

Magda Arsenicz

# The Battle of Lviv in November 1918 as “the memory place”<sup>1</sup> for the Polish and the Ukrainian people

## Introduction

World War I was almost over in November 1918. Among the many consequences of this conflict was the dissolution of the Russian Empire as well as the Habsburg Monarchy. For the Polish and the Ukrainian people living in Eastern Galicia, it was the key moment for achieving national independence and establishing new nation states – Poland and Ukraine. But their territorial aspirations were in one area mutually exclusive, and it led to an armed conflict. The borders of the newly created Poland and Ukraine were formed in fire.

The best example of the conflict and its effects on Polish and Ukrainian societies is the battle of Lviv<sup>2</sup> in November 1918. In this paper, I’m going to discuss how the memory of that event has changed since 1918. It had very different meanings in interwar Poland, during Communism, and finally in the independent Ukraine and Poland after 1989/1991.

The battle of Lviv (called in the Polish historiography *Defense of Lwów* and in the Ukrainian *November Uprising*) was the

<sup>1</sup> In that article, I use the expression „memory place” according to the most common definition by Pierre Nora, connected with the place in common identity/collective memory, not just like a place in some territory.

<sup>2</sup> The name of the city was changing during the history, in Polish language it is Lwów, L’viv – Ukrainian, Lemberg – German, Leopoliis – Latin, Lvov – Russian. In this article, I’m using the most common present English version – Lviv.

result of growing tensions between Poles and Ukrainians at the end of World War I. But the conflict was rooted in 19<sup>th</sup> century history. The process of conflictual nation-buildings started in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century during the Spring of Nations (1848). It was then when Ruthenians (Ukrainians) demanded the division of the Austrian province of the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria into two parts (the Western for Polish and the Eastern for Ukrainians) for the first time. From 1867 when Galicia gained an enhanced autonomy among the Austrian provinces, Polish and Ukrainian cultures enjoyed relative peace that fostered their intensive development. In addition to that, national movements started the process of building the modern national identity in this region. Despite the Ukrainians' loyalty to imperial government during the Spring of Nations, the Poles gained political leverage on Vienna and power in the province. In this period (1867-1914), the main political conflicts between Poles and Ukrainians in Eastern Galicia were their rivalry in the education system (the question of the official language and the language of instruction), the unsuccessful attempts to create a Ukrainian university in Lviv, and the problems of the electoral system that heavily favoured the traditional Polish nobility. The most important debates in the local parliament (*Sejm Krajowy*) dealt with these issues. The most dramatic event of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict in Galicia was the assassination of Andrzej Potocki – the Governor of the province in 1908, by Ukrainian student Myroslav Sichynsky.<sup>3</sup> That, in turn, prepared two nations to their fight for independence. The Polish-Ukrainian conflict and the rule over Eastern Galicia was still unresolved until the end of World War I.

<sup>3</sup> Read more about Polish-Ukrainian relations in Galicia, for instance: P. R. Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine. The Land and Its Peoples*. Toronto 2010, p. 467-488; O. Subtelny, *Ukraine. A History*, Toronto 2000, p. 307-335, J. Hrycak, *Historia Ukrainy 1772-1999. Narodziny nowoczesnego narodu*, Lublin 2000, p. 63-100, Cz. Partacz, *Od Badeniego do Potockiego. Stosunki polsko-ukraińskie w Galicji w latach 1888-1908*, Toruń 1997, p. 13-248, A. Świątek, *Gethe Rutheni, nazione Poloni. Z dziejów Rusinów narodowości polskiej w Galicji*, Kraków 2014, p. 33-442

Lviv played a symbolic role in Polish national identity because it had been part of Poland for almost five hundred years. Moreover, for Polish people, it embodied heroic and crucial moments of national history: the city was a border fortress against Cossacks, Tatars and Turks, defending the homeland in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, during the wars so vividly portrayed in Henryk Sienkiewicz's popular historical novels.<sup>4</sup> The Ukrainian (Ruthenian) national movement created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was based on the idea of continuity with the Rus' state which existed in this area in medieval times. The city itself was founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by one of the successor rulers of the Rus', Daniel Romanovych. Ukrainian history, especially the one promoted by intellectuals in Eastern Galicia like the great historian Mychailo Hrushevskyj (working in Lviv since 1894), built its own historical discourse mostly on the basis of this medieval history, and mobilized anti-Polish arguments, characterizing Poles as the occupants and Ukrainians as the victims of violence from Polish nobility<sup>5</sup>. It is needless to say in the light of these opposing perceptions of history that with the end of World War I, historical memories of Poles and Ukrainians living on the same territory were completely different, and Lviv meant something else for the two nations.<sup>6</sup> It was also the ideological reasons of the Polish-Ukrainian war in 1918-1919.

