.<sup>319</sup> The huge Ukrainian state, the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic, in turn, was created by the Bolsheviks.<sup>320</sup>
- The Ukrainian Military Organization cooperated in the 1920s with the German Abwehr, on whose behalf its members served as agents in Poland.<sup>321</sup>

313 Почему необходимо сохранение исторической памяти, <https://sputnik.by/20230914/pochemu-neobkhodimo-sokhranenie-istoricheskoy-pamyati-1079441946.html> [accessed 17.11.2023]; В. Володин, *К чему приводит поддержка нацизма...*; Т. Замахина, *Володин: Варшава предаёт память; Муковозчик - о 80-й годовщине Волынской резни...*; Р. Фахрутдинов, *Историк: Польша спросит с Украины за Волынскую резню...*; Мюсли вслух, *Сегодня 80-я годовщина “кровавого воскресенья”...*; “Подготовленное преступление”...

314 Р. Фахрутдинов, *Историк: Польша спросит с Украины за Волынскую резню...* In the texts of other publicists, the actions of the Polish authorities towards Ukraine are also described as „political schizophrenia”. А. Королева, *Myśl Polska: Украина может стать смертельной угрозой для Польши*, <https://rg.ru/2023/08/03/myl-polska-neobanderovskaia-ukraina-stanet-smertelnoj-ugrozoj-dlia-polshi.html> [accessed 16.11.2023].

315 А. Лапин, *Украина предложила полякам забыть о Волынской резне, чтобы не проиграть России*, <https://www.politnavigator.net/ukraina-predlozila-polyakam-zabyt-o-volynskoj-rezne-htoby-ne-proigrat-rossii.html> [accessed 17.11.2023].

316 “Подготовленное преступление”...

317 В. Володин, *К чему приводит поддержка нацизма...*

318 Мюсли вслух, *Сегодня 80-я годовщина “кровавого воскресенья”...*

319 М. Колеров, *Государственный опыт украинского национализма*, 12 Nov. 2023, [https://t.me/Modest\\_A\\_Kolero/8029](https://t.me/Modest_A_Kolero/8029), [accessed 15.11.2023].

320 The same, *Эксперимент Украины*, 12 Nov. 2023, [https://t.me/Modest\\_A\\_Kolero/8039](https://t.me/Modest_A_Kolero/8039), [accessed 15.11.2023].

321 А. Вершинин, *Дивизия СС “Галиция”: между исторической реальностью и политической конъюнктурой*, <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/diviziya-ss-galitsiya-mezhdu-istoricheskoy-realnostyu-i-politicheskoy-konyunkturoy/> [accessed 16.11.2023].



- In 1938, with the support of the Abwehr, training centers for Ukrainian agents were established in Germany.<sup>322</sup>
- In April 1939, The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists declared that “Ukraine and Germany are natural allies”.<sup>323</sup>
- After the Wehrmacht invaded the USSR, S. Bandera’s supporters announced the creation of an independent Ukrainian state in Lviv. A few days later, however, the German authorities arrested all members of the proclaimed country, as well as their leader, who was staying in Krakow. This situation perfectly illustrates the attitude of A. Hitler towards Ukraine, which was for him only a raw material base useful for further warfare and an area of future German colonization. In turn, the leaders of the Third Reich did not allow any form of self-determination for the Ukrainian people.<sup>324</sup>
- In 1943, the Germans formed the *SS-Galizien* rifle division composed of Ukrainians. After only a few weeks of recruitment, some 80,000 volunteers applied for it, of whom 13,000 were accepted. It defended the approaches to Lviv against the oncoming Red Army in 1944, where it lost about 70% of its soldiers and *de facto* ceased to exist. It was soon reorganized and took part in suppressing uprisings that broke out in German-occupied areas. Its members committed numerous war crimes.<sup>325</sup>

## HISTORY OF UKRAINE – VARIA

Russian propaganda emphasizes that Ukraine is a young country with a distinct problem in defining its own identity.

- The national liberation myth of the Cossacks is difficult to reconcile with historical truth. Indeed, the cities that became part of Ukraine in the 20th century were mercilessly looted by them in the 17th century.<sup>326</sup>
- As a relatively young country, Ukraine is searching for its identity, but it is incomprehensible why it wants to base it on the likes of S. Bandera or R. Shuchevych, who are responsible for the murder of 1.5 million Jews.<sup>327</sup>
- Despite more than 30 years of Ukraine’s independence (1991), the western part of the country still has the 1939 Stalinist administrative and territorial division.<sup>328</sup>

322 *Ibid.*

323 *Ibid.*

324 *Ibid.*

325 *Ibid.*

326 О. Хавич, *Как Богдан Хмельницкий и Тугай-бей Львов ограбили*, <https://ukraina.ru/20231015/1050178221.html> [accessed 17.11.2023].

