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## **The Escalation of Interethnic Relations in the South-Eastern Province of Poland in the Autumn of 1939 as an Element of the Information-Psychological War of the Stalinist Totalitarian Regime in Modern Ukrainian Discourse**

**Eskalowanie napięć międzyetnicznych na południowo-wschodnim terytorium  
Polski jesienią 1939 roku jako element wojny informacyjno-psychologicznej  
stalinowskiego totalitaryzmu we współczesnym dyskursie ukraińskim**

### **• Abstrakt •**

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza przyczyn, istoty i konsekwencji napięć o charakterze konfliktowo-konfrontacyjnym na linii interakcji ukraińsko-polsko-żydowskich w województwach lwowskim, stanisławowskim i tarnopolskim jesienią 1939 roku, a więc w warunkach mocowania stalinowskiego reżimu totalitarnego. Podjęto próbę scharakteryzowania stopnia i znamion wzajemnej agresji ze strony części nacjonalistycznie i socjalistycznie zorientowanej ludności ukraińskiej i polskiej z terenów zachodniej Ukrainy w kontekście ekspansji agresji niemieckiej przeciwko drugiej Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów. W artykule wskazano ideologiczne i propagandowe mechanizmy przygotowania wejścia Armii Czerwonej do województw

### **• Abstract •**

The purpose of this article is to analyze the causes, nature and consequences of the Ukrainian-Polish-Jewish conflict-confrontational interaction in the Lviv, Stanislav and Ternopil Voivodeships in the autumn of 1939 under the conditions of planting the Stalinist totalitarian regime. It also characterizes the degree and nature of mutual aggressiveness among the part of the active national-political and socially oriented Ukrainian and Polish population of Western Ukraine in the context of the expansion of German aggression against the Second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It indicates the ideological and propaganda principles for the preparation of the Red Army's entry into Lviv, Stanislav and Ternopil Voivodeships

lwowskiego, stanisławowskiego i tarnopolskiego 17 września 1939 roku. Opisano także główne modele stosunku władz radzieckich do różnych społeczności narodowych Galicji Wschodniej jesienią 1939 roku. Ponadto pokazano rozmiar walki zbrojnej między Ukraińcami a Polakami w warunkach upadku państwa polskiego i przygotowania wejścia Armii Czerwonej na Zachodnią Ukrainę, a także konkretne propagandowo-manipulacyjne narzędzia oddziaływania stalinowskiego reżimu totalitarnego na ludność regionu Ukrainy Zachodniej w procesie włączenia tego terytorium do ZSRR. Artykuł wskazuje również konsekwencje dyktatu informacyjno-psychologicznego, niszczylińskiego dla świadomości publicznej i pamięci historycznej ludności ukraińskiej, polskiej i żydowskiej byłych województw lwowskiego, stanisławowskiego i tarnopolskiego z okresu przedwojennej Polski.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Polska; Ukraina Zachodnia; druga wojna światowa; napięcia o charakterze konfliktowo-konfrontacyjnym w interakcjach ukraińsko-polsko-żydowskich

of Poland on September 17, 1939. The main models of the attitude to the Soviet authorities of the various national communities of Eastern Galicia in the autumn of 1939 are described. Furthermore, the size of the armed struggle between Ukrainians and Poles in the conditions of the collapse of the Polish state and the preparation of the Red Army's entry into Western Ukraine are shown, as well as the specific propaganda-manipulative instruments of the influence of Stalin's totalitarian regime on the population of the Western Ukrainian region in the process of its inclusion in the USSR. The paper also indicates the consequences of destructive information-psychological diktat on the public consciousness and historical memory of the Ukrainian, Polish and Jewish population of the former Lviv, Stanislaw and Ternopil Voivodeships of pre-war Poland.

**Keywords:** Poland; Western Ukraine; Second World War; Ukrainian-Polish-Jewish conflict-confrontational interaction

## Introduction

*Topicality and problem statement.* Deployment of the “hybrid” Ukrainian-Russian war in 2014 in general and the capture and detention of part of Ukraine's sovereign territory by the terrorist organizations “Donetsk People's Republic” and “Luhansk People's Republic” requires a corresponding scientific and theoretical synthesis using an interdisciplinary approach on the updated methodological base in the wider historical retrospective and regional coverage. Proceeding from this, the proposed theme appears relevant in the scientific, theoretical and practical dimensions as an important precondition for the objective coverage of the tragic events of the Second World War, taking into account historical lessons of the Ukrainian-Polish conflict-confrontational interaction, the elaboration of the principles of harmonious coexistence of various ethno-political communities in the independent Ukrainian state and the establishment of a constructive Ukrainian-Polish historical dialogue.

