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Battles for Bandera: Dissonant Historical Narratives of Ukrainians in Poland and Problems of Integration

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ABSTRACT

The increasing flux of Ukrainian migrants into Poland increases the urgency of correlating Polish and Ukrainian historical narratives. Here, a key problem concerns the new pantheon of Ukrainian national heroes, some of whom are viewed quite negatively by many Poles. In this article, problems of competing historical narratives, as well as correlations between historical conceptions and models of migrant integration, are examined with the reference to field research carried out with Ukrainian migrants living in Poland. Here, the main sources comprised interviews with migrants, monitoring of formal and informal cultural activities organized for migrants, as well as data obtained via social networks, thematic forums and the expatriate press. It was found that the main factors determining strategies for facilitating interaction between historical narratives comprise the degree of inclusion of migrants living in different communities of the host country, as well as the level of cohesion among the migrant communities themselves.

KEYWORDS

cultural history, historical narrative, social memory, Poland, Ukraine

Introduction

In 2017, the annual visit of the Polish President Andrzej Duda to Ukraine began with a joint visit by the Polish and Ukrainian delegation to the memorial to victims of the totalitarian Soviet regime in the Piatykhvatky neighborhood of the city of Kharkiv. An assessment of this period of history as comprising a socialist occupation by the Soviet Union is one of the few topics on which the views of Poland and Ukraine generally coincide. Since both countries shape their national

identity through a narrative of victimhood to their larger, eastern neighbor (formerly the Soviet Union, now the Russian Federation), it may be possible for them to find common ground when assessing many historical events.

In many respects, Poland's 2003 accession to the EU became an example for Euromaidan, a 2014 protest rally in Kiev attended by thousands of people, whose success in toppling Viktor Yanukovich's more Russia-oriented government apparently fixed the country's course towards European integration. In this context, Poland's model of national identity formation has often been cited by Ukraine, albeit often without the necessary adaptation or consideration of historical specificities. Like Poland, Ukraine refers to the period of socialist occupation to declare itself a victim of the same totalitarian regime and construct on this basis a new pantheon of heroic freedom fighters. However, since many of the heroes of Ukraine are already included in the negative symbolic pantheon of Poland's enemies, it is precisely this pantheon that poses the main risk to Polish-Ukrainian relations. For instance, the Ukrainian nationalist theorist and independence fighter Stepan Bandera is primarily known in Poland as an initiator of acts of terrorism including the 1943 massacre of Poles at Volhynia. In turn, Poland's protests against commemorative practices associated with Stepan Bandera's name have provoked a hostile reaction from Ukrainian nationalists (Ukrainian nationalists, 2014).

In 2016, the Polish director Wojciech Smarzowski made the first film depicting the events of the Volhynia massacre (Smarzowski, 2016). However, following a decision by the Ukrainian government that cited the possibility of inciting social unrest, the film was never publicly screened in Ukraine. Moreover, some Ukrainian actors turned down a role in the film on the pretext of it being anti-Ukrainian (Luty, 2014).

Thus, it can be seen that history is not always simply a story about events taking place in the past but can also become one of the actors in current political and socio-economic processes. The "revanche of memory" observed by some Polish researchers (Machcewicz, 2012) transformed the socialist period into a new ideological and political battlefield. Now, due to the replacement of the ideological battles of the Cold War era with rival historical narratives affecting the contemporary political situation, a need arises to mitigate the potential for conflict through democratic discourse.

Once the prerogative of select intellectuals, history is increasingly becoming the object of everyday personal experience and collective interpretation. In democratic societies, this creates a situation in which it becomes necessary to take a strategic approach to emerging trends in collective representations. In addition to carrying personal and family memories, succeeding generations also refer to dominant official discourses (and sometimes their corresponding historiosophical models) when narrating their retained images of the past. In situations where conflicts arise between personal experiences and official interpretations, the ensuing combinations reveal often paradoxical interrelationships between collective representations and the influence of official discourses on them. In post-socialist countries, collective representations of the past that had been constructed under the influence of a socialist discursive model subsequently became part of a post-socialist critique (which, as a rule, turned out to have an anti-socialist character).