<sup>4</sup> A. V. Wendland, *Semper fidelis: Lwów jako narodowy mīt Polaków i Ukraїnców (1867-1939)*, [w:] *Lwów. Miasto – Społeczeństwo – Kultura. Studia z dziejów Lwowa*, t. IV, red. K. Karolczak, Kraków 2002, s. 263-273; W. A. Serczyk, *Semper fidelis. Dzieje legendy*, „Niepodległość i Pamięć”, R. XIII, nr 3 (24), Warszawa 2006, s. 11-37; Я. Грицак, *Львів – місто у центрі Європи*, [w:] *Краків і Львів у європейській цивілізації. Матеріали міжнародної конференції, організованої 15-16 листопада 2002 р.*, Краків 2004

<sup>5</sup> Ł. Adamski, *Nacjonalista postępowy. Mychajło Hruszewski i jego poglądy na Polskę i Polaków*, Warszawa 2011, p. 74-176.

<sup>6</sup> A. V. Wendland, *Semper fidelis: Lwów jako narodowy mīt Polaków i Ukraїnców (1867-1939)* [in:] *Lwów - Miasto Społeczeństwo-Kultura. Studia z dziejów Lwowa*, vol. 4, ed. Kazimierz Karolczak, Krakow 2002, p. 263-273, W. A. Serczyk, *Semper fidelis. Dzieje legendy*, „Niepodległość i Pamięć”, Vol. XIII, No. 3(24), Warszawa 2006, p. 11-37, Y. Hrytsak, *Lviv – mīsto u centri Evropy*, [in:] *Krakiv i Lviv u evropejskij cyvylizacii. Materialy miżnarodnoi konferenciji organizovanoi 15-16 lystopada 2002*, Krakiv 2004, p. 11-32., R. J. Czarnowski, *Lwów. Legenda zawsze wierna*, Łódź 2010, p. 11-448.

Lviv was a city with a large number of Poles who did not want to be part of the newly-created Ukrainian state. According to official statistics, before World War I, 51% of Lviv inhabitants declared Roman Catholic religion, 19% Greek Catholic, and 27% were Jewish.<sup>7</sup> However, only 11% of the citizens declared using the Ukrainian language on a daily basis, while 86% declared the Polish language.<sup>8</sup> The number of Poles was certainly much higher than the number of Ukrainians living in Lviv. But the situation was complicated because in Eastern Galicia, especially in the villages, Ukrainians made up 70% of the population.<sup>9</sup> In the cities, the majority was Polish and Jewish; in the villages – Ukrainian. Thus, it was hard to draw the right boundary that could demarcate national territories in a way that was able to satisfy both sides.

During World War I, Poles and Ukrainians were fighting for national independence on many fronts. Poles were trying to rebuild the country which was divided by Russia, Austria and Prussia in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; most of the Polish lands were occupied by Russia, and became areas of two national uprisings, in 1831 and 1863. Ukrainians tried to create a country united from lands under Russian control (Central and Eastern Ukraine) and Austrian rule (Eastern Galicia). Most of the Ukrainian territories were under Russian control. They became the scenes of the revolution in 1917, too. That led to the first proclamation of Ukrainian independence in 1917 in Kiev, and raised hopes to unite Eastern Ukrainian lands with Eastern Galicia. As a result, the Polish-Ukrainian war for Eastern Galicia seemed unavoidable.<sup>10</sup>

At the end of October 1918, Galician Ukrainian political circles announced the creation of an independent West Ukrainian State in Eastern Galicia led by Yevhen Petrushevych.

<sup>7</sup> *Ludność nowoczesnego Lwowa w latach 1857-1938*, K. Wnęk, L. Zyblikiewicz, E. Callahan, Kraków 2006, p. 75.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 85.

<sup>9</sup> M. Klimecki, *Polsko-ukraińska wojna .....*, p. 14-20.

<sup>10</sup> Read more, for instance: A. Chojnowski., J. J. Bruski, *Ukraina*, Warszawa 2006, p. 22-49, O. Subtelny, *Ukraine. A History*, Toronto 2000, p. 339-379.

