

20TH-CENTURY HISTORY OF UKRAINE IN POLISH HISTORY TEXTBOOKS



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1 History textbooks in Polish secondary education system

History teaching in Polish schools has changed profoundly twice in the past two decades. These education reforms took place in 1999 and 2017. The first reform introduced two educational stages: a six-grade school and a three-grade gymnasium. Post-gymnasium education included technical and vocational education and training at a lyceum or a vocational school (*szkoła zawodowa*, *szkoła policealna*) that prepared students for specific career paths.

In 2017, Poland introduced a new educational system. In it, primary school education (*szkoła podstawowa*) lasts eight years. It includes primary school (grades one to three) and stage I secondary school. A primary school has no clear division of subjects. It integrates a focus on providing general basic knowledge in several areas into the teaching. Subjects are introduced in grade IV. After grade VIII, students switch to stage II secondary school (*szkoła ponadpodstawowa*). It includes four-year general lyceums (*licea ogólnokształcące*). The lyceum that students start after grade VIII is a stage in their preparation for university. Lyceums offer intense instruction with high requirements and a focus on specific subjects and areas the student has opted for. As an alternative option, students can choose five-year vocational schools and two- or three-year specialized schools oriented toward gaining an occupation that does not require a university degree. Polish education is in a transition phase as some schools teach according to the old curricula while others use the new ones.

3 Poland has a semi-decentralized education system in which schools choose their own educational paths. The government provides

the framework curriculum and minimum standards, while school administrations decide on plans and curricula in their schools.

History education is cyclical. In the 1999 and 2017 programs, students start learning history in grade IV. In grade IV, students are introduced to the subject, fundamentals, and basic notions. In grades V–VI and V – VIII, history has been taught chronologically: from ancient to modern history under both programs. In the gymnasium and lyceum classes in the 1999 program and the modern lyceums introduced in 2017, history teaching starts with ancient history too, but it is more profound.

From 1999 to 2017, schools and gymnasiums used history textbooks by various authors, titles, and publishers. Fourteen publishers specialized in textbook production during that period. The Ministry of Education would usually approve textbooks to be used in educational facilities. Since Polish history teaching does not tend to divide history into domestic and world history, Poland's history is integrated into the courses taught in periods focused on European history.

Titles point to the focus in some Polish history textbooks, such as *Polska a świat* (Poland and the World), *Świat-Europa-Polska* (The World-Europe-Poland), or *Człowiek i historia* (Human and History) with its focus on the anthropological approach. The textbooks of that period that focused on Polish history coexisted in one educational environment with the world history textbooks. The majority of those textbooks were written from 2000 to 2005. The books published in the 2010s were predominantly reprints of earlier texts.

Most Polish textbooks do not present Ukraine-related episodes of different historical epochs in the context of Ukraine's historical distinctiveness. Ukrainian storylines are integrated into the stream of Polish developments. However, the history of recent periods, such as the 20th century, allows for some agency on the part of Ukraine. At the same time, Ukraine is almost absent from textbooks on world history.

The timeline of historical developments in textbooks includes several periods, from the ancient time to the late 15th century; from the late 15th century to 1815; from 1815 to 1939; and from 1939 to present-day history.

Several themes in Ukraine's history stand out in Polish textbooks from 1997-2007. The list is as follows, in chronological order: the relations of the Polish Piast dynasty with Rus; Bolesław I the Brave's expedition to

Kyiv; Casimir III the Great's takeover of Galicia; the 1569 Union of Lublin; the incorporation of Ukrainian territories into the Kingdom of Poland; the emergence and socio-economic development of the Cossacks, their relations with the powerholders, the first Cossack rebellions; Bohdan Khmelnytsky's war; the 1658 Treaty of Hadiach; the 1848-49 Springtime of the Peoples in Galicia; and Ukrainian and Polish national movements in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Ukraine-related episodes from the history of the 20th century are presented through the following topics: the emergence of the West Ukrainian People's Republic; the 1918-1919 Ukrainian-Polish war; Symon Petliura and Józef Piłsudski and their joint 1919 expedition to Kyiv; the status of national minorities in interwar Poland; the 1943 events in Volhynia; migration policy in the Polish People's Republic; and Operation Vistula.

Textbook authors focus on the developments and phenomena that took place in the Polish territory in different periods, were intertwined with Polish developments, and had a notable impact on them. As a result, some fragments of Ukraine's history (such as the 18th-century Cossack Hetmanate (Hetmanshchyna); the 19th-century Dnieper Ukraine (Naddniprianshchyna); Soviet Ukraine (except for a handful of mentions) and others), were not covered in Polish history textbooks.

Ukraine-related topics are primarily present in the sections of Polish history of the early modern period – more specifically, the Khmelnytsky Uprising, or the mid-17th century National Revolution in the Ukrainian interpretation, or civil war (*wojna domowa*) in its Polish understanding. Polish textbooks usually have an individual chapter dedicated to these events.