*Analysis of previous studies.* Characterizing the historiographic base of this article, we should begin with an assessment of the significant contribution of Ukrainian historians K. Kondratyuk (Kondratiuk, 2011), M. Kucherepa (Kucherepa,

1999, 2007), M. Lytvyn (Lytvyn, Lutskyi, & Naumenko, 1999; Lytvyn & Naumenko, 2010), and others. The interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of institutional and procedural mechanisms of a part of the Western Ukrainian ethnic lands inclusion into Soviet Ukraine at the initial stage of the Second World War, which was initiated by B. Yarosh (Yarosh, 1995, 1999), continues in the works of modern Ukrainian political scientists V. Grinevich (Hrynevych, 2005), O. Dokash (Dokash, 2013, 2016), and the authors of the proposed study (Hulai, 2011, 2013).

*The purpose and objectives of the study.* The purpose of this article is to analyze the causes, nature and consequences of the Ukrainian-Polish-Jewish conflict-confrontational interaction in the Lviv, Stanislav and Ternopil Voivodeships in the autumn of 1939 under the conditions of planting the Stalinist totalitarian regime.

According to the purpose of the study, the following research tasks must be solved:

- to substantiate the new theoretical and methodological principles of the research of the Ukrainian-Polish conflict-confrontational interaction in the south-eastern provinces of the Second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth on the eve of and at the beginning of the Second World War;
- to characterize the degree and nature of mutual aggressiveness among the part of the active national-political and socially oriented Ukrainian and Polish population of Western Ukraine in the context of the expansion of German aggression against the Second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth;
- to indicate the ideological and propaganda principles for the preparation of the Red Army's entry into Lviv, Stanislav and Ternopil Voivodeships of Poland on September 17, 1939;
- to describe the main models of the attitude to the Soviet authorities of the various national communities of Eastern Galicia in the autumn of 1939;
- to show the size of the armed struggle between Ukrainians and Poles in the conditions of the collapse of the Polish state and the preparation of the Red Army's entry into Western Ukraine;
- to show specific propaganda-manipulative instruments of the influence of Stalin's totalitarian regime on the population of the Western Ukrainian region in the process of its inclusion into the USSR;
- to indicate the consequences of destructive information-psychological diktat on the public consciousness and historical memory of the Ukrainian, Polish and Jewish population of the former Lviv, Stanislav and Ternopil Voivodeships of pre-war Poland.

## **Presentation of the Main Material with Full Justification of the Received Scientific Results**

Describing the situation in the south-eastern provinces of the Second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth after signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on August 23, 1939 and the attached secret protocols, we can talk about preparations for deployment (using, with some reservations, modern terminology) of a hybrid war that combines conventional and non-conventional hostilities and the appropriate participants of this war (along with the armed forces, the actors are becoming terrorists, mercenaries, partisans, militias, banditry, special forces of other states, etc.). During the whole hybrid war, information warfare is very important, where the main actors are not only military personnel, but it is also mass communication. In the broader context, it is worthwhile to speak about the information-psychological warfare as a kind of informational and communicative confrontation for the redistribution of roles, places and functions of the subjects of the information space in order to achieve excellence in the political, social, economic, cultural, religious and other spheres.

The main arsenal of such confrontation consists of manipulative and propaganda information and communication influences. Thus, manipulative technologies of information and communication influence – a set of methods, processes and means of information and communication impact, integrated with the goal of latent excitement of another person's intentions that do not coincide with real desires. And propaganda technologies of information and communication influence can be described as a set of methods, processes and means of information and communicative influence, integrated in order to establish in the mass consciousness systematized judgments reflecting the ideological positions of the individual and society as a whole.

