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Resolution of the Polish Sejm on the 80th Anniversary of the Volhynian Crime in its Socio-political and Historical Context¹

Abstract: In July 2023, Poland commemorated the 80th anniversary of the Genocide of Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia – a crime committed by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army during the Second World War. On 11 July, the Sejm of the Republic of Poland adopted a resolution honoring the memory of the victims. The Discourse-Historical Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis was applied to identify the discursive strategies pursued in the mentioned document. In discussing the strategies of nomination and predication, the author has used the analytical categories described by Theo van Leeuwen. The first section of the paper provides the extralinguistic, socio-political and historical context in which the analysed act emerged. The statements of other representatives of the state, which, on the eve of the anniversary celebrations, aroused the strongest – not necessarily positive – reactions, are also quoted therein. The article shows that the Sejm’s resolution of 11 July, like no other, respected the sensibilities of Borderland circles. However, the message it contained was at odds with the narrative articulated by the President of the Republic of Poland and the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs. This discrepancy raised doubts whether there was deeper strategic thinking behind Polish historical policy.

Key words: politics of memory, commemorative resolution, Volhynian Genocide, discourse-historical approach, discursive strategies

Introduction

This article aimed to analyse the discourse surrounding the official celebrations of the 80th anniversary of the Genocide of Poles in Volhynia. The focus of interest was the message contained in the resolution of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of 11 July 2023 (Uchwała Sejmu RP z 11 lipca). The author attempted to identify the discursive strategies employed in the document (Wodak, 2008; Reisigl, 2011; Lipiński, 2020). Consequently, answers to the following research questions were sought: What names were given to the discursively constructed actors, places, or events? (nomination); What behaviours or characteristics were attributed to them? (predication); How were opinions and actions justified? (argumentation); What was the perspective of the authors? Whose point of view was taken into account? (perspectivation); Were the speakers’ judgements, rationale, and demands openly expressed? Was the tone of the statements deliberately toned down or amplified? (intensification and mitigation). The answers to these questions are presented in the third part of this article. In discussing the strategies of nomi-

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nation and predication, the author has used the analytical categories proposed by Theo van Leeuwen (1996).

The second part of the paper clarifies on whose initiative the examined resolution was created. The reader also learns how its final content was forged. The opening section of the article reconstructs the extralinguistic, socio-political and historical context in which the analysed statement emerged. The statements of other high-ranking state officials, which, on the eve of the 80th anniversary of the Volhynian Massacre, aroused the strongest public reactions, are also quoted therein. The author tried to show that the Sejm's resolution of 11 July, like no other, respected the sensibilities of Borderland circles – Poles who were resettled from the eastern areas of the Second Polish Republic, and their descendants (Wojnar, 2022, p. 72). However, the message it contained contradicted the narrative adopted by the President of the Republic of Poland and the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Extralinguistic, socio-political, and historical context

In the post-war period, highlighting the suffering of one's own nation has become a popular foreign policy strategy (Korzeniewski, 2006; Finkel, 2010; Zhurzhenko, 2012; Chwedoruk, 2018). Victim status is treated as a source of political advantage, providing access to rare and closely guarded goods – sympathy, understanding, and international support. It makes it easier to justify current claims and political actions (Kohlhammer, 2001, p. 60; Todorov, 2003, pp. 142–143; Korzeniewski, 2006, pp. 20–21). Those burdened with the stigma of the perpetrator, on the other hand, face the possibility of an immediate loss of moral capital (Łuczewski, 2017, p. 27). The caveat here is that groups demanding recognition of their own grievances are not always motivated by utilitarian concerns. Their behaviour may be guided by moral or cognitive considerations. This is not to say, however, that political actors do not see the advantages of victim status. These observations help to understand a trend that emerged in Central and Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It consisted in a number of nations in the region beginning to prove that they had been victims of genocide and seeking official recognition of their claims (Finkel, 2010). This tendency was also evident in Poland. In the early 1990s, the memory of the Katyn Massacre was unearthed. Central state institutions immediately became involved in its preservation (Głowacka-Grajper, 2016, p. 253; Czubaj-Kuźmin, 2019, pp. 130–132). In the commemorative resolution of 2000, the killing of Polish officers was officially described as genocide (Uchwała Sejmu RP z 13 kwietnia). The process of reviving the memory of the Volhynian Crime was much slower. During the first years of the political transformation, the issue was practically absent from the wider public debate. A relatively narrow group of researchers recognized the importance of the problem. The sensitive subject was raised by Józef Turowski and Władysław Siemaszko (1990), Ryszard Torzecki (1993), Andrzej L. Sowa (1998), Ewa Siemaszko (1998, 2000). In addition, the readers had the chance to familiarize themselves with the works of Władysław Filar (1999) and Wiktor Poliszczuk (1995, 2000). Later on, more publications have appeared that brought the Massacre into focus. Among the most important were those of Grzegorz Hryciuk (2005) and Grzegorz Motyka (2011,