Since 2014, the number of Ukrainian migrants in Poland has been rising due to a combination of deteriorating economic conditions at home and opportunities offered by EU countries (special programs for Ukrainian students, visa-free travel, etc.) (Dobroczek et al., 2017). In 2013, Ukrainians received 1,694 residency permits and 9,795 temporary residency permits (which are valid for up to three years); in 2014, 3,484 and 17,103 permits were issued, respectively, while for the first nine months of 2015 alone, the corresponding figures were 4,570 and 21,872 (Office for Foreigners, 2019). As of July 1, 2016, Ukrainians held 31% of all Polish residence permits issued to foreigners. Of all Ukrainian citizens studying abroad, a third were attending Polish education institutions, while in the academic year 2014/2015 the number of Ukrainians in Polish universities was double that of the previous year (Stadnii & Slobodian, 2019). In the present paper, collective representations of the past are viewed as a source of environmental conflictogenity, while models of their adaptations are considered as one of the methods for adapting to a changing world. However, an analysis of considerable empirical data about Ukrainians in Poland, the influence of economic and political factors on migration flows, the gender and age composition of migrants, and relevant monographs (Brzozowska & Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2014; Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2015; Kindler, 2011; Mrozowski, 2003) has been omitted as outside the scope of the present study.

While their respective governments are setting up commissions to settle historical issues, around a million Ukrainians living in Poland are experiencing historical narrative rivalry with their host communities at the same time as having to construct, on an almost daily basis, a dialogue with these same host communities. Having few working models on which to such base a dialogue, the migrant communities themselves obtain and/or create models of interaction depending on their personal interpretations of the historical information received in their home country, their experiences of living in Poland, interactions with the wider social environment, etc. While there are numerous public organizations based in Poland aimed at helping Ukrainians to resolve economic and social problems (for a detailed analysis see Łada & Böttger, 2016), for these migrants, the interpretation of historical events remains a largely personal matter. Thus, while it is understood that most migrants are probably more concerned with finding a good job and solving bureaucratic problems than with the peculiarities of Polish-Ukrainian history, it is impossible to fully consider issues around the adaptation and integration of migrants without also taking into account the conflict-causing potential of collective memory.

Theory and Methods

The analysis presented in this article is informed by studies that deal with the influence of historical memory on the Polish–Ukrainian relations. A comparative analysis of contemporary political, economical, and social features of the contemporary phase of Polish-Ukrainian relations was carried out along with a consideration of Poland's foreign policy strategies towards Ukraine (Szeptycki, 2016). Other authors place an emphasis on how historical memory is manifested in political documents

(Mieliekiestsev, 2016) and the media (Allison, 2015), without touching upon individual impressions and perceptions or the influence of the state's politics of memory on the specifics of people's daily lives. Although various aspects of the Ukrainian migration to Poland have been studied in detail, the contemporary phase of the Ukrainian migration to Poland has not been covered in these works.

Thus, based on the particular case of Ukrainian migrants in Poland, the present article analyzes problems of rivalry between conflicting historical narratives in the context of intensive migration along with an examination of methods for reconciling the conflict potential of national histories in the context of currently intensifying exchanges between Ukrainians and Poles. Thus, we will attempt to demonstrate, on the one hand, how migration affects the reproduction of historical memory, and on the other, in what ways historical narratives determine the living conditions of migrants.

Sources

The present article reports on research carried out into the historical narratives of Russian-speaking migrants conducted between October and November 2017 in the Polish cities of Warsaw, Krakow and Poznan. The purpose of the research was to analyze methods of interaction between different forms of cultural memory, including conflicts arising in the course of this interaction, the boundaries of assimilation and acceptance of various perceptions of the past, the mechanisms of "tradition creation", as well as obliviousness to the past in the migrant environment and the influence of the cultural memory of the host community. The main sources comprised interviews carried out with migrants, analysis of formal and informal activities organized for and by migrants, as well as data obtained from social networks, thematic forums, and the migrant press. The study was supported by the *Centrum Polsko-Rosyjskiego Dialogu i Porozumienia* [Centre for Polish-Russian Dialogue and Understanding].

The paper presents the results of forty in-depth structured interviews carried out with Ukrainian migrants aged 20 to 47 years who have been living in Poland for between two and ten years. Of the informants, which comprised 23 men and 17 women, 20 were from Eastern Ukraine and 20 from Western Ukraine. Ten participants were students in Polish higher education institutions (of whom eight also had a job), nine worked in the service sector, five were entrepreneurs, four were housewives, five were employed in the education sector, five worked in construction, and two were currently looking for a job. When selecting informants, quota sampling was employed, which entailed simple random sampling. With the consent of the informants, the interviews were recorded by the author of the present article using a digital voice recorder. An interview location was selected by the informants (typically, a cafe or their own place of residence). When processing interview transcripts and systematizing the data, the author of the article paid attention not only to the semantic content, but also to common discursive constructions, wording and underlying opinions. As additional sources, were also included: observations made by members of informal migrant communities (*Emigrant Lyre* poetry gatherings, regular club events of Russian-speaking and Ukrainian-speaking communities, theme nights organized by the *Ukrainian House in Warsaw*¹,