Returning to the historical context of the proposed research, we can agree with historian O. Derkach that in the spring of 1939, Hitler's special services began the preparation of anti-Polish performances in Western Ukraine (Derkach, 2011, p. 35), thus simultaneously conducting subversive activities on the territory of a potential enemy and laying the foundations for the possible formation of a puppet Ukrainian state education there. Germany tried to make it impossible to establish any Ukrainian-Polish dialogue, which could ultimately be a significant factor in the normalization of interethnic relations within the Second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and consolidate its society in confronting foreign policy threats. Despite this, the greatest "achievements" in the escalation of interethnic relations in Western Ukraine at the initial stage of the Second World War were obtained

by another totalitarian regime – Stalinism – and the topic of cooperation between certain Ukrainian nationalists with the structures of the Third Reich needs to be considered separately by Ukrainian historians and political scientists, who did not find themselves in the “captivity” of the official discourse of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory in cooperation with the dominant non-state research structure of the respective ideological direction – the Center for the Study of the Liberation Movement.

So, September 1, 1939 for the Poles became the beginning of aggression, a treacherous attack on their homeland. After the German blitzkrieg, the illusory period of hope for the “strength, cohesion, and readiness” of the Polish army, which was based on pre-war military propaganda, has quickly passed in this environment (Holyk, 2010–2011, p. 97).

At the same time, part of the Polish leaders tried to use Slavophile arguments to unite forces to save their state (Naumenko, 2000, p. 403). On September 19, 1939, the Lviv press placed the appeal of the Slavic Defense Committee to unite the efforts of the Poles, Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians against the eternal enemy of the Slavs – the Germans (Holyk, 2009, pp. 269–270).

In the midst of fights for Lviv, rumors of a possible anti-Polish armed action of Ukrainians began to spread. On the proposal of the military and civil authorities on September 14, through the Lviv radio and the Polish newspapers which were still coming out, a statement was made that was signed by Metropolitan bishop A. Sheptytsky and UNDA Chairman V. Mudryy who rejected these rumors as unfounded (Shvahuliak, 1993, p. 240).

The preparation of the USSR for an attack on Poland was accompanied by a powerful propaganda campaign. In unison with the Nazi propaganda, the Soviets also assumed all responsibility for the beginning of the war on Poland, which was formed “in accordance with the plans of the imperialist Triple Entente”, but now “the ruling elite of Poland plunged the working masses of Western Ukraine into a bloody massacre in the name of the imperialist interests of the great Polish capitalists, landowners and settlers” (Lavrov, 1939, p. 3). In early September 1939, numerous newspapers and radio reports provided information on the course of the German-Polish war, about the social and national oppression that the working people suffered from, especially Ukrainians and Belarusians. Although the emphasis was placed on the latter, but, in our opinion, it is impossible to deny the discriminatory nature of the socio-economic and ethno-national policies of the Polish state, in particular regarding Ukrainians.

A well-known Ukrainian political scientist V. Grinevich rightly points out that the national question has always occupied one of the most respected places in the

ideology and propaganda of the warring states: exaltation and glorification of the dominant (titular) nation; certain actions towards small peoples, national minorities, in cultivating their patriotism-nationalism; the attraction of allies from the number of oppressed nations to the party, often with the emphasis on a certain ethnic or historical affinity, belonging to one super-ethnic, and so on; the awakening of hatred for peoples – enemies on ethnic or racial grounds, the formation in the minds of the population of disgust and contempt for their language, culture, way of life, etc. (Hrynevych, 2005, p. 184). Therefore, it is not surprising that on September 17, 1939, in his speech on the radio, the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR V. Molotov pointed out that "The Soviet government cannot also demand indifferent attitude to the fate of the half-hearted Ukrainians and Belarusians who live in Poland, while in Poland they are in the position of disenfranchised nations, and which are now completely abandoned by chance". However, in early September 1939, the Military Council of the Ukrainian Front issued a resolution, which stated, in particular: "In order to positively influence the local population, it is necessary to enter the cities under the International and Ukrainian marches and songs, to organize rallies with speeches of speakers in Ukrainian, to disseminate the Ukrainian press, to campaign and propaganda that we are friends and liberators, in no case do not allow the immoral actions of commanders and fighters" (Hudzenko & Shevchenko, 1949, p. 57). From the column of Soviet newspapers in Ukrainian Soviet historiography, the key thesis of Soviet propaganda passed: "The Polish-gentry state with its terrorist dictatorship of the landlords and capitalists, unable to organize the country's defense, collapsed under the first blows of fascist Germany" (Babii, 1954, p. 54). By joining the Western Ukrainian lands, which were forcibly included in the restored Polish state and were subjected to total discrimination as its backward "southeastern crests", the Soviet authorities hoped to raise an armed uprising here. So, in a flyer letter issued by the commander of the Ukrainian Front, S. Timoshenko, of September 17, 1939, which was scattered from the planes, it was said: "By the arms, the sticks, the forks and the ax, beat the eternal enemies – the Polish lords" (Babii, 1954, pp. 31–32).