2013, 2016). In general, however, the voice of the Kresovians (the Borderland circles) remained unheard; their commemorative actions did not go beyond the private domain and were not supported by the state (Głowacka-Grajper, 2016, p. 247). For a long time, the Polish Parliament did not take a stand on the issue. The first resolution commemorating the Massacre was adopted only in 2003. The text, drafted in agreement with the Ukrainian side, was strongly inscribed in the discourse of the Parisian "Kultura." The whole event was seen not so much from a national perspective as from a purely humanitarian one. The document highlighted two issues: the suffering of the Poles in Volhynia and the suffering of the Ukrainians – victims of Polish reprisals (*Oświadczenie Sejmu RP z 10 lipca...*). Kyiv's fierce opposition meant that the term "genocide," which – in the opinion of many parliamentarians – would have been the most appropriate, did not appear in the resolution. For the same reason, no reference was made to the concept of ethnic cleansing. Instead, euphemistic terms such as "dramatic years" or "tragedy of the Polish population" appeared in the document. The following quote succinctly encapsulates the problematic nature of this expression: "In the use of this term, it is not a matter of acknowledging the tragic nature of these events but of relativising responsibility for them. A crime (not only genocide) must have a perpetrator; by speaking of a crime, we imply the existence of a criminal. Tragedy, on the other hand, is something that happened to us: an accident, an act of God, an act of fate; by speaking of tragedy, we thereby remove the thought of a perpetrator" (Olszański, 2013a, pp. 37–38). The negotiated statement did not specify which formations carried out the operation against the Poles. Instead, it placed strong accent on the external circumstances in which this crime took place (German occupation, Soviet and Nazi policies of fomenting nationalist conflicts). This distribution of emphasis led to the suspicion that its authors were trying to dilute the responsibility of the perpetrators.

The 60th anniversary of the Volhynian Massacre was marked by a commemoration ceremony in Pawliwka attended by the Presidents of Poland and Ukraine. Leonid Kuchma's commemorative speech was part of a narrative of symmetry of guilt (Motyka, 2020; Olszański, 2017, pp. 33–34). It pointed out that the civilian population of the Borderlands had fallen victim to the mutual killings perpetrated by the two national liberation movements. As a result of these clashes, the parties involved were supposed to have suffered equal losses (Stępień 2003, p. 108). Aleksander Kwaśniewski chose to condemn Polish reprisals, Operation Vistula, and the nationality policy of the Second Polish Republic. He also mentioned the extremely unfavourable circumstances in which the two neighbouring nations found themselves. He did not hesitate to declare that the killings in Volhynia were genocide initiated by the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). The symbolic gestures of the political elites, however, have not solved the most pressing problem: the overwhelming majority of the victims of the Crime still lie in nameless death pits, waiting for a Christian burial (Olszański, 2013b, p. 98).

In 2006, there was another joint commemoration. Lech Kaczyński and Viktor Yushchenko commemorated the Ukrainians and Poles who died in Pawłokoma near Przemyśl. Only one year later, the decision was made to honour the commander of the UPA, Roman Shuchevych, with the title of Hero of Ukraine. In Poland, voices were raised that attempts at historical rehabilitation of the OUN-UPA were taking place with the tacit

consent of the authorities in Warsaw. There was a growing conviction in the Borderland circles that the memory of the victims was being sacrificed in the name of good relations between Poland and Ukraine (Głowacka-Grajper, 2016, pp. 250–251). Subsequent parliamentary debates proved that a certain section of the political class was indeed afraid that raising the issue would lead to an increase in anti-Ukrainian sentiment in Poland and *vice versa*. The situation was not helped by the fact that the celebrations of the 65th anniversary of the Massacre were rather modest, and the Marshal of the Sejm blocked a draft resolution recognising the Crime as genocide (Narbutt, 2008).