At the same time, many Polish cities successfully announced their accession to the newly formed Poland, for instance Cracow on 31 October. In Lviv, such an action was planned by Poles for the beginning of November; however, Ukrainians managed to take control over the city as soon as during the night from 31 October to 1 November, 1918.<sup>11</sup>

The Battle of Lviv took place from 1 to 22 November, 1918. On the one side, there were Polish civil volunteers, including a lot of young students, often without proper weapons which they had to collect during those struggles; on the other one, there were Ukrainian troops called Sichovy Striltsy who up to that time had been part of the Austrian army. Most of the Ukrainian soldiers came from Eastern Galician villages and they did not know the city very well, but their training, experience and professional weaponry inherited from the Austro-Hungarian army strengthened their position. It was related to the support from the last Austrian General-Governor Karl Huyn who transferred the rule to Volodymyr Decykievych, a Ukrainian politician on 1 November 1918. At the same time, there were only a few Polish military groups in Lviv. The majority of Poles was still on the fronts of World War I. It was the reason why Polish civilians were participating in fighting on such a scale. But it was an enthusiastic and youthful congregation of fighters. According to Polish statistics, among all Polish volunteers (6022 people in total), 67% were younger than 25 years.<sup>12</sup> After three weeks of fighting, the situation has changed. The new Polish state sent regular troops as well as volunteers from Cracow and Przemyśl, and it led to the final Polish victory on November 22. The Ukrainian army withdrew, first to Stanisławów and after

<sup>11</sup> M. Klimecki, *Polsko-ukraińska wojna o Lwów i Galicję Wschodnią 1918-1919*, Warszawa 2000, p. 47-66.

<sup>12</sup> *Obrona Lwowa w 1-22 listopada 1918 roku, t. 3, Organizacja i stopadowej obrony Lwowa, Ewidencja uczestników walk, lista strat*, Warszawa 1994, *Źródła do dziejów walk o Lwów i województwa południowo – wschodnie 1918-1920*, p. 13.

that to the line of the river Zbruch in July 1919, which became the border of Poland in the interwar period.<sup>13</sup>

## 2. The Polish legend of the battle and its conflicting memory with the Ukrainian one in interwar Poland (1918-1939)

During the November fighting, a famous legend was born: the old Polish city of Lviv was saved by children. The young Polish volunteers were called “Lwów Eaglets” – their name given after the Polish national emblem. What is more, the legend was presented as a kind of continuation of the noble history of the city. In poetry and popular songs written during the battle, there is a clear continuation of the complex idea of “Polish Eastern Borderlands” which included the people in these regions have always defended the country from the “barbarians” (Cossacks, Turks, Tatars and others). We can see these examples in many articles and texts published in “Pobudka”, the newspaper which was an official instrument of the Polish General Command of Defence of Lviv.<sup>14</sup> For instance, at the beginning of the battle, “Pobudka” informed, “Feral barbarians broke into Lviv”<sup>15</sup> or “The history repeats. Bloody times of drunk gangs of *haidamaks* revelling around steppe have come again”.<sup>16</sup> But the Poles were not alone in using historical references for the purpose of propaganda. The Ukrainian side announced in many proclamations the “return to the old Ruthenian city after 578 years of occupation”.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> M. Klimecki, *Polsko-ukraińska wojna...*, p. 67-145.

<sup>14</sup> *Obrona Lwowa 1-22 listopada 1918 roku vol. 3. Organizacja listopadowej obrony Lwowa, Ewidencja uczestników walk, lista strat*, Warszawa 1994 p. 336.; „Pobudka”, No. 1-17, November 1918.

<sup>15</sup> “Do Lwowa wdarł się barbarzyńca dziki(...)”, „Pobudka”, No. 3, 08 Nov.1918, p. 2;

<sup>16</sup> „Historia się powtarza. Wracają krwawe czasy, kiedy to po stepach Ukrainy hulają pijane bandy hajdamackie(...)”, „Pobudka”, No. 5, 10 Nov.1918, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> „(...)Ukraińska Nacionalna Rada v našij starij stolicy vziala verhovnu derżavnu vlast` u ruku (...) Po 578 litah nevoli (...). *Vidozva Ukrain'skoi*

In Polish official propaganda, the Battle of Lviv represented Polish “eternal rights” to the city. We can find this idea, for instance, in the main commander’s (kpt. Czesław Maczyński) appeal published on 22 November, 1918, right after Polish victory became clear: “Lviv has just got rid of occupants and given the evidence for the whole world: it was, still is, and must remain a Polish city”.<sup>18</sup>

During the interwar period, Lviv was one of the most important cities in Poland – mostly because it was an economic, cultural and educational centre (university, technical university and other science institutions). But its symbolism was rather connected to the living memory of the November battle. For the Poles, Lviv was equal with the sacrifice of young Polish volunteers: children and students who not only fought, but also died for keeping the city Polish. The most popular examples were of two boys: 14-year-old Jerzy Bitschan who ran away from home to fight and died in the struggle at the territory of Lychakovsky Cemetery, and 13-year-old Antoni Petrykiewicz who is the youngest Polish soldier ever to receive the highest military award “Virtuti Militari”. They became examples for subsequent generations, presented in official school books, popular poetry and many songs sang in schools and among scouts.<sup>19</sup>