¹ Український дім у Варшаві

*Club of Ukrainian Wives*², and others); an analysis of the content of social network groups and sites for Ukrainian/Russian-speaking migrants *Overheard in Warsaw*³, *Poland for your own and our in Poland*⁴, *Warsaw for Ukrainians*⁵, *Typical Krakow*⁶, *Our people Poznań*⁷, *Poland: useful information, work, life*⁸, *Work and life in Krakow*⁹, *Ukrainians in Poland*¹⁰; news channels and outlets *Polsha24*¹¹; *Life and work in Poland*¹², *Our choice*, a newspaper for Ukrainians in Poland¹³; publicly available data obtained from personal social media accounts and influencers on social networks.

Theoretical Foundations

The selection of theoretical foundations and methodological framework was determined by the purposes of the study. In order to study changes and transformations of images from the past, a methodological approach was required. In this connection, it became necessary to determine the impact of historical narratives on the integration of migrants, e.g., what difficulties may arise when the bearers of a certain image of the past find themselves in the middle of conflicting historical narratives (that is, when there is a transfer not only of people, but also of their ideas). Therefore, the methodological framework of the study was informed by the process-relational methodology of Jeffrey K. Olick, who suggested that memory of the past should be seen as an activity, a process in which changing practices are of great importance. In particular, Olick noted that the purpose of studying collective memory should be to understand “figurations of memory”, i.e., changing relations between the past and the present, in which images, contexts, traditions and interests are intertwined, albeit not always harmoniously (Olick, 2007, p. 92). Moreover, the dynamics of cultural memory are largely determined by its intermediaries, whose actions result in memories being made public (Erlil & Rigney, 2009, p. 2). Thus, it is argued that a cultural memory of a certain event does not exist in the mind as a stable and unchanging picture; rather, it is a “script” that is constantly being rewritten, only a few particular episodes of which at best have actually been “brought to the screen”.

Second, some of Andrzej Szeptycki's ideas have been rethought in the context of the “mobility turn” concept developed by John Urry. As described by Georg Simmel, a migrant is generally considered as a “stranger” by his or her host community. Thus,

² Клуб Українських Жінок

³ Подслушано в Варшаві https://vk.com/sekret_warsaw

⁴ Польща для Своїх & Наши в Польше! <https://vk.com/polskaforyou>

⁵ Варшава для українців https://vk.com/wawa_ua

⁶ Типичный Краков | Krakow | Краків https://vk.com/typ_krakow

⁷ Наши люди Poznań, Познань <https://vk.com/poznann>

⁸ Польща: полезная информация, работа, жизнь <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1444850238943158/>

⁹ “Работа и жизнь в Кракове” <https://www.facebook.com/groups/382529975458952>

¹⁰ Українці w Polsce/Українці У Польщі <https://www.facebook.com/groups/426062464109096/>

¹¹ <https://www.polsha24.com/>

¹² <https://in-poland.com/>

¹³ Наш вибір

although living alongside the host community, a migrant does not fully participate in terms of that community's specific conditions of interaction (Simmel, 1908/2009). For this reason, in order to stabilize the relationship between migrants and their host communities, Bülent Diken proposes to inform an interpretation of the messages of "the Other" by taking a hermeneutic approach (Diken, 1998, p. 251). However, as we have seen in the context of Polish-Ukrainian historical dialogues, a migrant may be considered not merely as a "stranger", but also as an "enemy" (Simmel, n.d.). While some organizations may paternalistically depict Ukrainians as younger brothers who need help, Simmel emphasizes that conflicts between people and groups who have much in common are often more acute (Simmel, n.d.). Here, a paradoxical situation arises according to which, while Ukrainians may be deemed "close" in one relation (according to geographical and linguistic principles), they can also be considered by the Polish community as an "enemy" when it comes to certain episodes from the past. Therefore, the relationship between Poland and Ukraine can be seen as complicated not so much by the historical conflicts themselves, but rather in terms of a rivalry of historical narratives, whose goals are determined by current political agendas in terms of forging a respective national identity to underpin national unity according to existing historical narrative models. Ukrainian nationalism, which arises as part of an intense exercise in shaping national identity, conflicts with the Polish historical narrative. Following the accession of the conservative Law and Justice party to a dominant position in Polish politics, the latter also carries strongly nationalist overtones. Meanwhile, considerable experience of Polish-Russian dialogue has already accrued without relying on a bi-nationalistic model.