In many Galician and Volyn towns and villages, with the Red Army forthcoming, there were built triumphal arches, decorated with flowers and blue-and-yellow flags, but, for example, "when the first Soviet soldiers entered Narayev [town in Berezhany region – V.G.], the situation cleared up. The Ukrainian flag was stripped and replaced by a red flag" (Redlikh, 2002, p. 154). At the same time, cases of self-government or direct criminal offenses by certain parts of the Red Army occupying Western Ukraine took place (Semenenko & Radchenko, 2008, pp. 20–21).

In order to strengthen the propaganda influence, on the first days of the arrival of the Red Army, 800 thousand copies of important in the system of Soviet agitation means were delivered that should “raise the consciousness of the people”, i.e., portraits of leaders of the Communist Party and the Soviet state, numerous leaflets. From the very first days of its activities, the interim administration organized in all regions and counties the publication of newspapers in Ukrainian (Luchakivska, 1999, p. 40). Thus, in Lviv, “Free Ukraine” appeared, in Drohobych – “Bolshevik Truth”, in Lutsk – “Red Flag”, in Rivne – “Free Labor”, and others (Babii, 1954, pp. 75–76). Following the first units of the Red Army to Western Ukraine came theater, music, choir, pop groups, who initially performed concerts before the army audience, and soon switched to the local population.

The arrival of the Red Army was valued by residents of Western Ukraine primarily by ethnicity. In spite of the favorable attitude of the Ukrainian population at first, especially on the background of the Ukrainian course of the new government after two decades of Polish assimilation policy, a certain part, mostly intellectuals, did not conceal the rejection of the new regime (Nakonechnyi, 2004, pp. 20–21).

Some of the remaining political leaders and organizations tried to establish cooperation with the new government (Hrynevych et al., 2004, pp. 172–173). Underlined loyalty to the new government took Galician Muscophiles (Lytvyn et al., 1999, p. 101). In that position, O. Lutsky unquestionably sees a reflection of the established political culture of the Galician, the peculiarities of their mentality. It is about prudence, the ability to compromise, the avoidance of power methods, the ability to adapt to external threats, and so on (Lutskyi, 1999, p. 576).

Among the Poles, the entry of the Red Army into the territory of Western Ukraine gave birth to deep despair, “immeasurable tragedy”, perceiving the accomplished fact “as a terrible dream” (Danylenko & Kokin, 2009, p. 15). Ukrainian historian V. Sergiychuk pays attention to the special cultivation of anti-Polish sentiment by the Soviet regime through cinema, the press, and radio (Serhiichuk, 2003, p. 19). Extremely painful, the Poles perceived the visual manifestations of Soviet propaganda, as from a poster, where a Soviet soldier pierced a Polish eagle with a bayonet (Hryciuk, 2000, p. 42). For the Polish population, the displacement of ethnic myths and symbols, in particular the cult of Pilsudski, by somewhat “Ukrainianized” cult of Lenin and Stalin was twice humiliating. For example, the fact that some Polish professors of the Lviv State University named after I. Franko were forced to take part in the Soviet demonstration and carried Ukrainian-language banners in honor of the “leader of the peoples”, they perceived this as a social and national abuse (Holyk, 2010–2011, pp. 102–103).

The attitude of the Jewish population of Western Ukraine to Soviet power was ambiguous and depended on political sympathies and property status. The Jewish elite of Lviv, among which Polish orientations were traditionally strong, was rather restrained in Soviet power. This position contrasts to a certain extent with the strongly favored attitude of the less prosperous and educated representatives of the Jewish population. It is obvious that the reason for the spread of pro-Soviet sentiment among Jews in Western Ukraine was not only a prominent representation among them of the Communists, but also a pragmatic calculation that the Red Army would not yield to the occupied territory in favor of the German Wehrmacht.