The history textbooks that have been introduced after the 2017 reform differ notably from the previous textbook generation. The variety of genres, authors, and publishers is narrower. The time could be too short in order for a more comprehensive range of textbooks to be elaborated or, alternatively, because the industry itself has undergone some centralization. Currently, school textbooks include books for grades IV-VIII and four-year lyceums. Since then, the division of the subject of history into world history and Polish history has been avoided. In grade IV, students are introduced to history's general principles and functions and some essential historical personalities. These textbooks do not present history as events in chronological order. Grade V starts from

ancient history to the Late Middle Ages (late 15th century and the Age of Discovery). Grade VI students learn about the period from Modern History to the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the 1815 Congress of Vienna. Grade VII textbooks run from the early 19th century to the beginning of World War II. Then, the final grade of primary school deals with the period from 1939 to present-day history. The lyceums program encompasses the timeframe from ancient to present-day history.

Since Ukraine emerged as an independent state, it has mostly enjoyed constructive relations with Poland in education. In May 1992, Ukraine and Poland signed the Good Neighbourliness Treaty, which touched upon humanitarian cooperation, among other things. In 1993, the two countries established the **Ukrainian-Polish Textbook Commission** to discuss mutual concerns about interpreting the common past in national textbooks and to elaborate a non-antagonistic vision on controversial topics.

Poland had already had some experience running bilateral commissions. For instance, a Polish-German commission¹ had been in place since 1972, tasked with harmonizing the coverage of some controversial topics in the history of both nations, such as the wars with the Crusaders, the World War II period, the post-war division of the Polish territory, and forced resettlements. A similar commission was co-organized with Belarus.

Since its establishment, the Ukrainian-Polish commission has met for twenty-two sessions held in various places across Poland and Ukraine. The latest meeting took place on October 19, 2021. The list of the discussion topics includes perspectives and approaches to history from the Middle Ages to modern history, particularly the “ownership” of the Kingdom of Galicia-Volhynia; interpretation of Khmelnytsky’s Uprising in the middle of the seventeenth century, the dramatic events of the 20th century: the 1917-1921 revolution and the Polish – Ukrainian war; 1943 in Volhynia; Operation Vistula (deportation of Ukrainians from their native lands in Eastern Poland to the western part of the country in 1947) and others.

Despite difficulties in seeking compromise on particularly controversial issues and challenges in implementing the commission’s decisions, the commission managed to significantly reduce the potential

for conflict between Ukraine-related episodes in Polish school textbooks and Poland-related episodes in Ukrainian texts.

Since 2017, four top textbook publishers specializing in textbook making have produced the lion's share of history textbooks: Operon, Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne (WSiP), Nowa era, and Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe (GWO). The new generation of books is represented predominantly by new authors, and very few of those who published previously are among those publishing now.

This study analyses twenty textbooks devoted to the history of the 20th century, which could be divided into three cohorts: those from recent years approved under the new 2017 program, those published from 2001 to 2011, and some from earlier periods. It provides an opportunity to trace changes in the representation of Ukraine-related topics chronologically, identify similarities and divergencies among them, and detect changes in attention to specific developments, facts, phenomena, and figures of Ukrainian history.

Notably, the ideas behind some texts by the same authors published before and after the 2017 education reform are identical. The only difference is in the timeframe and structure that changed in order to comply with the new program.

2 20th Century History of Ukraine in Polish History Textbooks

When it comes to Ukraine-related topics in contemporary Polish textbooks, several thematic blocks that present developments in Ukraine's history clearly stand out. In chronological terms, this list is similar to the previous generation of textbooks.

Textbooks focus relatively little on the 20th and 21st centuries. However, developments from that time period resonate far more with Polish society and influence Polish-Ukrainian relations in education, politics, and daily life. Similar to earlier periods, Ukraine-related topics are presented in several thematic blocks that are usually linked to conflicts. Beyond conflict-related episodes, Ukraine-related topics are barely present. Among the developments that resonate with Polish society, two conflict episodes are primarily worth noting: the debate on the creation of the Polish Military Memorial in Lviv and the Cmentarz Orłąt Lwowskich (Cemetery of Lwów Eaglets) as part of it. Compromise on this is an illustration of the successful settlement of complex problems from the past. 1943 in Volhynia is a sensitive topic for Ukrainian-Polish efforts to reach compromise as each side continues to insist on its own interpretation. Despite the heated debate in the media, academic and quasi-academic texts, textbooks in both countries have been on the path towards de-escalation regarding it. Textbooks tend to highlight the profound impact of a number of external historical factors that led to the tragic developments. Obviously, the work of Ukrainian and Polish researchers in the Ukrainian-Polish Textbook Commission has contributed positively to achieving consensus on this issue as well as on other controversial aspects of the 20th century history, as, for instance, the status of the Ukrainian minority in interwar Poland or deportations.

Among others, the developments covered in textbooks include the establishment of the West Ukrainian People's Republic, the 1918-1919 Ukrainian-Polish war, the alliance of Petliura and Pilsudsky and their joint expedition to Kyiv in 1920, the status of national minorities in interwar Poland, the partition of Poland in 1939, the year 1943 in Volhynia, migration policy in the Polish People's Republic, Operation Vistula, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of independent states, Ukrainian-Polish relations from 1990 to 2000, the Ukraine-Russia war, and the annexation of Crimea.

The first thematic block on 20th-century Ukraine-related topics in Polish textbooks is controversial in the way it is perceived and presented both in Ukraine and in Poland. It covers the collapse of Austria-Hungary, the emergence of nation-states in its former territory, and the 1918-1919 Polish-Ukrainian armed conflict in Galicia. In order to understand the nature of this conflict, one needs to look deeper into the earlier history of Polish-Ukrainian relations in the region, going back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Textbooks cover this, too. Textbook authors refer to this period and the precursors to war when they write about 1919.