Before proceeding to analyze the obtained empirical evidence, a few more theoretical remarks are necessary. Following Jens Brockmeier and Rom Harré, historical narratives are considered to comprise a subtype of discourse (Brockmeier & Harré, 2001, p. 40). Despite the essentially descriptive nature of historical narratives in terms of stating what actually happened, their coherence is also reliant on certain explanatory models (Danto, 1965, p. 290). Thus, when ideas and images of the past serve as part of a historical narrative, this in turn presupposes the description of historical events within a representative form of historical knowledge that is affected by the present cultural and social context.

While a historical narrative may be transmitted through the education system, family or various media, problems arise concerning, firstly, that images can have various meanings in different cultural and social contexts, and secondly, that how they are transmitted depends on the specific agents involved in their transmission.

In a monograph, Pamela Ballinger describes the effect of history on identity in a situation of exile (Ballinger, 2002) in terms of the agency of a particular historical narrative. While Urry points to a decline in the primary importance of national identity in the context of a turn to mobilities (Urry, 2000, pp. 161–163), the Ukrainian situation may be seen as an exception to this tendency, since historical narratives underpinning their national self-determination still structure a number of Ukrainian cultural practices. Here we may also pause to consider the peculiarities of historical education in Ukraine. In most post-Soviet countries, including Ukraine, school history teaching is essentially

narrative based (Korostelina, 2010; Richardson, 2004). Thus, when studying a narrative of past events, children are generally inculcated with the ideologically correct (from the point of view of state actors) interpretation. In this connection, it can be observed that the state-approved Ukrainian historical narrative generally depends on an interpretation that is relevant to the current political agenda.

While the successful implementation of such an interpretive-narrative model of historical education may indeed lay the foundation for a national state identity, when such a model collides with an alternative narrative, not only does this hinder integration processes, but it can also form the basis of conflicts between migrants and their host community.

Historical Narrative Transfers: Integration Strategies

The most common strategy, which was adopted by twenty eight of the forty interviewed migrants and by the majority of participants in activities observed in the migrant communities, was to deny the existence of any such narrative rivalry. In general, this strategy was preferred by young people who had been living in Poland for several years. Although not implying that Ukrainians abandon their historical narrative upon arrival in Poland in order to replace it with a new one, the essence of this strategy consists in (a) minimizing the influence of past events on modern life and/or (b) denying any personal connection with past conflicts. Although this strategy may seem to broadly coincide with the foreign policy statements of the Ukrainian establishment (President Poroshenko, 2018; Ukraine, Poland in effort, 2017), this should not be interpreted to imply that the migrants are consciously repeating the rhetoric of the president of the country they left several years ago, but rather as constituting evidence of common cultural ground on which basis the political elite and the citizens of Ukraine select similar strategies.

Such migrants argue that, since such tragic historical events as the Volhynian massacre happened a long time ago, it is no longer necessary to pay them much attention:

- It's time to live for today [...], look ahead, not back [...] (F., 46).
- That's history [...], there are many bad things, but there are many good things as well [...]; it's time to stop these endless quarrels [...] (F., 37).

Some called for a broader view of history that is not limited to Polish-Ukrainian relations:

- The Germans have also been treating us badly—so what? (M., 23).
- Volhynia is a regional conflict, it means nothing, there were many of them in history, what's the use in remembering that? (M., 29).

The same strategy can also be seen in admissions of the equivalence of different interpretations and thus the possibility of their coexistence. According to these informants, history turns out to be a property of the state, created by those responsible for enacting state policy and therefore to be treated as part of state ideology:

- Here, they can make films about anything they like (referring to the film “Volhynia”) [...] and we can name our streets as we please (M., 41).

- In Warsaw, they say one thing on the streets, while in Lviv they say another. That's okay (M., 33).

The informants in this case avoided giving any personal appraisal of historical events or heroes, emphasizing that the state (whether Ukraine or Poland) has the right to adopt the historical narrative that suits it best because no one really knows what actually happened in the past. Thus, in the terminology of Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, the state acts as an intermediary in determining the possibilities of interpreting the past.