In support of its desire to include Western Ukraine in the Ukrainian SSR, in its Declaration, the People's Assembly of Western Ukraine, in particular, emphasized: "The Ukrainian people in the former Polish state were doomed to extinction. Oppression, destruction and robbery were their destiny. The Polish lords did everything to make Ukrainian population more Polish and less Ukrainian, to ban even the very word 'Ukrainian', replacing it with the words "bydło" and "khlop" (Tsentralnyi..., 1939, p. 3).

According to the legitimate remarks of Lviv historians, the Bolshevik propaganda sought to gain the trust of the Galician and Volynian by slogans of reunification of Ukrainian lands. Therefore, many Ukrainians, fascinated by the cathedral's impulse, saw in the Soviet regime the savior of a disadvantaged Ukrainian nation. Disoriented by propaganda, they did not have a clear understanding of the situation for some time and perceived the desirable for real. Part of Ukrainians managed to get involved in political performances, instructing them to speak at numerous rallies and meetings, to sign petitions on behalf of the people in support of Soviet power. The Stalinist regime also managed to draw much of the Polish and Jewish intellectuals, both local and refugees, into the orbit of its influence (Lytvyn et al., 1999, pp. 103–104).

In addition, Soviet propaganda actively used the concept of "great Ukrainian people", which could not find support in the hearts of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians in Galicia and Volhynia. In particular, in the editorial of "Pravda" on September 19, 1939, the exact words were used about the defense of "our unified national brothers"; the publication ended with a call: "Let's live a great free Ukrainian nation". The official body of the Ukrainian Communist Party, newspaper "The Communist", on November 15, 1939, first used this statement in the text of a letter from the Supreme Soviet Republic to Stalin: "Through centuries dismembered, separated by artificial boundaries for centuries, the great Ukrainian people have forever been united in a single Ukrainian republic" (Khitrova, 2011, pp. 99–101).



There are undeniable facts that apart from the erection of ethnic accounts there were no separate representatives of the Soviet regime (Redlikh, 2002, p. 154). The “reunification” of Western lands with Soviet Ukraine in 1939, accompanied by attempts to sovietize and communize the region, the beginning of mass repressions of the Stalinist regime against dissenters, certainly not contributed to the overcoming of mental differences, because communist-Soviet rejected them as “unfamiliar” (Svitlenko, 2010, pp. 24–25). In this connection, another historian – Y. Soroka – considers it appropriate to emphasize that although the accession of Western Ukrainian lands to the Ukrainian SSR objectively corresponded to the idea of national unity of the Ukrainian people, but from the beginning was based on violence, ignorance, the destruction of ancient customs and traditions, mentality and morals of a large part of the locals (Soroka, 2009, p. 15).

## **Conclusions and Perspectives of Further Research**

Thus, on the basis of the study, it can be reasonably argued that the escalation of Ukrainian-Polish interethnic conflict interaction was determined by a complex of internal and external factors.

The determining factor of the radical change in the political structure of the Western Ukrainian region was an external factor – the division of spheres of influence between the USSR and Germany in order to realize the plans of the proletarian revolution and the world domination of the Aryan nation, accordingly. The beginning of the Second World War on September 1, 1939 directly affected the West Ukrainian lands, which became the scene of the competition of two totalitarian regimes – Nazi Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union.

The arsenal of methods of information and psychological influence of the Stalinist totalitarian regime in the occupied southeastern voivodships of pre-war Poland included various methods and means of pressure on the individual and mass consciousness of the Ukrainian, Polish and Jewish populations.

The tragic consequences of a mutually armed confrontation in the conditions of exacerbation of the expansionist “appetites” of the leaders of Germany and the Soviet Union, may be felt even to this day, but, in our opinion, the position of complete non-recognition of the mistakes of its own ethno-political community and the aggressive rhetoric of accusations of betrayal and cooperation, whether with the “red-brown” or “red” occupiers by the other side, is hopeless, so it is relevant to develop proposals for dialogue on the basis of reciprocity.

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