However, the legend gradually infused the perception of the city abroad, too. In 1937, a book was published in Hungary, “Polish Eaglets” (*Lengyel sasfiókok*), written by Jenő Szentiványi.<sup>20</sup> It is the story of the Polish defence of Lviv (from 1 November, 1918 to March 1919), and the main characters are children who took part in the battle and risked their lives for the homeland. The author emphasized children sacrifice,

---

*Nacionalnoi Rady, Lviv 5 lystopada 1918*, [in:] O. Kuz'ma, *Lystopadovi dni 1918*, Lviv 2003, p.1.

<sup>18</sup> „Lwów pozbył się najeźdźców i dał wspaniały wobec świata dowód, że był, jest i pozostać musi polskim miastem.” Cz. Maczyński, *Boje Lwowskie. cz. I Oswobodzenie Lwowa ( 1-24 listopada 1918)*. Vol. I., p. 332-333.

<sup>19</sup> Nicieja S. S., *Lwowskie Orleża. Czyn i legenda*, Warszawa 2009, p. 151-159.

<sup>20</sup> Nicieja S.S., *Lwowskie Orleża...*,p. 64.

difficulties of the life under siege, and presented Ukrainians like cruel barbarians.<sup>21</sup> Lviv Eaglets appeared in English language books and travelogues, too: Arthur Goodhurt, Ada Chesterton and Henry Baerlein all emphasized this issue in their reports.<sup>22</sup>

The main memorial for the Polish heroes was the Cemetery of the Defenders of Lwów, designed by the young architect Rudolf Indruch who was one of the volunteers himself and participated in the battle. This cemetery was not only a place for soldiers' tombs, but also it was built to demonstrate the meaning of Polish Lviv for subsequent generations, a highly ideological construct.<sup>23</sup> The main gate to the cemetery was modelled on the ancient structure of a Triumphal Arch. The lions sitting before the arch kept plates with the inscriptions “always faithful” and “for you Poland”. The graveyard was the central place of many Polish patriotic celebrations. Those were opportunities to show support for ideas connected with the mythical Polish Eastern Borderlands and their “defence” that was of vital importance in interwar Poland, situated between two arch-enemies, Germany and the Soviet Union.<sup>24</sup> The Cemetery of the Defenders of Lwów was the most splendid military cemetery in the whole country. In a popular short story from the 1930s about Lviv, written by Kornel Makuszyński, one of the main characters says this about the cemetery: “This cemetery, like no other in the whole world, is like a school (...) here children teach old people (...) that from heroic death life springs up”.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, at that time, Lviv was the only Polish city which received the highest Polish military award “Virtuti Militari”. It was granted in 1920

<sup>21</sup> Polish version of the book, J. Szentiványi, *Orleńta Lwowskie*, Kraków 2013, 272 pp.

<sup>22</sup> T. Pudłocki, *Ambasadorzy idei. Wkład intelektualistów w promowanie pozytywnego wizerunku Polski w Wielkiej Brytanii w latach 1918-1939*, Kraków 2015, p. 69.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 79-107.

<sup>24</sup> *Przewodnik po Cmentarzu Obronców Lwowa. Orleńtom w szesnastą rocznicę*, Straż Mogił Polskich Bohaterów, Lwów 1934, p.3-18.

<sup>25</sup> „Ten cmentarz, jakiego drugiego nie ma na całym świecie, jest jakby szkołą (...)dzieci uczą się od siwych ludzi (...) że z bohaterskiej śmierci najbujniej wyrasta życie”, K. Makuszyński, *Uśmiech Lwowa*, Kraków 1989, p. 65.



by marshal Józef Piłsudski, commander-in-chief and head of state, for its entire contribution during the battle to save the country. This distinction became part of the city's official coat of arms in the interwar period, which conveyed the importance of the distinction and the event it recalled.<sup>26</sup>