The second strategy is manifested in terms of maintaining a distance from the tragic events of the past:

- Neither I nor my relatives participated in that [Volhynia massacre] (F., 29).
- The UPA is not the whole of Ukraine (F., 21).
- I'm from another city/That's a thousand kilometers from me (F., 37).

Such a stance allows migrants to tell themselves that the film "Volhynia" does not concern them but describes other people with whom they have no connection. It is noticeable that those with other family histories can also employ this strategy: a person of Ukrainian descent whose Polish relatives suffered under Volhynia said that it would not help them if he was to somehow develop a particular attitude towards this event now. Therefore, this strategy allows the maintenance of a personal distance from memories of Polish-Ukrainian violence by negating the significance of the past. In such situations, as noted by Jeffrey K. Olick, it is not the image of the past that has changed, but rather the methods of its transmission under the influence of social practices (Olick, 2007, p. 93).

The main goal of denying the rivalry of historical narratives thus consists in a desire on the part of the migrants to reduce the possibility of conflict situations in the host country, i.e., not to become an "enemy" in Simmel's terminology. For such migrants, interpreting the events of the past is a less pressing issue than the need to find a good job and communicate with officials. This point of view is related to the informants' acquaintance with history. Even the youngest of the interviewed migrants spoke in terms of the unreliability of knowledge of their country's past. Concerning the narratives recalled from school textbooks, although they have retained a certain integrity over the last decade, those narratives broadcast through the media often put forward alternative interpretations that contradict previous ones; for example, while older relatives or friends can act as translators of the Soviet historical narrative, this narrative is criticized by contemporary Ukrainian history books. Due to the presence of such intermediaries, the past loses its ontological status in the accounts of migrants, proving to be as valid as fiction, because (this turns out to be a rather common phrase among Ukrainian and generally Russian-speaking migrants): No-one really knows what actually happened in the past. As one informant explained:

- Even if he examines all the facts and sources and develop his own point of view, another person will come along who has also studied everything, but he is going to have another point of view (F., 21).

In general, when participating in conversations about history, migrants kept changing the subject of discussion back to current political issues.

Thus, while migrants may be willing to establish a certain identity in which their original country's cultural memory is reconciled with their lived cultural reality, they make a great effort to keep this identity separate from the "cultural memory" itself in order to construct something less controversial on its basis. At the same time, they emphasize the dominance of elements of the lived cultural reality: they strive for integration, play up aspects that appear to them to be "Polish" (since their first day of arrival in Poland, girls acquire the "western" habit of shaking hands when making people's acquaintance, using Polish words in speech, etc.), as well as sometimes cultivating a new identity by trying on the stereotypical image of a Pole, all the while avoiding any topics associated with periods of conflict in the history of Poland and Ukraine. Conversely, cultural memory may maintain a dominant position for quite some time, not only due to its inherent nature, but also when reinforced by the negative attitude of some Poles towards the migrants as "Ukrainians", "newcomers", *zarabiający* (migrant workers who come for the sole purpose of earning money), etc. However, it can be noted from the primary data that the significance of actual cultural elements intensifies along with the degree of integration as the migrants' length of stay in Poland increases.

At times, informants' explanations for their attitude to the Ukrainian past were quite original: for example, one explained that he does not feel a connection with either Ukraine or Poland:

- I'm a cosmopolitan. That is, a rootless man [...] and the fact that I have been living for 26 years in the territory of Ukraine does not make me a Ukrainian (M., 29).

Another considered his social identity to be more important than his national one:

- I am a simple hard worker, and we have our own problems. That's why we do not bother each other with that political nonsense. A worker's life is the same everywhere! (M., 41).

Alternatively, a desire to explain the Ukrainian actions in Volhynia while maintaining a friendly attitude towards his Polish hosts led another informant to appeal to a common enemy by claiming that the Volhynia massacre was organized by Soviet special services disguised as Ukrainians.

As a rule, the main goal of migration is to improve one's financial and social situation. Therefore, in preparation for a move to Poland, migrants are more interested in finding out how to rent an apartment, pay for their phone or buy a car, than in "memory wars":

- Did Poland have any conflicts with the Ukrainians? I didn't know about that (M., 21).