In early 2009, President L. Kaczyński and his Ukrainian counterpart travelled to the Lviv region to pay tribute to the Poles murdered in Huta Pieniacka. The conciliatory speech by the representative of the Republic of Poland did little to assuage the growing frustration of the Kresovians. It did not specify at whose hands the local population had perished; it did not state that the Crime should be recognised as genocide. Instead, the speech stressed that the whole tragedy would not have happened if the two peoples had not been drawn into the cogs of the criminal machinery of Soviet Communism and German Nazism (Kaczyński, 2009). Shortly afterwards, the Polish Sejm adopted a resolution describing the Volhynian Massacre as a “mass murder with the characteristics of ethnic cleansing and genocide” (*Uchwała Sejmu RP z 15 lipca...*). The question of the external causes of the Crime was omitted. Instead, reference was made to the victims of Polish retaliation and to the Ukrainians who resisted the criminal acts of their compatriots. There was also no hesitation in pointing out which formation bore the odium of guilt. The Deputies acknowledged that public knowledge of the commemorated event had faded. The results of surveys confirmed this intuition. In the early 2000s, 44% of Polish respondents openly admitted that they did not know who the victims of the Volhynian Massacre were; 41% of pollees answered that they were Poles. 5% said that they were Poles and Ukrainians (Strzeszewski, 2003, p. 2). Responsibility for the Crime was attributed to Russians (21%), Ukrainians (19%), or UPA/Ukrainian nationalists (10%); 45% of interviewees were unable to say who was responsible for the tragedy. The data published five years later was even more alarming: 54% of respondents were unable to identify the victims of the Massacre; 31% said the victims were Poles. 4% said they were Poles and Ukrainians (Makaruk, 2008, pp. 3–4). Blame was placed on Russians (19%), Ukrainians (14%), and UPA/Ukrainian nationalists (5%). 57% of pollees were unable to answer the question of who had committed the Crime. The data presented makes it possible to understand why the resolution included the demand for the restoration of the memory of the Volhynian Massacre. The act, which was adopted by acclamation, provoked strong protests in western Ukraine. It was not only the legal qualification of the Crime that raised objections; Ukrainian nationalists claimed that by using the term “Eastern Borderlands,” the Poles were undermining the territorial integrity of their eastern neighbour.

In 2010, OUN leader Stepan Bandera was granted the title of Hero of Ukraine. It was another decision by V. Yushchenko that came as a surprise to the government in Warsaw (PAP, 2010). A part of Polish society concluded that over the years, the political elite had shown excessive leniency towards Kyiv and had begun to demand changes in state’s historical policy. On the 70th anniversary of the Massacre, both chambers of the Polish Parliament spoke out. They unanimously acknowledged that the Crime was “ethnic cleansing with the characteristics of genocide” and that its memory should be

a permanent part of the national historical consciousness. The institutions also honoured the memory of the so-called Righteous Ukrainians. The Senate's June resolution was the first document to mention the incredible cruelty of the (precisely specified) perpetrators (*Uchwała Senatu RP z 20 czerwca...*). Its authors decided to recall the great efforts made to build Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation. In this context, the names of Jerzy Giedroyc and L. Kaczyński were mentioned. No reference was made to the grassroots activities of the Kresovians who have been working for many years to commemorate the victims. Their merits, however, were recognised by the lower chamber of the Parliament (*Uchwała Sejmu RP z 12 lipca...*). The Sejm's resolution also placed emphasis on external factors, which were seen as the cause of everything that had transpired in the years 1943–1945.