Polish textbooks look at the issue of the Ukrainian national movement in Galicia in the context of rivalry with the Polish movement in the very same region. According to most authors who have written on this issue, this was where the new stage of Polish-Ukrainian antagonism emerged. Both Ukrainians and Poles who resided in that territory achieved a certain level of national identity that affected political agendas, among other things. Both sides saw Galicia as the base for developing their national movements that sought to establish – or restore – statehood.

In some respects, the interpretation of these developments varies between the textbooks from the early 2000s and the later textbooks. Apparently, this is the result of a more professional and considerate approach on the part of the authors of more recent textbooks when compared to their predecessors. In earlier textbooks, statements about the role of the Russian or Habsburg empires in fuelling Ukrainian-Polish tensions occurred more frequently. According to those interpretations, Austrian power holders were presented as the key drivers of the Ukrainian-Polish conflict as they encouraged Ukrainians to defend their national rights and to press the emperor to divide Galicia into Polish and Ukrainian parts.²

At the same time, the idea of Ukrainians and Poles uniting to struggle together is a recurring episode in the history of the Springtime of the Peoples in Galicia. Still, the authors recognize the futility of such unification as the two sides pursued mutually exclusive political agendas. Both Ukrainians and Poles viewed Galicia as their own land which would be expected to host their own statehood (Ukrainian or Polish).

Newer textbooks claim that the Springtime of the Peoples in Galicia contributed to the escalation of the Polish-Ukrainian confrontation as it resulted in a stronger Polish presence in the region: a Polish nobleman was appointed as governor-general of this autonomous region, Polish became the official language of administration, etc. At the same time, the rights of the Ukrainian population in Galicia were overlooked, which, in the long run, laid the foundation for the 1918-1919 war and further conflicts.³

Thus, textbooks present the battle for Lviv in 1918-1919 and the Polish-Ukrainian war as a continuation of the Ukrainian-Polish conflict stemming from the 19th century. Some textbooks recognize the complexity and controversy of the issue, including the role of the Poles in the evolution of the conflict.

The representation of these historical developments fits into the wider debate about the restored Polish state and its borders. Textbooks mention the discussion about the prospects of expanding the Polish state, including eastward, that took place in Polish political circles in the early years of independence. The National Democrats and *Piłsudczyks*, represented by Roman Dmowski and Józef Piłsudski, respectively, embodied two opposite visions of the Polish state.

National Democrats insisted on the complete assimilation of national minorities, including Ukrainians. *Piłsudczyks* saw Poland as a federation of peoples within the borders of the 17th-century Jagiellonian Rzeczpospolita. Piłsudsky believed that Ukrainians had acquired a sufficient level of national awareness to have their proper state. That state within a federal Rzeczpospolita could have served as a reliable shield against Bolshevik Russia. Textbook authors note the potential of that federalist concept, also known as *Intermarium*. The opponents of that vision within the Polish political establishment of the time believed

³ Tomasz Małkowski, *Historia 7. Podręcznik. Szkoła podstawowa*, (Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe, 2020), 53; Anna Łaszkiewicz, Jarosław Kłaczko, Stanisław Roszak, *Wczoraj i dziś. Historia. Klasa 7. Podręcznik dla szkoły podstawowej*, (Warszawa: Nova era, 2020); Janusz Ustrzycki, Mirosław Ustrzycki, *Historia. 7. Podręcznik dla szkoły podstawowej*, (Gdynia: Operon, 2021), 135.

that such a state could have been dangerous for Poland as it might succumb to Russian or German protectorate.⁴

The territory of Galicia was analysed irrespective of this debate, as it was identified as Polish territory. Textbooks highlight the multi-ethnicity of the region, which is home to Poles, Ukrainians, Germans, Jews, and Armenians, and the fact that it was impossible to draw any borders based on the density of particular groups in particular areas. It is noted in textbooks that the Polish population prevailed in cities, especially the big ones such as Lviv and Przemyśl. By contrast, Ukrainians were the majority in the countryside.⁵ In the description of the beginning of the conflict, a number of textbooks point to the role of the Austrian power holders in the way it evolved. Among others, they mention the fact that the Austrians handed over weapons and formal power to the newly established Ukrainian administrative bodies in the capital of Galicia. The local Polish population did not accept this, which eventually led to an armed clash.⁶

Only one analysed textbook covering those developments portrays the 1918–1919 war as a tragedy: people had allegedly lived as neighbours for generations before taking up arms and becoming enemies.⁷ All the others portray the war as defensive and heroic for the Poles. Ukrainians, whose ambition to take Lviv and Galicia under control led to bloodshed, are presented as the initiators of the war.⁸ New textbooks do not offer clear assessments, still blaming Ukrainians for the conflict. Instead, their authors provide facts about the rapid pushing out of Ukrainian troops from Lviv, then over the Zbruch, “the old border of Galicia.”⁹

The image of the popular fight for Lviv and the heroism of its defenders, including children who became known as Lviv orlęta (Lviv eaglets) later, is an integral part of most textbooks. Wojciech Kossak’s famous painting, *Orlęta lwowskie*, illustrates the part about child defenders in textbooks, making it more sentimental.