However, since Ukrainians remain "strangers" to their host community (according to Simmel's terminology), the long-term, consistent implementation of the denial/minimization strategy turns out to be problematic. Since ideas and images from the past often have an all-too-real effect on conditions of mobility, ignoring them may lead to problems in terms of integration or adaptation. While migrants may claim not to be interested in historical narratives, the host community (especially such as in present-day Poland) cannot entirely avoid touching upon past conflict events. According to

some informants, questions about attitudes towards Volhynia and Stepan Bandera are more frequently encountered during interviews for obtaining a residence permit; as other informants noted, such interviews had not previously referred to assessments of historical events. The Euromaidan period is noted by some Ukrainian migrants as having been a high point in Polish-Ukrainian relations. At that time, many Ukrainians gave interviews in the Polish media concerning the situation in Kiev; by providing “firsthand” commentary on what was going on in Ukraine, they were able to dispel some negative stereotypes held by Polish people about their neighboring country. With the help of funding provided by the Polish authorities, various public organizations were established: Ukrainian World, under the auspices of the Open Dialogue Foundation and Euromaidan Warsaw; Ukrainian House managed by Our Choice Foundation; and the Friends of Ukraine Network. However, following the short-lived euphoria of civil solidarity and influenced by a new wave of Ukrainian migration and the return to power of the Law and Justice Party¹⁴, Polish-Ukrainian historical conflicts started to regain their salience. One informant recounted an incident when she and a friend from Moldova were having a conversation in Russian. She stated that a Polish passenger stood up and, using offensive language, referred to them as Banderites and warned them not only to get off the bus but also to return home. Meanwhile, the other passengers did nothing. When describing this incident, the informant agreed with the negative interpretation of Bandera’s image expressed by the Polish passenger but stated that it was not relevant to her since neither she nor her relatives had ever had anything to do with him.

Thus, while perceptions of the past may alter under the influence of various social factors, the merely superficial embrace of a Polish historical narrative is not a sufficient condition for successful integration. The notion that professed ignorance of history contributes to more successful integration does not hold water, since, despite declared efforts to leave history in the past, migrants are still confronted by history in the form of media, films, as well as neighbors who have been inculcated with different values. Therefore, some migrants (eight of those interviewed) agreed with the historical narrative of the host community. Usually, this was stated in the discourse of awareness:

- Only here I came to realize what swine we were” (M., 38).
- We were not told about this in school, but here it has become clear (F., 40).

In seeking to justify their adoption of a Polish historical narrative, the interviewed migrants sometimes referred to their own humanitarian education, which allowed them to draw an objective conclusion (regardless of the country in which they were educated). Others cited the education of a Polish spouse or friend; less frequently, to their own, self-directed study of sources:

- We must admit our historical mistakes (F., 33).
- I wasn’t aware about that before, but now I understand why Poles do not like us (M., 28).

Thus, in the minds of migrants, the past is changing under the influence of the new social environment, as the studies of Olick and Erll & Rigney confirm (Erll & Rigney, 2009, p. 1; Olick, 2007, p. 113). In attempting to forestall possible conflicts with their

¹⁴ Prawo i Sprawiedliwość

host community, migrants instead emphasize those common features that unite Poles and Ukrainians: the “Slavic soul”, shared aspirations for national self-determination, etc. At the same time, historical events in which the Polish side failed to show itself in the best light (for example, the “pacification” of Galicia) are either not commented on or declared to be the result of Soviet propaganda. This point of view allows Ukrainian migrants to establish their integration into the Polish community and avoid harsh criticism of their homeland. The image of the Soviet Union (often extended to Russia) as a totalitarian empire that sought to set one nation against the other (Poles and the Ukrainians), violently repressing any manifestations of free-thinking (which largely corresponds to the contemporary politics of memory of the Polish people), is now being adopted by Ukraine to suit a contemporary political agenda. In extreme cases, this may imply a change to one’s own family history, as in the case of a grandfather who was previously remembered as a participant in the Great Patriotic War (that is, part of the Soviet heroic pantheon), but is now viewed as a war criminal.

However, adopting a Polish historical narrative is not sufficient to save a Ukrainian migrant from being considered a “stranger”. The informants who followed this strategy generally continued to regard themselves as Ukrainians and maintain contact with relatives living in Ukraine. Negative reactions to the informants’ “eastern accent” (typical of native Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian speakers who also speak Polish), whether encountered in shops, at work or in the treatment of their children (especially those already born in Poland), often expressed in the form of the denigrative *banderovtsy*, offends this group more than it does those who employ other strategies. Nevertheless, many Ukrainian migrants note that the root of this situation lies not with their Polish host communities, but rather with the more recent Ukrainian arrivals in Poland.