For the Ukrainians who at that time were still a majority in Eastern Galicia's villages (over 70%), the battle of Lviv was a symbol of their independent country (The West Ukrainian People's Republic) that had existed only for a few months. Lots of Ukrainians never accepted that loss. It was the reason why so many of them treated the Second Polish Republic as the temporary occupying power which sooner or later would be defeated.<sup>27</sup> The Polish-Ukrainian conflict has intensified during the interwar period; evidences of the growing passion were, for instance, assassinations of important Polish civil servants by Ukrainian nationalists (Ukrainian Military Organization, since 1929 Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists): superintendent of Lviv's schools Stanisław Sobiński (1926), Minister of Internal Affairs Bronisław Pieracki (1934), and unsuccessful assassination attempts on Józef Piłsudski (1921) and the President of Poland Stanisław Wojciechowski (1924).<sup>28</sup> As a response, the Polish government organized the "pacification" in Eastern Galicia in 1930 which was a police and military action against Ukrainians. Many activists were sent to prisons, and some Ukrainian high schools were closed. All in all, these repressions caused the death of 3-30 people.<sup>29</sup>

The anniversaries of November 1918 were celebrated every single time with the highest esteem, and the program always caused serious troubles in the relations between Poles and Ukrainians. National celebrations, supported by the government, intended to attract all of the citizens. That,

<sup>26</sup> Nicieja S. S., *Lwowskie Orleńta...*p. 12-13.

<sup>27</sup> A. Chojnowski., J. J. Bruski, *Ukraina*, Warszawa 2006, p. 77-87.

<sup>28</sup> A. Chojnowski, J. J. Bruski, *Ukraina (...)* p. 126-127.

<sup>29</sup> G. Motyka, *Od rzezi wołyńskiej do akcji „Wisła”. Konflikt polsko-ukraiński 1943-1947*, Kraków 2011. p. 29-31., O. Subtelny, *Ukraine. A History*, Toronto 2000, p. 425-452. The sources differ on the actual number of those died.

of course, was impossible in such a situation. The Ukrainians were demonstrating their rival memory of the events through separate celebrations at their soldiers' tombs (at Yanovsky Cemetery). They were also organising other celebrations in Ukrainian churches (most of them were conducted in St. George Cathedral in Lviv with the support of well-known Greek Catholic archbishop Andrey Sheptytsky.)<sup>30</sup> In addition to that, Ukrainians displayed their national flags in public spaces, which was forbidden. For instance, in 1928, during the tenth anniversary celebrations, they hung Ukrainian flags at a few places in Lviv (university, Union of Lublin Mound) and painted over a few Polish monuments. Also at that time, Ukrainians organized a manifestation and march around St. George Cathedral which resulted in fights with Polish students and policemen.<sup>31</sup>

Many monuments and memorial plaques memorialized the Polish victory in 1918 in Lviv's public space. Moreover, some events from that battle were marked in other ways too – for instance, in November 1938, during the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, around 36 street names were changed to commemorate the Defence of Lviv. The previous ones were usually traditional names, not connected with the history of any nation; these were altered to names recalling the Defence of Lviv. For instance, part of *Gródecka* street (old name from the small town near Lviv) was changed to the name of General Michał Karaszewicz-Tokarzewski who was the commander of the Polish army which relieved the city on 22 November. Part of *Green* (*Zielona*) street was renamed to that of General Tadeusz

<sup>30</sup> He was the unofficial leader of Ukrainians in Poland in the interwar period, supported Ukrainian culture, language and political life. His figure is controversial in present day Poland because of his suspected support for Ukrainian nationalists who collaborated with Germany during WWII, and his alleged consent to mass murders committed against Polish civilians by Ukrainian nationalists. Nevertheless, the church has started his beatification process that still goes on. More on him: *Metropolita Andrzej Szeptycki: studia i materialy*, ed. A.A. Zięba, Kraków 1994, 274 pp.

<sup>31</sup> „Gazeta Lwowska”; No. 253, 3 Nov. 1928, „Dziennik Lwowski”, 3 Nov. 1928.

Rozwadowski who was the commander of the Polish Army in Eastern Galicia during the last phase of the Polish-Ukrainian war.<sup>32</sup> That, in fact, is a good example of how the Polish legend was nurtured.

The Lviv Eaglets were present in interwar Poland in the education system and in the public space all over the country as an example to follow for future generations. But the official state discourse treated the battle like a fratricidal struggle which must not happen again. This was an attempt to convince the Ukrainian minority to accept Polish control over former Eastern Galicia, something that proved to be almost impossible.<sup>33</sup> The best example of this attempt is the official school reading in interwar Poland “Lviv Children” (*“Dzieci Lwowa”*) written by Helena Zakrzewska.<sup>34</sup> It was a short story about the November battle that featured the story of two siblings, the “good” sister Hela who was fighting on the Polish side defending the homeland and the “bad” brother Jurek who was fighting on Ukrainian side. At the climax of the story, Hela took her brother into captivity which illustrated the dilemma of tragic choice in one family. In the final part, Hela dies from a Ukrainian shot, and Jurek, at her deathbed, switches to the Polish side and swears loyalty to Poland.<sup>35</sup> Stories like that were a naively emotional way of educating subsequent generations and could have caused many problems with the Ukrainian minority in the country.<sup>36</sup>