⁴ Anita Plumińska-Mieloch, Igor Kąkolewski, Krzysztof Kowalewski, *Historia. Podręcznik. Klasa 7. Szkoła podstawowa*, (Warszawa: WSiP, 2017), 210; Stanisław Roszak, Jarosław Kłaczek, *Poznać przeszłość. Wiek XX. Podręcznik do historii dla szkół ponadgimnazjalnych*, (Warszawa: Nowa era, 2012), 71.

⁵ Roszak, Kłaczek, *Poznać przeszłość. Wiek XX. Podręcznik do historii dla szkół ponadgimnazjalnych*, 72.

⁶ Ustrzycki, *Historia. 7. Podręcznik dla szkoły podstawowej*, 135; Łaskiewicz, Kłaczek, Roszak, *Wczoraj i dziś. Historia. Klasa 7. Podręcznik dla szkoły podstawowej*, 225.

⁷ Grzegorz Wojciechowski, *Historia. Podręcznik dla gimnazjum*, (Poznań: 2001), 39.

⁸ Jerzy Kochanowski, *Człowiek i historia. Czasy nowe i najnowsze (XIX i XX wiek). Podręcznik dla liceum ogólnokształcącego*, (Warszawa: 2004), 252.

⁹ Ustrzycki, *Historia. 7. Podręcznik dla szkoły podstawowej*, 135.

Little is known about Ukrainians as the other side of the conflict in textbooks. They are described as rivals to the Poles in taking over the lands of the former empire. Textbooks highlight the opposite perspectives on the Eaglets in Ukrainian and Polish societies as enemies to one side, and heroes and patriots to the other. Textbooks note that this difference in the evaluation continues to divide “our peoples” to this day.¹⁰ Also, they mention the contemporary context, i.e., the restoration of the Eaglets cemetery in Lviv in the independent Ukraine, as a certain marker of the improvement of relations between the two states.

The textbooks in question offer no information about the West Ukrainian People’s Republic, its establishment, its leadership or the details of the conflict’s evolution. A textbook from the 1990s offers some bold statements claiming that the war was against the Ukrainian People’s Republic and Symon Petliura, who sought to annex the land over the Zbruch river, or rhetoric about the heroic efforts of the Polish military to push Petliura over the Zbruch and the exhausting war with the Bolsheviks as the only factor that forced him to agree to peace with Poland.¹¹

Textbooks do not offer much information about the **Ukrainian People’s Republic**. Among other things, students learn that the Ukrainian People’s Republic proclaimed full independence after the Bolshevik Revolution,¹² that it was a “huge reservoir of food and human resources in the time of the revolution and a source of constant flare-ups and instability against its own and foreign governments,” a territory “reigned by chaos.”¹³ Another textbook states that it were the Germans who created the Ukrainian People’s Republic.¹⁴

Textbooks highlight the union of Petliura and Pilsudsky against the Bolsheviks, which was aimed at creating an independent Ukrainian state that Poland needed as a “sanitary border” between itself and Bolshevik Russia. That union was preceded by agreements under which the Polish government would recognize an independent Ukrainian State in exchange for the Ukrainian State dropping its ambitions over Galicia.¹⁵

¹⁰ Małkowski, *Historia 7. Podręcznik. Szkoła podstawowa*, 177.

¹¹ Marian Toporek, *Historia Polski w pigułce*, (Warszawa: Korona, 1998), 230.

¹² Roszak, Kłaczek, *Poznać przeszłość. Wiek XX. Podręcznik do historii dla szkół ponadgimnazjalnych*, 72.

¹³ Małkowski, *Historia 7. Podręcznik. Szkoła podstawowa*, 177.

¹⁴ Jarosław Czuby, Dariusz Stola, *Historia. Podręcznik. Klasa II*, (Warszawa: PWN, 2008), 276.

¹⁵ Łaszkiwicz, Kłaczek, Roszak, *Wczoraj i dziś. Historia. Klasa 7. Podręcznik dla szkoły podstawowej*, 226; Roszak, Kłaczek, *Poznać przeszłość. Wiek XX. Podręcznik do historii dla szkół ponadgimnazjalnych*, 73.

The victorious joint military campaign that led to the takeover of Kyiv soon turned into a defeat. Textbook authors refer to scarce support among the Ukrainian population as one of the reasons for the failure. Exhausted by the years of war, Ukrainians were reluctant to join the army. Moreover, many did not trust the Poles, seeing them as enemies, or Petliura, perceiving him as a traitor who gave Ukrainian territory away to the Poles.¹⁶

Ukraine-related topics are also presented in textbook sections on the **status of ethnic minorities in interwar Poland**. They say that Ukraine was divided into Soviet and Polish parts.¹⁷ Ukrainians are introduced from different perspectives, including economic, ethnic, and political. According to these textbooks, Ukrainians accounted for 5 million, or 14-15% of the Second Polish Republic.¹⁸ Some authors refer to the *tutejszy* (*local*), the resident of Polissia, and the *lemko* as separate ethnic categories when they describe the ethnic composition of Poland.