Thus, while perceptions of the past may change under the influence of various social factors, the embrace of a Polish historical narrative is not a sufficient condition for successful integration. An alternative strategy consists in maintaining a historical narrative that is characteristic of the country of origin. However, among the Ukrainians interviewed, only a few had chosen this model. This group, which criticized Poles for their simplified interpretations and reluctance to understand Ukrainian history, did not intend to stay in Poland permanently (although neither did they plan to return to Ukraine).

Such a strategy tends to be more typical of immigrants from the Republic of Belarus. Unlike Ukrainians or Russians, there are many Belarusians in Poland who have the status of political refugees. Like the Ukrainian migrants who had chosen to retain their own historical narrative, this group tends to perceive Poland as a country of temporary residence, thus orienting itself not toward integration but rather aiming at a more or less comfortable transitory stay in Poland. With their immediate circle of friends mainly consisting of their fellow citizens, their media landscape tends to consist of Russian- or Belarusian-language public posts on social networks. Even after receiving Polish citizenship, expatriates from Belarus often do not intend to settle permanently in the host country but either see it as a springboard for subsequent westward movement within the EU or a temporary respite before returning to their homeland in the event of a change in the political situation there. Since no atrocity

comparable to Volhynia can be found in Polish-Belarusian history, the informants propose that those with a poor grasp of the Polish language (and having a so-called “eastern” accent) may present themselves as Belarusians.

Unlike Belarusians, however, the Ukrainian expatriate community sees itself as highly disorganized and sometimes even divided. The lack of integration into existing or newly formed organizations on the part of more recent Ukrainian migrants (i.e., since 2014) may partially explain the lack of active propagation of a Ukrainian historical narrative in Poland. “I’m looking for a Ukrainian guy. Don’t email me if you’re a Banderite”, wrote one young woman from Ukraine in a migrant social network group. While tolerant of migrants from other countries and inclined towards dialogue with their Polish hosts, Ukrainians are at the same time often intolerant of their own compatriots. While, despite their checkered shared history, they are often willing to abandon stereotypes associated with the Russians and Poles, some interviewees considered those who come from Western Ukraine to be aggressive, fanatical nationalists, while others refer to those from Eastern Ukraine as stupid, prone to alcoholism and ignorant of the Ukrainian language. Perhaps these conclusions, which the present author derived from communication with Ukrainians in informal migrant communities formed on the basis of interests rather than ethnicity, are relevant only to this particular group of migrants. Despite the current political situation, an analysis of rental ads and other communications with the mentioned circle of migrants demonstrated that a native of Lviv might prefer to share an apartment with a Russian than with a migrant from Dnipro (previously called Dnipropetrovsk). Despite the existence of many organizations aimed at helping Ukrainian migrants to integrate, many of the interviewed migrants tend to avoid their compatriots, instead (as especially typical for those with poor knowledge of the Polish language) gravitating towards Russian-speaking communities of interest. This leads to the propagation of only the most anodyne cultural images (national cuisine, popular culture, images from nature, literature).

Poles and Ukrainians: Close, but Not Together

Migrants tend toward the opinion that, despite the problems they will inevitably have to face, their adopted host country can provide them with the benefits that their home country cannot. Thus, while expressing regret at losing connections with friends who remained in home country, an interviewed Ukrainian migrant was glad never to have to deal again with state institutions. Although it is typical of both Russian and Belarusian migrants that distrust of the state does not prevent them identifying with their national culture, definitions of Ukrainian culture in recent decades continue to depend on the current political agenda and the residence of migrants. Therefore, a strategy that involves maximum integration into the host community (with a tendency to assimilation) seems the best option for them. In the given political and social situation, however, this turns out to be impossible due to the propagation of a Polish historical narrative that conflicts with its Ukrainian counterpart.

The research revealed few differences in the responses of migrants who had arrived on a work or education visa with those who were repatriating to Poland on

the grounds of Polish ancestry. Despite the latter stating Polish to be their native language (and consequently already being assimilated into Polish culture), they also strove to avoid narrative rivalry, sometimes choosing Polish narrative interpretations only following a long period of living in Poland. Indeed, in most of the studied cases, being of Polish origin had hindered the integration process, since these repatriates not only had to jump through the same hoops faced by all migrants but were also forced to somehow neutralize the conflict between their origins and the reactions of others who defined them as Ukrainians. The more repatriates considered themselves to be a Pole, the more disappointment they expected to encounter when dealing with local residents. Informants stated that, even if they knew the Polish language as a mother tongue, they would still not be able to understand Polish humor and would have to face the negative attitudes of those they encountered (e.g., university professors and local residents). An anticipated correlation between informants' previous place of residence and their chosen strategy was not found: migrants from both Eastern and Western Ukraine, who used the Russian or Ukrainian language during interviews and in communication with their compatriots, responded similarly to the interview questions.