The Volhynian Genocide was a major campaign issue in the run-up to the 2015 presidential elections in Poland. On 9 April, Verkhovna Rada passed a law declaring members of the OUN and the UPA to have been combatants fighting for Ukraine's independence. It was a blow to the image of Bronisław Komorowski, who was running for re-election at the time. Only hours earlier, he had delivered a conciliatory speech in the Ukrainian Parliament (Kordas, 2017, pp. 200–203). Some Poles may have hoped that the electoral success of Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) and Andrzej Duda would lead to a reassessment of Polish historical policy. To meet these expectations, on the 73rd anniversary of the Massacre, parliamentarians adopted two commemorative resolutions. In doing so, they dispensed with the euphemisms that had appeared in previous documents of this kind. Both chambers emphatically stated that the Volhynian Crime constituted genocide. Furthermore, they did not fail to mention the cruelty of the perpetrators. Surprisingly, the Senate resolution lacked the traditional reference to the value of Polish-Ukrainian dialogue and reconciliation (*Uchwała Senatu RP z 7 lipca...*). Nor was there any attempt to reconstruct the historical context of the Massacre. Instead, the document included a call for the establishment of a National Day of Remembrance dedicated to the victims. The Sejm agreed with the senators' request. It also expressed solidarity with the neighbour, engaged in a struggle to preserve its territorial integrity since 2014. For the first time, specific expectations were articulated towards Kyiv. The Deputies called for crime scenes to be found and marked, for decent burials to be provided, for complete lists of victims to be drawn up, and for Polish and Ukrainian historians to cooperate more closely (*Uchwała Sejmu RP z 22 lipca...*). These resolutions came as a shock to the Ukrainian elite. After their adoption, tensions in mutual relations seemed to reach a climax (Kordas, 2017, pp. 215–223). In 2017, Ukraine blocked further searches, exhumations, and burials of Polish victims of the Massacre. Officially, the moratorium was a response to the dismantling of the UPA monument in Hruszowice and the controversies over the reconstruction of commemorative plaques on Monastyr Hill (ibidem, p. 226; Leśkiewicz, 2023, 2024).

After the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022, there was a breakthrough in Polish-Ukrainian relations. During the first months of the war, relations between the two countries grew closer. There was hope that politicians would do everything possible to ensure that the issue of the Volhynian Genocide would no longer divide the neighbouring nations. Reality painfully verified these expectations. Suffice it to say that the Ukrainian side has still not agreed to more extensive search and exhumations in Volhynia. On the occasion of the 79th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, Volodymyr Zelenski sent a bill to

the Parliament that would grant Poles a special status in Ukraine. Contrary to earlier rumours, the Ukrainian President did not directly condemn the crimes of the OUN-UPA. In the pre-election period, the attitude of a strategic ally was an image problem for the Polish government. The policy of unconditional support for Ukraine was increasingly perceived as naive and quickly lost public support. The political class was accused of impotence and incompetence (MA, 2022). The atmosphere was not improved by an interview given by Andrzej Duda, who cooled public expectations towards Kyiv. In June this year, the President admitted that he does not expect the 80th anniversary of the Genocide to bring a breakthrough (Duda, 2023). He announced that Polish leaders would act very calmly, relying on the reciprocal goodwill of their partner. He evaded answering the question of whether Ukraine should apologise for the Crime. The interview will be remembered above all for the words he addressed to Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zaleski, a man who has worked tirelessly to ensure that the victims of the Massacre are remembered. The clergyman, who was awarded the title of Custodian of National Memory in 2010, did not hide his disappointment with the attitude of the most important people in the state, saying that they showed hypocrisy and cowardice. Referring to this criticism, A. Duda said, "I would prefer [T. Isakowicz-Zaleski – K.G.] not to concern himself with politics but with what a priest should concern himself with. We [...] do quiet politics. Not the politics of running around with pitchforks, but the politics of calmly seeking agreement on historically difficult issues" (Duda, 2023). The quoted statement must be considered inappropriate for at least two reasons. First of all, it should be remembered that the victims of the Volhynian Genocide were mainly the rural population and that the killings were carried out with simple agricultural tools – including axes and pitchforks. Some commentators also pointed out that the President's language was reminiscent of communist propaganda slogans, such as the memorable call "Students to studying, writers to writing" (Warzecha, 2023). The initiative of Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki who, in almost total solitude, erected a makeshift cross in Ostrówki in Volhynia on 7 July, also provoked chilly reactions (FO, 2023). Two days later, the Presidents of Poland and Ukraine attended an ecumenical service in Lutsk Cathedral. After the ceremony, the social media accounts of both leaders read, "Together we pay tribute to all the innocent victims of Volhynia! Remembrance unites us! Together we are stronger!" (Rebelińska, Junko, 2023). A vague message also appeared on Zbigniew Rau's Twitter profile. On the 80th anniversary of the Massacre, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs wrote, "We pay homage to the still unnamed victims of those events. We stand today in reverie, remembering to honour and pray for all victims of armed conflicts. It is our belief that only joint efforts to discover the truth will lead to a lasting reconciliation" (Rau, 2023). The statements, which did not specify who the perpetrators and victims were, provoked another wave of criticism. Their authors seemed to have completely ignored the prevailing public sentiment. Polls published in July 2023 showed that it is difficult to find a Pole who has not heard of the Volhynian Massacre, and 78% of respondents said that the Ukrainian President should apologise for this Crime (Scovil, 2023, pp. 4–6). Finally, 72% of pollees believe that it was genocide (Szaniawski, 2018). Significantly, 65% believe that Ukraine should agree to the unrestricted exhumation of the victims (Bartkiewicz, 2023). Hopes for a political agreement on this issue have been raised after the talks between Radosław Sikorski and Andrij Sybiha that took place in Warsaw at the end of 2024. After