The problem of conflicting Polish-Ukrainian memories in The Second Polish Republic could not be resolved before 1939. Moreover, the tension was increasing instead of being reduced

<sup>32</sup> „Gazeta Lwowska”, No. 265, 22 Nov. 1938, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> In addition to that, the government not only tried to convince Ukrainians to accept Polish rule in Eastern Galicia. It was also important to counter the Soviet influence and propaganda which were trying to unite Ukrainians in Poland with Ukrainians in the Soviet Union, endangering Poland.

<sup>34</sup> *Bibliografia literatury dla dzieci i młodzież y 1918-1939. Literatura polska i przekłady*, ed. B. Krassowska, A. Grefkowicz, Warszawa 1995, p. 528.

<sup>35</sup> H. Zakrzewska, *Dzieci Lwowa*, Warszawa 1925, p. 55-160.

<sup>36</sup> However, we can also find similar Polish-Ukrainian problems in real life: the most popular example is the Sheptytsky brothers: Andriy was a Ukrainian bishop, unofficial head of Ukrainians in Poland; Stanislaw was a general of the Polish Army, fighting for Polish independence in WWI.

in the interwar period together with other political problems inside the country, the danger of war and the rise of nationalist ideologies in this region of Europe.

### **3. World War II and Communist period: occupations, deportations and changing borders**

The situation of Lviv and its inhabitants changed quite often during World War II. From 1939 to 1941, the city was under Soviet occupation; from 1941 to 1944, under German rule; and again, from 1944, under Soviet control. Those events radically changed the ethnic character (structure) of the city. As the result of the territorial settlement at the end of WWII, Lviv became part of the Soviet Union, and Poland was “moved” further to the West, losing the “Eastern Borderlands” with Lviv. Most of its Polish inhabitants were deported to the “new” Western Poland, the territory which Poland took over after the deportation of German people: Wrocław (Breslau), Opole (Oppeln), Silesia. After 1944, people from other parts of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic were moved to Lviv. During Soviet times, Lviv became a city with a Ukrainian majority population.<sup>37</sup>

The Polish and Ukrainian independence activists in Lviv, although they did not work hand in hand (in fact, often fought against each other), equally became the victims of the Communist persecutions after WWII. Many of them were deported to camps in Siberia or put into prison because of their struggle against German and Soviet oppression during and after World War II. The memory of the November battle was “uncomfortable” for Communist propaganda and was erased from official state historical discourse. It was a symbol of independent national countries and national ideologies in this area and seen as “dangerous” to the new Communist authority. Somewhat paradoxically, the Soviet rule brought Polish and

<sup>37</sup> L. Podhorodecki, *Dzieje Lwowa*, p. 205-235, J. Hrycak, *Ukraina. Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej*, Gdańsk-Warszawa 2009, p. 159-165.

Ukrainian memory closer to each other as it was a symbol of strong traditions of independence for both sides. Soviet propaganda aimed to convince people that only communists could be “good” heroes, and everyone who was not should have been called “evil nationalist” or “fascist”.

This stance affected the post-World War II history of military cemeteries from the time of the Polish-Ukrainian War in 1918-1919. During the Soviet period, in 1971, the Polish Cemetery of the Defenders of Lwów was completely bulldozed by the authorities. A stonemason's workshop was set up in the chapel and catacombs. The cemetery of Ukrainian Sichovy Striltsy (part of Yanovsky Cemetery) was destroyed simultaneously.<sup>38</sup>

Poles, who after World War II were in minority in Lviv, tried to commemorate the battle on its anniversaries, but it might have caused serious persecutions. The last pre-war head of the Society of Protection of the Polish Heroes' Tombs (*Straż Mogił Polskich Bohaterów*) Maria Tereszczakówna, who stayed in Lviv after World War II, tried to save the last remaining tombs. She managed to move some remains of Polish commanders to other graves in Lychakovsky Cemetery during the Soviet destruction in 1971, and sent information about the devastation of the cemetery to Polish veterans' circles.<sup>39</sup> Thanks to her message, two old generals, veterans from November 1918, who were still alive at that time in Poland, Roman Abraham and Mieczysław Boruta-Spiechowicz, addressed a protest against the damage made to the Polish soldiers' cemetery to the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Leonid Brezhnev. Unfortunately, they did not receive a response. Polish veterans' groups living in Western Europe and in North America also protested against Soviet actions, but again to no avail.<sup>40</sup>

Ukrainian soldiers' tombs in Yanovsky Cemetery in Lviv were destroyed at the same time in 1971, and it also triggered

<sup>38</sup> S.S. Nicieja, *Lwowskie Orleńta...*, p.113-116.