Textbooks note that the Ukrainian population prevailed in the countryside while Poles and Jews mostly resided in cities. Ukrainian territory was far behind other regions of Poland in terms of their economic development and was in the B territory category. The population was mostly poor and employed in agriculture.¹⁹ Polissia was among the regions considered the most backward and neglected in Europe.²⁰

Polish authors often point out the disproportion between declarations of equality for all ethnic minorities by the Polish authorities and reality, referring to the insufficient number or even absence of Ukrainian schools and cultural hubs.²¹ Some of the unfulfilled promises they point to include the project for a Ukrainian university in Lviv that was never opened. Greek-Catholic religious schools remained the only legal facilities for Ukrainian education.

The National Democrats' policy of full assimilation of Ukrainians, according to textbook authors, contributed to the "fatal" relationship between Ukrainians and Poles.

¹⁶ Roszak, Kłaczek, *Poznać przeszłość. Wiek XX. Podręcznik do historii dla szkół ponadgimnazjalnych*, 73; Plumińska-Mieloch, Kąkolewski, Kowalewski, *Historia. Podręcznik. Klasa 7. Szkoła podstawowa*, 211.

¹⁷ Małkowski, *Historia 7. Podręcznik. Szkoła podstawowa*, 187.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Plumińska-Mieloch, Kąkolewski, Kowalewski, *Historia. Podręcznik. Klasa 7. Szkoła podstawowa*, 226.

²⁰ Czuby, Stola, *Historia. Podręcznik*, 311.

²¹ Kochanowski, *Człowiek i historia. Czasy nowe i najnowsze (XIX i XX wiek)*, 253; Plumińska-Mieloch, Kąkolewski, Kowalewski, *Historia. Podręcznik. Klasa 7. Szkoła podstawowa*, 226.

Textbooks describe the Ukrainian movement in the interwar Second Polish Republic as divided into two factions. One was the moderate parties that were represented in the Sejm and recognized the legitimacy of Polish authorities (Ukrainian National-Democratic Alliance, UNDO) as they pursued national cultural autonomy. The other faction was radical, represented by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), which sought to establish a Ukrainian state. The majority of authors classify its activities as terrorist.

Many textbooks mention Stepan Bandera, the leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists. Its activities in Galicia are even referred to as a “small civil war,” where Polish top officials were killed and civilians on both sides suffered.²²

In other words, according to one author, the leaders of the new Polish state did not take into account the profound changes that had occurred in the awareness of the local population since the latest partition of Rzeczpospolita in their ambition to expand to its former territories. These profound changes had to be taken into consideration.²³ Instead, the authorities responded to the radicalization of Ukrainians with a policy of pacification that included brutal beatings, the destruction of Orthodox churches, and the full polonization of Ukrainians.

The Polish authorities applied the principle of collective responsibility, wherein the whole ethnic group was held accountable for the activities of radical groups.²⁴ In a repressive move, it created a concentration camp in Bereza Kartuska where Ukrainian nationalists, communists, and other people treated as hostile ended up. It was an extrajudicial facility where people were detained upon administrative orders from officials rather than going through trial.²⁵ The hatred of Ukrainians toward Poles and the Polish state was the downside of those measures. This spiral of violence inevitably affected relations between the two nations.²⁶

²² Kochanowski, *Człowiek i historia. Czasy nowe i najnowsze (XIX i XX wiek)*, 256.

²³ Andrzej Leszek, *Polska i świat. Wspólne dziedzictwo. Podręcznik dla III klasy gimnazjum*, (Radom: Polskie Wydaw. Encyklopedyczne, 2001), 147.

²⁴ Łaszkiwicz, Kłaczko, Roszak, Wczoraj i dziś. *Historia. Klasa 7. Podręcznik dla szkoły podstawowej*, 254.

²⁵ Ustrzycki, *Historia. 7. Podręcznik dla szkoły podstawowej*, 173.

²⁶ Łaszkiwicz, Kłaczko, Roszak, Wczoraj i dziś. *Historia. Klasa 7. Podręcznik dla szkoły podstawowej*, 254.

The interwar **Soviet Ukraine** is only mentioned in references to collectivization and the 1932-1933 famine. The famine is interpreted as the result of poor harvest and Soviet policy of seizing all means of survival, including all food from peasants. "Southern regions of the USSR and especially Ukraine"²⁷ are described as the territory where the famine spread. In this case, textbooks acknowledge that the famine affected all of the Soviet Union.

Notably, Polish textbooks do not mention the Ukrainian term Holodomor and use Great famine instead.²⁸ Their assessment of the death toll ranges from several million to six million people. One textbook notes that the parliaments of 26 countries recognized it as a genocide of the Ukrainian people in the early 21st century.²⁹

World War II is an important aspect of the representations of Ukrainians in Polish textbooks. Textbooks present the material on WWII in a number of contexts. One is September 1939, which Polish textbooks interpret as the result of the deal between the Soviet Union and the Third Reich, an undeniable act of aggression, occupation, and annexation of part of the Polish territory. In most textbooks, including those from previous years, Ukrainians are not featured in this episode. It mostly constitutes an account of the act of destruction of Polish statehood, the status of Poles in the occupied eastern territory (*Kresy Wschodnie*), and repressions against Polish citizens afterwards.