the meeting, a bilateral statement of the foreign ministers was released. It included an assurance that there are no formal obstacles for search and exhumation efforts. Moreover, the Ukrainian authorities declared their readiness for a positive consideration of the IPN's requests. The ministers pointed to the need to create a joint Working Group under the patronage of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland and the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine (Sikorski, Sybiha, 2024).

The legislative process

The resolution commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Volhynian Massacre was adopted by the Sejm of the ninth-term, which was formed after the parliamentary elections of 13 October 2019, in which the winning party, Law and Justice, won up to 235 seats in the 460-seat house (PKW, 2019). The Civic Coalition (Koalicja Obywatelska, KO) ranked second with 134 votes in the lower chamber. The Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, SLD) won 49 seats. Representatives of the Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL) and the Confederation Liberty and Independence (Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość, Konfederacja) also sat in the Sejm.

The draft resolution designated with no. 3430 was submitted to the Sejm on 4 July 2023. It was prepared by Bartłomiej Wróblewski, Dariusz Paprocki and Rafał Sierchuła from the Institute of National Remembrance in Poznań (Sejm RP, 2023a, p. 22). Thirty-three Law and Justice members signed the initiative. On 7 July, the draft was considered by the Culture and Media Committee. The atmosphere in which the deliberations took place proved that the debating parties had adopted a cooperative attitude. It was a novelty in the political debate on the Volhynian Crime. From the very beginning, the authors were driven by the ambition to create a resolution that all parliamentary forces would sign without hesitation (*ibidem*, p. 4).

During the first reading, minor revisions were made to B. Wróblewski's draft. The most significant change was the addition of acknowledgements to the Borderland circles: guardians of the memory of the Massacre. The passage dedicated to the ongoing war beyond Poland's eastern border was the most controversial. According to Tomasz Zieliński (PiS), Kacper Płażyński (PiS), and Paulina Matysiak (Lewica), the reference to the current situation in Ukraine should be removed from the resolution. The Deputies pointed out that the Sejm had repeatedly expressed solidarity with its neighbour under attack. They argued that the text under consideration would not only be analysed in Kyiv or Moscow: it would send a strong signal internally. It should therefore be borne in mind that any veiled attempt to trivialise or relativise this Crime will have the opposite effect to that intended (*ibidem*, pp. 12–14). Joanna Lichocka (PiS), Iwona Śledzińska-Katarasińska (KO), Małgorzata Prokop-Paczkowska (Lewica), Krzysztof Mieszkowski (KO), and Marek Suski (PiS) categorically rejected the idea of removing the reference to the war in Ukraine. According to J. Lichocka, the context in which the resolution was adopted was as important as the commemoration of the Volhynian Massacre (*ibidem*, p. 12). There were also claims that by omitting the topic, the Sejm would subscribe to Russian propaganda. Incidentally, Michał Urbaniak's proposal was not supported. The representative of the Confederation proposed that the following sentence be added to the text, "The