<sup>39</sup> A. Fastnacht-Stupnicka, *Zostali we Lwowie*, Wrocław 2010, p. 248-253.

<sup>40</sup> S.S. Nicieja, *Lwowskie Orleńta...*, p.117-123.

protest in Ukrainian national circles in Western Europe and North America. In the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, Viacheslav Chornovil (who was a Ukrainian opposition activist) tried to protest against the destruction, but also without success.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, these attempts show how important the memory of the Battle of Lviv in November 1918 was for the national identity of Poles and Ukrainians, and not only the ones living in the Soviet Union. However, the Battle of Lviv was still a symbol of painful wounds between those two nations, former neighbours. Both sides continued to nurture their legends and myths in the underground, protecting national memories and preserving identities transmitted from the interwar era in totalitarian times. The common enemy, the Soviet Union, was not enough to reconcile Polish and Ukrainian memories; moreover, after World War II and the cruel struggle between both sides, reconciliation was much harder.

#### **4. After 1991: memory of the battle as a modern problem in international relations**

In 1991, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the creation of the independent Ukrainian State, the memory of the Battle of Lviv has gained new meaning in present-day Western Ukraine. It is one of the ideological foundations of the modern Ukrainian national identity. On the other hand, in Polish collective memory, it is the symbol of the lost “Polish Eastern Borderlands”, especially Lviv.

After the fall of Communism, this question became vital again for Poland and Ukraine among the new conditions with a reversal of the interwar roles. The destroyed soldiers’ cemeteries were located in Lviv and after 1991, the issue of rebuilding those places and opening them for visitors came to the fore. Polish

<sup>41</sup> Chornovil’s letter from 16 August 1971, [in:] *Viačeslav Čornovil, Tvory v desiaty tomah*, t. 5: *Publicystyka, dokumenty, materialy “Sprawy no 196” (1970-1984)*, vol.5, Kyiv 2007, p. 58-60.

public opinion exerted pressure that in a non-Communist state (like Ukraine from 1991 on), all soldiers' tombs should be respected. The Ukrainian soldiers' cemetery was rebuilt without problems, and it offers locus to commemorate and popularise this event among modern Ukrainians in Lviv. The status of the destroyed Polish cemetery was more problematic. The question arose: what would Ukraine (independent for the first time in its history) do with the Polish Cemetery of Lviv's defenders?

From the beginning of the nineties, the Polish government tried to make an agreement with the new Ukrainian government in order to rebuild the Cemetery of the Defenders of Lwów. At that time, the Polish company "Energopol" working in Lviv on international contract, together with volunteers from the Polish minority in Lviv, started searching the territory of the cemetery. They found and marked the tombs hidden under the debris. However, they were doing it unofficially, in their leisure time. Lviv officials and local authorities rejected plans of rebuilding the destroyed Polish cemetery on several occasions. Moreover, there were some controversies connected to the memorial plaques and inscriptions on them, for example in 1995 and later. At that time, it was the most important political controversy between newborn Ukraine and Poland in their mutual international relations.<sup>42</sup>

A lot of discussions were conducted between politicians, diplomats and historians from both sides, with different results. Many articles and political actions showed that the problem of the Battle of Lviv was very sensitive for both sides. Moreover, after Communist times, the ideological meaning of this "place of memory" has grown. Ukrainian nationalists' circles saw the Polish Cemetery of Lwów Defenders as a symbol of "Polish occupation" and they could not agree to have it rebuilt on their territory. On the other hand, for many Polish people, the cemetery's restoration was a crucial issue to start normal relations between the two countries.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> S.S. Nicieja, *Lwowskie Orłeta...*, p.126-138.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p.139-143.

It was finally after the Orange Revolution (2004) and Polish support for Viktor Jushchenko when the controversial issue was solved. The official opening ceremony of the rebuilt Cemetery of the Defenders of Lwów took place on 24 June, 2005. The President of Poland (Aleksander Kwaśniewski) and the President of Ukraine (Viktor Jushchenko) both attended.<sup>44</sup>

That ceremony symbolically ended the Polish-Ukrainian conflict over the memory of the Battle of Lviv in November 1918 and set a new stage in the relations between the two neighbouring nations. By the entrance to the Polish cemetery, we can see the plaque with inscriptions taken from the presidents' words, “On the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have to remember the past, but we have to look to the future”.<sup>45</sup> Today, for every Polish tourist group visiting Lviv, it is one of the main stops, and every Polish political delegation to Ukraine visits the cemetery as well.