The concept of *Polish citizens* usually applies to ethnic Poles. Elections to the councils of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic are interpreted as fully falsified and described as an act aimed at the legalization of the occupation, followed by the allegedly "voluntary" annexation of the Polish territory to the Soviet Union.³⁰

In the textbooks from the 2010s as well as in more recent versions, Ukrainians tend to feature more often. On the one hand, they are presented as victims misled by Soviet propaganda. On the other hand, they are portrayed as accomplices to the Soviet occupation, responsible for various

²⁷Roszak, Kłaczek, *Poznać przeszłość. Wiek XX. Podręcznik do historii dla szkół ponadgimnazjalnych*, 39; Plumińska-Mieloch, Kąkolewski, Kowalewski, *Historia. Podręcznik. Klasa 7. Szkoła podstawowa*, 186.

²⁸Małkowski, *Historia 7. Podręcznik. Szkoła podstawowa*, 166.

²⁹Roszak, Kłaczek, *Poznać przeszłość. Wiek XX. Podręcznik do historii dla szkół ponadgimnazjalnych*, 39.

³⁰Wojciech Kalwat, Piotr Szlanta, *Historia. Podręcznik. Klasa 8. Szkoła podstawowa*, (Warszawa: WSiP, 2018), 49 – 50; Szymon Ciechanowski, Dawid Lasociński, *Historia. 7. Podręcznik dla klasy 8 szkoły podstawowej*, (Kielce: MAC, 2021), 11.

activities ranging from running and voting in elections to proactively acting against Polish citizens.³¹

One textbook author speaks about the hostility of Ukrainians, residents of the annexed territory, towards the Polish state and the Poles. According to it, they often welcomed the Red Army, some collaborated with the communists for ideological or economic reasons, and they did so completely voluntarily, even when facing no threat of repression.³²

After the Soviet-German war began in 1941, Ukrainians, according to some textbooks, viewed the German occupation as an alternative to the Soviet authorities and an opportunity to create their own state. As a result, collaborationism was widespread among Ukrainians, similarly to the Baltic States.³³ Defeats on the frontline forced Germans to organize national military units. Division Galizien was allegedly an equivalent of that in Ukraine.³⁴

In the coverage of the **Holocaust**, some textbooks present Ukrainians not as proactive participants in the killing of Jews, but as people prone to antisemitic sentiments which the Germans encouraged and supported in every possible way.³⁵ By contrast, Poles are portrayed as people who risked their lives by proactively saving Jews and were eventually honored as the Righteous Among the Nations.

Textbooks cover extensively the **tragic events of 1943 in Volhynia** that “cast a shadow over Polish-Ukrainian relations for many years.”³⁶ One textbook notes that the conflicts like that of Volhynia took place between Poles and Belarusians and Poles and Lithuanians during the war, albeit at incomparable scales and with incomparable consequences.³⁷

This topic tends to be discussed in an individual section titled *Zbrodnia Wołyńska* (the Volhynian crime). One Polish historian noted

³¹ Roszak, Kłaczek, *Poznać przeszłość. Wiek XX. Podręcznik do historii dla szkół ponadgimnazjalnych*, 184.

³² Agnieszka Zielińska, Robert Śniegocki, *Wczoraj i dziś. Klasa 8. Podręcznik dla szkoły podstawowej* (Warszawa: Nowa era, 2018), 54.

³³ Zielińska, Śniegocki, *Wczoraj i dziś. Klasa 8. Podręcznik dla szkoły podstawowej*, 78–79; Ciechanowski, Lasociński, *Historia. 7. Podręcznik dla klasy 8 szkoły podstawowej*, 30.

³⁴ Roszak, Kłaczek, *Poznać przeszłość. Wiek XX. Podręcznik do historii dla szkół ponadgimnazjalnych*, 149.

³⁵ Ciechanowski, Lasociński, *Historia. 7. Podręcznik dla klasy 8 szkoły podstawowej*, 32.

³⁶ Kalwat, Szlanta, *Historia. Podręcznik. Klasa 8. Szkoła podstawowa*, 70.

³⁷ Zielińska, Śniegocki, *Wczoraj i dziś. Klasa 8. Podręcznik dla szkoły podstawowej*, 74.

that this topic had been taboo in communist times.³⁸ The emotional element, numerous historiographic and political myths, and a selective approach to sources stand in the way of an appropriate account of this topic.

“My impression is that contemporary textbooks marginalize these events on purpose,” the historian notes. “But we will have to worry about the future of Ukrainian-Polish relations for as long as students do not know about the crimes of OUN-UPA in Volhynia.”

Textbook authors see the negative experience of earlier relations between Ukrainians and Poles as the reason for the conflict, coupled with the fact that Germans were feeding it and Ukrainian nationalists reinforced it in the context of the war. The war and occupation escalated the conflict between the two peoples, which de facto resulted in ethnic cleansing.³⁹

Ukrainian nationalists are defined as the key executors of this cleansing who, as the textbooks point out, sought to create a monoethnic Ukrainian state. In order to accomplish that, they had to remove Poles, Germans, and communists. Since Poles were the weakest opponent, Ukrainians’ violence turned against them.⁴⁰ UPA organized violent actions against Poles, and its members or local Ukrainians, Poles’ one-time neighbours, carried them out. According to textbooks, this was the campaign to destroy the entire Polish population, with a total loss of nearly 70-130 thousand people.⁴¹ Armia Krajowa carried out revenge campaigns that killed nearly 30 thousand Ukrainians, though textbook authors see 7.5 thousand Ukrainian victims as the most probable number. Another textbook mentions 20 thousand Ukrainian victims.⁴² These included both UPA sympathizers, and civilians who were in no way linked to the UPA’s activities. Textbooks condemn revenge campaigns by Polish military formations against the

³⁸ Juško P., “Ludobójstwo ludności polskiej na Wołyniu i w Galicji Wschodniej w opinii historiografii polskiej i ukraińskiej oraz na łamach współczesnych podręczników do nauczania historii. Żary problem,” *Zagłada Polaków na kresach Drugiej Rzeczy Pospolitej. Stosunki polsko-ukraińskie w latach 1939–1945. Materiały pomocnicze do nauczania historii Polski XX wieku*, (Tarnów: Samorządowe Centrum Edukacji, 2008), 109 – 110.