Sejm of the Republic of Poland condemns the propagation of ideology and symbolism referring to the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army; the persons and organisations who organised this genocide must be stigmatised and forever constitute an anti-model of action” (ibidem, p. 16). Such open criticism of Ukrainian historical policy would certainly strengthen the tenor of the resolution.

The second reading of the draft took place at the 79th sitting of the Sejm on 11 July 2023. The resolution was supported by the Law and Justice, Civic Coalition, Coalitional Parliamentary Club of the Left (Koalicyjny Klub Parlamentarny Lewicy), Polish Coalition (Koalicja Polska), Poland 2050 Parliamentary Group (Koło Parlamentarne Polska 2050), and Polish Matters Deputies’ Circle (Koło Poselskie Polskie Sprawy). Representatives of all these formations stressed that the issue of exhumation and dignified burial of the victims is a priority (Sejm RP, 2023b, pp. 80–82). Only the members of the Confederation spoke about the shortcomings of the draft. Krzysztof Bosak emphasised the lack of a clear condemnation of the Ukrainian attitude towards the OUN-UPA. Grzegorz Braun, on the other hand, pointed out that citizens expect real action and not “tearful proclamations.” The Deputy said that the resolution under consideration would not change anything, “It will not change the fact that the excesses of the first and second people in the state will go down in history, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland with two sticks for a cross in Ukraine, the President who accuses the guardians of national memory of running with pitchforks, or the excesses of Ms Marshal of the Sejm [...] Gosiewska, who did not hesitate to legitimise with her person those who cultivate the cordial memory of the genocidaires in Ukraine” (ibidem, p. 82).

A member of the Poland 2050 Parliamentary Group also referred to President A. Duda’s unfortunate statement, “I remember the campaign from 8 years ago, in 2015, when the currently ruling party built its campaign on criticism of the achievements of previous presidents: Komorowski, Kaczyński, Kwaśniewski in relations with Ukrainians. I think that today, President Duda could envy his predecessors. He could envy the way his predecessors spoke or the way the Ukrainian presidents spoke with them, how clearly they spoke about who murdered the Poles. There was no talk of the innocent victims of Volhynia. It is a euphemism which today replaces the truth. We are also here to demand this truth” (ibidem, p. 83).

In recent years, we have become accustomed to the fact that parliamentary discussions on the Volhynian Massacre are dominated by emotion rather than rational argument. Political debates were usually a pretext for ruthless attacks on interlocutors and turned into a festival of mutual accusations. Against this background, the 2023 deliberations stood out in a positive way, even taking into account the verbal clashes between Małgorzata Gosiewska and G. Braun (ibidem, pp. 82, 85). Despite the objections raised by the Confederation, the resolution commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Genocide was passed unanimously: 440 Deputies voted in favor.

Volhynian Massacre in the anniversary resolution of the Sejm

The Sejm’s July resolution constructs the identities of seven subjects: the direct victims and perpetrators of the Volhynian Crime, the Righteous Ukrainians, the Kresovians,