Nevertheless, the immediate environment of migrants does have an influence on their choice of strategy. An analysis of social network accounts showed that the more connections the migrants had with their host community, the more they were likely to agree with the Polish historical narrative. Those informants inclining toward this strategy were either in mixed marriages (80 percent of those who supported Polish historical narratives) or had Polish co-workers. Among the migrants from Russia, while a number of divorces had occurred as a result of anti-Russian narratives, no informants reported the possibility of maintaining neutrality in relation to "battles of memory". According to existing research, the fairly widespread practice of intermarriage between Poles and Ukrainians tends to result in the assimilation of Ukrainian migrants rather than their integration (Brzozowska & Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2014; Górny et al., 2007). Some Ukrainian migrants mentioned in interviews that Poland had become their home following the birth of their children in this country.

In the current situation, one can point to the emergence of a "migrant workers community", whose members are united by lifestyle and social roles rather than ethnic origin. Labor migrants (*zarobitczany*), who make up the bulk of those coming from Ukraine to Poland, are neither particularly concerned about competing historical narratives nor generally oriented toward integration. Nevertheless, their behavior may be an additional reason for growing Polish anti-Ukrainian sentiment.

Some Ukrainian informants who had been living in Poland for more than five years noted that they had only started to experience hostility on account of their nationality in recent years. In detailed interviews, while only three stated that they had encountered explicit cases of ethnic discrimination, all of them mentioned hearing stories of such discrimination from his or her acquaintances, who in turn had heard them from other people. Given additional comments in thematic communities, the level of anti-Ukrainian sentiment can partly be explained in terms of the migrants' own attitudes, which can be seen as a reaction to the growth of such sentiments in the media.

Due to their ever-increasing number, Ukrainian students, as well as those working in the service sector, childcare, or education services, cannot fail to influence their host community. In parallel with the patriotic policies introduced by the Polish Law and Justice Party, the growth in the number of migrants has resulted in an increase in nationalist sentiment among Poles.

Conclusion

On the basis of an empirical study, the interactions of migrant historical narratives with those of the host community were traced in terms of competition and conflict. Despite frequent denials on the part of migrants that their successful integration into the host community is impeded by competing historical narratives, one of the main impediments to abandoning their own historical narratives consists in the negative reactions on the part of their host community. The main factors determining the strategies on the part of the migrant communities in terms of managing the interaction of their own historical narratives with those of their host communities are the level of their integration into those communities and the extent of their internal cohesion.

Taking into account the influence of the collective memory of the host community, the study reveals that the changing nature of historical conceptions should be considered according to a conceptual framework that is not only capable of describing the potential conflicts between historical narratives, but also offers a means for their possible resolution.

The axiological character of historical narratives, both on the part of Ukrainian migrants, as well as their Polish hosts, leads to difficulties in terms of their possible reconciliation. The results of the empirical study show that, while some of the migrants are happy to forget about their history and national identity, they are continually reminded of it by their host community. Thus, instead of reducing identification with a national historical narrative, the migration context tends to intensify it.

For migrants, it is not always easy to simply leave the past behind, since it lurks in the speeches of politicians and puts words in the mouths of people sitting beside them on public transport. Integration strategies on the part of Ukrainian migrants in Poland cannot be analyzed purely in terms of the activities of two actors (i.e., migrants and host community) due to the presence of more than two actors. Thus, it is necessary to consider migrant integration and assimilation not only in terms of the amount of time they have lived abroad or the place they have come from (Schiller, 1999; Stack, 1996), but also in terms of their self-identification, in which attitudes to the historical narratives of their country of origin play a key role.

The present study has focused on the role of historical narratives and the extent to which attitudes towards them lead to heterogeneity on the part of migrant communities. In the context of rivalry between historical narratives, the study of the relationship between migrants and their host community permits a return to the notion of migrants having their own views and values rather than comprising mere demographic shifts. When studying mobilities, the relevance of the obtained results is increased by including the migration of ideas. The study has shown that sharing a common physical

space does not automatically lead to the formation of a community of common destiny, but that migration in the context of rivalry between historical narratives exacerbates problems of identity both for the migrants and the host community. This increases the potential for conflict situations, whose resolution nevertheless requires an appeal to the axiological base of identity. In this way, perhaps “strangers” will not immediately become “natives”, but neither will they necessarily remain “enemies”.

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