³⁹ Zielińska, Śniegocki, *Wczoraj i dziś. Klasa 8. Podręcznik dla szkoły podstawowej*, 79; Anna Radziwiłł, Wojciech Roszkowski, *Historia 1939-1956. Podręcznik dla szkół średnich*, (Warszawa: PWN, 2002), 94; Zofia Kozłowska, Stanisław Zajac, Irena Unger, Piotr Unger, *Historia. Poznajemy przeszłość. Od 1939 do czasów współczesnych. Podręcznik dla liceum ogólnokształcącego* (Toruń: SOP Oświatowiec, 2007), 94 – 95.

⁴⁰ Tomasz Małkowski, *Historia 8. Podręcznik. Szkoła podstawowa*, (Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe, 2018), 81.

⁴¹ Kalwat, Szlanta, *Historia. Podręcznik. Klasa 8. Szkoła podstawowa*, 69 – 70.

⁴² Kochanowski, *Człowiek i historia. Czasy nowe i najnowsze (XIX i XX wiek)*, 257.

Ukrainian civilian population. Also, they note that such campaigns had the opposite effect, radicalizing Ukrainians even more in their attitudes towards the Polish population and contributing to the popularity of UPA.⁴³ Textbooks mention that there was a noticeable number of Ukrainians who risked their lives hiding Poles and falling victims themselves.⁴⁴

The 1947 **Vistula Operation** and similar deportation campaigns of the period are viewed in the context of Poland's postwar organization and settlement of its borders. According to textbooks, it was partly caused by OUN-UPA activities as the Soviets aimed to remove its social base, as well as by the ambition of the new Polish government to create a monoethnic state by polonizing ethnic minorities or forcibly deporting them.

However, textbooks mention that the forced resettlement, carried out in an extremely brutal manner and resulting in the relocation of 140 thousand Ukrainians deeper into Poland and to its western regions and the deaths of nearly 4 thousand people, turned into a tragedy for generations of innocent families.⁴⁵ Apart from that, the Greek-Catholic Church, the foundation of Ukrainians' spiritual life, was officially abolished. When giving a summary of the forced relocation campaign, one textbook author noted that the total number of "voluntarily" brutally displaced people amounted to 480 thousand. After that, the Ukrainian issue became no longer relevant for the Polish government.⁴⁶ One author refers to the mass displacement campaigns as ethnic cleansing and mentions that such actions by the totalitarian regime had been condemned, also at the state level. Both presidents of Ukraine and Poland condemned it in 2007.⁴⁷

The history of **Ukraine after gaining its independence** is not a priority for Polish textbooks. They mention Ukraine in the context of the Chernobyl disaster, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the emergence of new independent states, some of which became members of the CIS. The 2004 Orange Revolution comes up in some references; textbooks mention rallies of solidarity with the protesters that took place in several cities in Poland.⁴⁸

⁴³ Małkowski, *Historia 8. Podręcznik. Szkoła podstawowa*, 81.

⁴⁴ Kalwat, Szlanta, *Historia. Podręcznik. Klasa 8. Szkoła podstawowa*, 70.

⁴⁵ Ciechanowski, Lasociński, *Historia. 7. Podręcznik dla klasy 8 szkoły podstawowej*, 230; Małkowski, *Historia 8. Podręcznik. Szkoła podstawowa*, 81.

⁴⁶ Kochanowski, *Człowiek i historia. Czasy nowe i najnowsze (XIX i XX wiek)*, 258.

⁴⁷ Małkowski, *Historia 8. Podręcznik. Szkoła podstawowa*, 155.

⁴⁸ Zielińska, Śniegocki, *Wczoraj i dziś. Klasa 8. Podręcznik dla szkoły podstawowej*, 238; Ciechanowski, Lasociński, *Historia. 7. Podręcznik dla klasy 8 szkoły podstawowej*, 230.

Also, textbooks describe Ukraine's recent history linked to the Revolution of Dignity, the Russian annexation of Crimea, and the war in Donbas. But this description is quite brief and narrowed down to some facts. Textbooks mention the war in the east of Ukraine between the Ukrainian army and Russia-backed separatists. This armed conflict is mentioned in the context of sixteen other similar conflicts the world experienced in 2018.⁴⁹ Some textbooks that discuss the period before 2018 do not mention these events at all. Instead, authors mostly focus on the developments in Western Europe and other parts of the world.