the Ukrainian, Russian, and Polish political elites. The victims are referred to by collective nouns, most often by the ethnonym “Poles.” The text emphasises that the victims of the Massacre mainly rural people, large families, women, children, and the elderly (*Uchwała Sejmu RP z 11 lipca...*). To emphasise the enormity of the loss suffered, the authors used the strategy of aggregation, pointing out that on Bloody Sunday, ninety-nine villages in Volhynia were attacked and a significant proportion of their inhabitants murdered. It is recalled that the entire operation claimed more than 100,000 lives and several hundred thousand people left the South-Eastern Borderlands to save themselves. The aggrieved were placed in the passive role (passivation strategy): they are the party that does not cry out for revenge, although they were victims of a brutal genocide, intimidated and forced to flee under threat of death. On the other hand, the perpetrators (the unnamed leaders of the OUN, who planned the genocide, and the UPA units, who carried out the plan) were seen as active, dynamic force. The people responsible – described as nationalists or chauvinists (a negative ideologisation) – were said to have shown incredible brutality, ruthlessness, and deep contempt for human life. One can assume that the authors of the resolution were referring to the concept of the Polish lawyer Ryszard Szawłowski, who suggested that the Volhynian Massacre should be called *genocidium atrox*, i.e. cruel/terrible genocide (2008, pp. 26–27). However, this term did not appear *expressis verbis*. The authors of the text stressed that the perpetrators aimed at the destruction of the Poles in the Borderlands, killed all those who dared to oppose them, ransacked property, and liquidated every trace of Polishness – cultural heritage, churches, and other places of worship (*Uchwała Sejmu RP z 11 lipca...*). The resolution added that Ukrainian civilians sometimes supported these acts. At the same time, tribute was paid to those who resisted the crimes committed by their compatriots: many of them paid for their courage with their own lives. Deputies also saluted the Kresovians and their descendants, who have been demanding the truth about the Genocide for many years. The resolution clearly states that their actions are not motivated by resentment or ill will but by a genuine desire to listen to witnesses and commemorate the victims. In a veiled way, however, it criticised the evasive attitude of the Ukrainian political class. Blocking the exhumations and the dignified burial of the victims of genocide in a country currently experiencing brutal aggression was considered particularly incomprehensible. The criticism was also aimed at Russian decision-makers (or rather “invaders”) who consider violence and brute force to be appropriate ways of managing international relations (*ibidem*). Against this background, the Polish political class comes off exceptionally well: the lower house comes across as an energetic and decisive entity. The Polish Sejm is striving for genuine Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation, recognising the righteous deeds of some Ukrainians and supporting the state in its fight against Russian aggression. At the same time, it tries to respect the sensibilities of Borderland circles, insisting on the exhumation, dignified burial, and commemoration of the victims of the Genocide. The text contains a subtle but clear suggestion that the Ukrainian people should acknowledge their guilt from the Second World War. Justifying their position, the Deputies pointed out that the Kresovians and their descendants have been demanding the fulfilment of the above-mentioned demands for decades (the topos of the people). Moreover, the efforts made so far for Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation should not be wasted. A sincere compromise cannot be built without an examination of conscience and memory (a reference to the topos of a healthy

foundation). Those wavering should be convinced by the enormity of the crime committed. After all, it is difficult to imagine a reason why the Polish state should not commemorate a Massacre in which more than 100,000 citizens perished (the topos of numbers).

The resolution to mark the 80th anniversary of the Volhynian Genocide took on a more direct tone than the documents adopted in 2003, 2009, 2013, and 2016. This is due to several factors. Firstly, it did not use euphemisms such as “tragedy,” “tragic fate of the Poles,” or “ethnic cleansing with the characteristics of genocide.” The Crime was unequivocally recognised as genocide (the term appears as many as five times in the text), although the authors were aware that such an assessment would provoke violent protests from Kyiv. Moreover, there was no hesitation in using the term “Eastern Borderlands,” which had caused so much controversy in western Ukraine in 2009. The OUN-UPA was bluntly identified as responsible for the Massacre, and the cruelty and ruthlessness of the formation, which today enjoys the recognition of Ukrainian society, were openly discussed. A number of strongly evaluative keywords (e.g. “slaughter,” “chauvinists,” “looting,” “aggression,” “violence,” “invaders”) appear in the analysed text. The result is an image that can evoke strong emotions: horror, sadness, compassion, longing, or perhaps disgust, anger, embarrassment or remorse. The Deputies do not shy away from figurative metaphors and large quantifiers. The Genocide was likened to a cataclysm – a fire that first engulfed the territory of Volhynia and then spread to the rest of the Second Republic (*ibidem*). The authors twice mention that they will endeavour to exhume and commemorate all the victims of the Crime, although it is no secret that finding all the remains is simply impossible.