327 М. Рябов, *Путин припомнил слова Сталина о Варшаве...*

328 О. Хавич, *Народное собрание Западной Украины...*

Russian propaganda also interprets other facts of the past in the key of Kremlin's historical policy. These events indirectly concern the fate of Poles and Ukrainians:

- A parallel can be seen between the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact and the Treaty of Tilsit (1807) signed by Alexander I and Napoleon Bonaparte. Both of these agreements were made in accordance with the *raison d'état* and the interests of the Russian people, and therefore do not constitute a violation of moral norms.<sup>329</sup>
- The joint parade of the Red Army and the Wehrmacht in Brest-Litovsk on September 22, 1939 should be admired rather than condemned, because despite the ideologically-lined mutual dislike, there was no conflict between them.<sup>330</sup>

## APPLICATIONS

- The information present in Russian propaganda, regarding the history of Poland and Ukraine, regardless of its veracity, is intended to harm the image of both countries and to show the actions of the Russian Federation in a positive light, or to portray the country as aggrieved in its relations with Warsaw and Kiev.
- In an effort to weaken Polish-Ukrainian relations, articles emphasizing the historical past between the two countries appear in the Russian media. Texts of this kind often appear on the occasion of certain anniversaries (e.g., the Volhynian massacre) and at moments of growing misunderstandings on the Warsaw-Kiev line (e.g. the grain crisis).
- In Russian propaganda, facts related to Polish-Russian relations throughout history are particularly often manipulated and used for disinformation.
- The propaganda depicting the Kremlin's vision of Polish and Ukrainian history is aimed primarily at the Russian public and citizens of the former USSR.
- Sentences and opinions appearing in Russian online media on the history of Poland and Ukraine coincide with the message coming from the Kremlin – they duplicate, prove or develop V. Putin's position.
- The analyzed texts show that in recent months, rather than denying the basis of Ukraine's statehood, Russian propaganda has been trying to portray its creation as the result of a decision by the USSR.

329 И. Шишкин, *Освободительный поход...*

330 *Ibid.*

- Highlighting the cooperation of Ukrainian nationalists with the Germans during World War II is intended to support the message about “Nazis” ruling Ukraine.
- Accusing Poles of collaborating with the Third Reich and proving their complicity in the Holocaust is an attempt, typical of Russian disinformation, to reverse roles – that is, to assign Poland, a victim of World War II, the role of one of the executioners.
- Russian propaganda contains elements that undermine Poland’s sovereignty by suggesting its dependence on Western powers.

## **PRESCRIPTIONS**

- It is necessary to raise the level of knowledge and historical awareness in society.
- In order to counter Russian disinformation about the history of Poland and Ukraine, it is necessary to inform and sensitize the public of both countries with a message that is in line with the Kremlin’s interests.
- Public campaigns that point out examples of manipulation and promote critical thinking can be a valuable tool in the fight against disinformation.
- The media should take a broader interest in the problem of disinformation in the area of history and inform the public about it.
- It would be worth setting up a Polish-Ukrainian team to monitor Russian disinformation in the area of the history of the two countries, which could include specially appointed experts. Such a group could also be formed through cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian think-tanks dealing with national security.
- Individuals can also join in the fight against disinformation by, for example, commenting on manipulated content and sharing messages on social media that are consistent with historical truth.
- It is necessary to disseminate the results of reliable, source-based research conducted by historians addressing issues that are a field of manipulation for Russian propaganda, for example, by publishing them in foreign languages.
- It is worth publishing historical sources whose content challenges the Russian narrative about the history of Poland and Ukraine.
- Historians should be particularly careful in researching the issues raised by Russian propaganda and presenting their findings in such a way, so as to reflect the historical truth while

not giving credence to the Kremlin's message, such as anti-Semitism in the Second Republic, cases of collaboration, or attitudes toward the Holocaust.

- It would be a valuable initiative to organize a periodic conference on Russian disinformation in the area of history, which would bring together scholars and experts in history, political science, international relations and security.
- It is necessary to undertake cultural initiatives aimed at disseminating history in areas particularly vulnerable to Russian disinformation. This can be achieved, for example, by organizing cultural events, producing feature films and documentaries, or placing monuments, sculptures, or murals in public places that refer to important historical events.
- It is necessary to continue Polish-Ukrainian cooperation and, through dialogue, resolve all contentious issues concerning the historical past dividing the two countries.

## RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA THE MOST COMMON MANIPULATIONS

"Polish-Russian antagonism is closely linked to the Jagiellonian dynasty ascending to the Polish throne."



### MIDDLE AGES

"The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was hostile to the Muscovite State".



"The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth pursued a policy of oppression in Ukraine, following which the Cossacks surrendered to the Tsar."

Russians deny the existence of Ukrainian national consciousness in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. They refer to the population then living in the lands of modern day Ukraine as "Ruthenians" or "Malorusians".

### MODERN AGE



"Poles murdered POWs taken prisoner during the Polish-Bolshevik war".

### 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

"The Second Polish Republic was a state that persecuted the minorities living there."



"Poles invaded Russia in 1920 to seize Ukraine."

"The authorities of the Second Polish Republic pursued a colonial policy in the areas of the Eastern Borderlands."

"The Second Republic was a fascist state, i.e. was ruled by an extreme right-wing authoritarian regime."

### AFTER. 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

"By occupying Polish territory on September 17, 1939 the USSR liberated the Ukrainians and Belarusians living there."



"Ukrainians committed genocide against the Polish population of Volhynia."

"The Second Polish Republic was an ally of the Third Reich."

"Ukraine owes its statehood to the USSR."

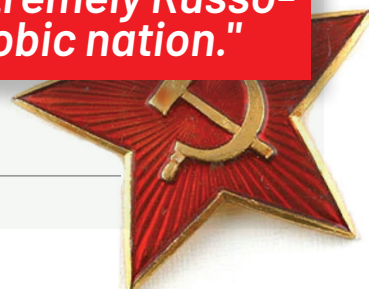
### WWII AND PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF POLAND

"Poles aim to regain the Eastern Borderlands, and therefore plan to seize Western Ukraine"



### CONTEMPORARY TIMES

**"Poles are an extremely Russophobic nation."**





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