Some textbooks that do provide information about the most recent period in Ukrainian history highlight the need to maintain good neighbourly relations between the two states, for Poland to support democratic transformations in Ukraine, and to reach consensus with Ukrainians on the controversial history issues.⁵⁰ In this context, one secondary school textbook provides an episode that illustrates this admirable tolerance: "The dream of Ukrainians has been to build their own state. Because of this, there were arguments and even Polish-Ukrainian wars in history. But in 1991, Poland and the young Ukrainian State decided that they had no territorial claims to each other and agreed to provide for the needs of the Polish minority in Ukraine and the Ukrainian minority in Poland. Thanks to this, our countries enjoy very good relations."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Zielińska, Śniegocki, *Wczoraj i dziś. Klasa 8. Podręcznik dla szkoły podstawowej*, 244 – 245.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 238.

⁵¹ Anna Landau-Czajka, Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, *Poznajemy świat wokół nas. Podręcznik dla klasy szóstej szkoły podstawowej* (Warszawa: WSiP, 2010), 146.

3 Conclusions

20th-century Ukraine is represented in Polish textbooks as lacking agency. Exceptions include a few episodes on the revolution of 1917-1921, such as the account of the establishment of the Ukrainian People's Republic, and about independent Ukraine after 1991. In all other representations of the Ukraine, textbook authors use the concepts of "Ukrainians" and "Ukrainian population" (i.e., just the people, not the country or state).

Textbooks signify Ukrainian territory in the times when it did not have its own statehood or in the period of the Soviet Union as a former part of the Second Polish Republic, including in references to the territory of Western Ukraine in the 1920-40s. The name Ukraine is present in episodes from the Soviet period, but it is present as a geographic category only. Moreover, the 1932-1933 famine and the Chornobyl Disaster are the only events from that period that are mentioned.

Ukrainian history is not treated as a separate narrative in Polish textbooks, which contrasts with the histories of other European countries in the integrated history courses. It is presented as part of Polish history, with few exceptions linked to Ukraine's relatively recent experience as an independent country.

Episodes from Ukrainian history are mentioned in all periods of Polish history, from the early Middle Ages to present-day history, but most frequently in the early modern period.

The Ukrainian history of the 20th century is split into several thematic blocks. Each one focuses on pivotal moments or events of the Polish history.

Textbooks present the Polish-Ukrainian conflict in Galicia in the 19th-20th centuries and in 1918–1919 as the product of earlier clashes inspired

by a third party (Austrian or Russian powerholders). The establishment of the Polish state in that territory is presented as the restoration of historical justice. That period in modern Polish-Ukrainian relations is considered to be one of the most conflict-ridden. However, textbooks narrate that the efforts of both sides have contributed to a compromise that reconciled the conflicts of both nations over historical memory.

The 1920 union of Symon Petliura and Józef Piłsudski to counter the external Bolshevik threat is referred to as a model of positive experience in cooperation in the histories of both nations.

Textbook sections on the interwar period mention the term “Ukrainian nationalism” for the first time to mark the sentiments of anti-Polish political organizations. That term is then often used in fragments about World War II and the post-war period. It is used in a very negative way and is the opposite of the positive term “patriot/patriotism,”⁵² which is only used to describe Polish actors (for example, Lviv eaglets or participants in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising).

Polish citizens of Ukrainian origin during the Second Republic are presented as a category that was discriminated against, with their economic status, political and cultural rights being restricted, and the Polish government is partly blamed for that. At the same time, Ukrainians are portrayed as collaborators of the communist or Nazi regimes in the more troubled periods of Polish statehood. They are then viewed as opponents of Polish statehood.

Textbooks recognize the events of 1943 in Volhynia as the greatest tragedy in Polish-Ukrainian history of the 20th century. It is blamed on the German authorities that benefited from the conflict and Ukrainian nationalists as the key executors of the tragedy. Textbooks admit that the conflict divided the two neighbourly nations for many years and still divides them.

Polish textbooks present the forced resettlement of Ukrainians under the Polish People’s Republic both as a crime of the communist regime and a forced move to counter radicalism and to bring non-German settlers to the newly acquired land in the west of Poland.

Polish textbooks largely represent landmark developments in independent Ukraine, even if fragmentarily. However, for the period since

1991, they pay much more attention to Ukraine than to the history of other neighbouring countries. Ukraine is recognized as Poland's partner, whose priorities remain democracy and a common European future.

Overall, the discourse of conflict prevails in the episodes of Ukraine's 20th century given in Polish textbooks and analysed in this research. Ukrainians appear as political or military opponents, and relations with them are extremely tense. However, textbook authors believe that the history of conflicts is already in the past, and that understanding it and reconciling the historical memories of the Ukrainian and Polish peoples will lay the foundation for good neighbourliness.

The work of the Polish-Ukrainian Textbook Commission, especially on the topics of 20th-century history, is a positive sign in Ukrainian-Polish relations, as the textbook design and mutual representation of their past influenced by its work exhibit more reconciliation. Despite some controversial interpretations of 1943 in Volhynia by Ukrainian and Polish historians and textbook authors, Polish textbooks have managed to avoid confrontation. Mutual work on other topics of the 20th century has been more successful, and textbooks testify to that. Examples include the condemnation of the deportations of the Ukrainian population by the communist authorities of the Polish People's Republic or the failure of the Polish authorities to meet their commitments on ensuring non-discrimination of Ukrainians in interwar Poland, which, in its turn, served as the foundation for further conflicts and clashes.

4 List of analysed textbooks

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