Summary

The moral-religious discourse, as well as the humanitarian-legal discourse, is clearly present in the document studied. The authors are guided by the assumption that all human beings possess an inherent dignity that does not disappear with death. Therefore, it is the duty of today’s generations not only to remember their ancestors but also to search for their mortal remains – the resting places of the dead must be properly marked and maintained. It is important to note that, according to the teachings of the Catholic Church, the burial of the dead is one of the works of mercy.

In assessing the Crime, the authors use the concept of genocide while emphasising that it also had a cultural dimension (the systematic destruction of all traces of Polishness). Perhaps this is a reference to Raphael Lemkin’s original concept, on the basis of which the United Nations’ definition of genocide was developed (Głogowska-Balcerzak, 2013, pp. 80–84). In this respect, the text under analysis stands out from earlier resolutions that highlighted the purely physical aspect of the genocide in Volhynia. The boundary dates adopted and the numerical data showing the scale of the Crime coincide with the findings of the Institute of National Remembrance. The emphasis on the Ukrainian Righteous is also in line with the official narrative of this institution. This motif is, after all, a permanent element of acts dedicated to the victims of the Volhynian Massacre.

The list of topics covered in the analysed document suggests that its authors did not want to expose themselves to accusations of minimising or relativising the Genocide.

Thus, provisions that provoked such accusations in previous years were not included in the resolution. For example, the issue of Polish retaliation, the short-sighted nationality policy of the Second Republic, or the possible complicity of the occupying forces were not addressed. The result is a text that corresponds to the sensibilities of the Kresovians, which, after many years, have lived to see a symbolic rehabilitation. It should be noted that the position of the Sejm was completely at odds with the narrative articulated by the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This discrepancy raised the question of whether there was any deeper strategic thought behind Polish historical policy. In an interview with Radio Zet, A. Duda suggested that the activities of perhaps the most prominent guardian of the memory of the Massacre were simply irresponsible and had a hidden pro-Russian agenda. In 2004, when a wider discussion about the Volhynian Crime was only beginning, Z. Rau's somewhat perfunctory statement would not have aroused so many negative comments. Today, after twenty years of uneasy debate on the issue, the Twitter post by the head of Polish diplomacy was surprisingly vague. It did not satisfy those who demanded that the Polish political elite be more proactive and assertive in promoting our vision of the past at the international arena.

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Sejmowa uchwała upamiętniająca 80. rocznicę zbrodni wołyńskiej i jej społeczno-polityczny kontekst

Streszczenie

W lipcu 2023 r. Polacy upamiętnili 80. rocznicę ludobójstwa na Wołyniu i Galicji Wschodniej – zbrodni popełnionej przez Organizację Ukraińskich Nacjonalistów i Ukraińską Powstańczą Armię w trakcie II wojny światowej. 11 lipca Sejm Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej przyjął uchwałę, w której uczczono pamięć pomordowanych. Wykorzystując podejście dyskursywno-historyczne w ramach krytycznej analizy dyskursu autorka ukazała strategię dyskursywną, jakie realizowali twórcy tego dokumentu. Omawiając zastosowane strategie referencji oraz predykcji, odwołała się do kategorii analitycznych, które opisał Theo van Leeuwen. W otwierającej sekcji pracy zrekonstruowano kontekst zewnątrzjęzykowy, społeczno-polityczny i historyczny, w którym zaistniała analizowana wypowiedź. Przytoczono w niej również stwierdzenia innych przedstawicieli państwa polskiego, które w przededniu uroczysto-

ści upamiętniających 80. rocznicę zbrodni wołyńskiej wzbudziły najsilniejsze – niekoniecznie pozytywne – reakcje społeczne. Artykuł pokazuje, że uchwała Sejmu z 11 lipca (jak żadna inna) wpisała się we wrażliwość polskich środowisk kresowych. Przesłanie w niej zawarte nie pokrywało się jednak z narracją, jaką przyjął Prezydent Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej i polski Minister Spraw Zagranicznych. Zaobserwowany rozdzźwięk prowokował pytania o to, czy za polską polityką historyczną stoi jakakolwiek głębsza myśl strategiczna.

Słowa kluczowe: polityka pamięci, uchwały upamiętniające, ludobójstwo na Wołyniu, podejście dyskursywno-historyczne, strategię dyskursywne