## Conclusions: Anniversaries of November 1918 today

The anniversary of the “November uprising” is still very important for modern Ukrainian identity. The declaration of independence of the West Ukrainian People's Republic in 1918 is solemnly celebrated on this territory; in Lviv Town Hall, a reconstruction of those events takes place every year. For instance, we can see scouts dressed up like Ukrainian soldiers at that time. Also, there are many events connected to the anniversary in public spaces and in arts.<sup>46</sup>

But the fall of Communism saw the revival of the Polish memory of the “Eastern Borderlands” as well. Many organizations nurturing the memory of the area were created. Most of them gather people born in pre-WWII Lviv or their children – all living in Poland. Groups like those organise

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, p. 143-148.

<sup>45</sup> „Na porozi XXI stolittia pamiatajmo pro mynule ale dumajmo pro majbutnie”

<sup>46</sup> For example: *U Lvovi 1 lystopada vhid u meriju vartuvatymut' ZUNRivci*, [in:] [www.zaxid.net](http://www.zaxid.net) [31 October 2011].



ceremonies in the churches and cemeteries in Poland, they publish many magazines and books about Lviv's history and the "Defence of Lwów". Those circles have not laid any claims to Western Ukraine, their main purpose being the protection of the memory and contact with the Polish minority in Ukraine. For example, thanks to them, many Polish schools and streets gained names after "Defenders of Lwów" or "Lwów Eagles".<sup>47</sup>

For the Polish minority in Ukraine and its organizations that still are in Lviv, 22 November is the anniversary of the Polish victory in 1918. Most of them have their own private feasts.<sup>48</sup> In addition to that, the Roman Catholic Church in Western Ukraine, which is mostly based on the Polish minority, has its ceremony. It was also symbolic when the present bishop was installed in his seat on 22 November, 2008.

Nowadays, this issue does not cause serious problems, and both sides try to understand their complicated history. They try to reconcile that they were fighting for one and the same territory, and for both sides it was and still is the "holy land". But in today's Lviv, 1 November is the date of common prayer for reconciliation between Poles and Ukrainians.<sup>49</sup> It is always organized around St. Michael's column in Lychakovsky Cemetery. Representatives of the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic Churches and officials from both governments participate in this.

However, it is still a sensitive issue that needs to be approached tactfully. Recently, the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage restored and returned two lions sitting in front of the Triumphal Arch. The lions were reinstalled, but they revived heated discussions about the inscriptions on the plaques – could they be like the originals before WWII with the promise about loyalty to Poland and the Polish national emblem? Ukrainian nationalist circles opposed it and it is still unresolved. But many Ukrainians sided with the view that it

<sup>47</sup> S.S. Nicieja, *Lwowskie Orłeta...*, p. 292-293

<sup>48</sup> *Uroczystości jubileuszowe*, „Kurier Galicyjski”, No. 22(218) / 2014, p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> *Lwów – modlitwa pojednania*, <http://info.wiara.pl/doc/170501.Lwow-Modlitwa-pojednania> /access April 2015/

is a matter of historical accuracy without political salience.<sup>50</sup> Another example of attempts to reconcile the memory of November 1918 is the new Ukrainian documentary “The Legion. The Chronicles of Ukrainian Galician Army 1918-1919” directed by Taras Khymych (2015) which offers a wide variety of perspectives on the conflict, uses original memoirs and memories of Ukrainians, Poles and Austrians. In the concluding section, Poland is presented as the main strategic partner of Ukraine today, supporting Ukraine during Majdan, and the film accentuates the brotherhood of the two nations regardless of many wars.

Nowadays, events during World War II are more significant for the troubled memories of Polish-Ukrainian relations. Memories of the massacre of Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia by the Ukrainian nationalists (called the *Volhynian slaughter*) and Polish deportations of Ukrainian people from present areas of Eastern Poland (called: *Operation Vistula*) are still to be resolved.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> L. Petrenko, *Cvyntarnyj detektyv Mista Leva. Lohichni, moralni, ta pravovi aspekty vporyatkuvannya Cvyntarya Orlyat, [in] zaxid.net* [http://zaxid.net/news/showNews.do?tsvintarniy\\_detektiv\\_mista\\_leva&objectId=1378004](http://zaxid.net/news/showNews.do?tsvintarniy_detektiv_mista_leva&objectId=1378004) (access January 2016).

<sup>51</sup> G. Motyka, *Cień Kłyma Sawura. Polska-ukraiński konflikt pamięci*, Gdańsk 2013, p. 6-12.