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Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics 17 (2): 25–43
DOI: 10.2478/jef-2023-0016

"I HAD NO CHILDHOOD": A TRAUMA HISTORY OF DEPORTED UKRAINIANS FROM WESTERN BOYKIVSHCHYNA

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ABSTRACT
The article is devoted to the trauma history of Ukrainians from Western Boykivshchyna, part of the Boykivshchyna ethnographical region situated in modern Ukraine. Operation Vistula (1947–1950) was the forced resettlement of more than 150,000 Ukrainians and mixed Polish-Ukrainian families from the territory of Rzeszów, Lublin and Kraków provinces (Voivodeships) to the western and northern territories of Poland, leading to radical changes within this regional group. The article deals with the difficult experience of the resettlers not only in the context of psychological, but also cultural, trauma. According to the theory of Polish sociologist Piotr Sztompka, three main phases of cultural trauma induced by resettlement have been highlighted and are outlined as strategies to cope with trauma: contemporary resettlers' preservation of native culture, religion and family tradition, and sharing memories of the past.

KEYWORDS: trauma • deportation • Operation Vistula • Ukrainians • Western Boykivshchyna

INTRODUCTION

The trauma of forced displacement or deportation has a series of specific features that qualitatively distinguish it from traumas induced by other types of social catastrophe. Speaking about the traumatic effects of deportation, we cannot avoid the issue of identity, because the core meaning of any individual or group identity is seen as sustained by remembering (Misztal 2003: 133). Identity, which in addition to all other components (such as a collective proper noun, myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more differentiating elements of common culture and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population), implies connection with one's fatherland, or "an association with a specific homeland", as Anthony David Smith (1991: 21) puts it. When the inhabitants of the Western Boykivshchyna[1] were displaced, or rather, 'rooted

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ISSN 1736-6518 (print), ISSN 2228-0987 (online)

out' from their farms and native regions, they did not lose the connection with their homeland, but lost the homeland itself. Therefore, having lost their own real community in their native land after some time they started to create a symbolic community in the strange land, united by common memories and ideas about their 'lost homeland'. Very often such communities possess a collective identity based on a common past with traumatic events from personal and family life, and also a shared vision of this past. For their determination I use the term "communities of memory", which was previously used by Iwona Irwin-Zarecka (1994: 47), who claims: "For people to feel a sense of bonding with others solely through shared experience, the experience itself would often be of extraordinary or even traumatic quality". She also notes: "Indeed, it is often the victims of traumas who most immediately and naturally bond together" (ibid.: 50).

The deportation of Ukrainians during Operation Vistula took place mainly in 1947. By Operation Vistula, we mean the forced displacement of the Ukrainian minority and mixed Polish–Ukrainian families (more than 150,000 people) including representatives of ethnographic groups – mainly Boykos and Lemkos – from the mountainous area in the southeastern provinces of post-war Poland, to the so-called *Ziemie Odzyskane* ('Recovered Territories') in the west and north of the country (in a landscape of plains and the seaside) (Drozd 1997a: 73, 75–76). An official version of this resettlement, announced by the political authorities of the time, claimed that people were replaced to prevent them from supporting the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (an underground army that was fighting for the independence of Ukraine between 1942 and 1960). However, the real cause is assumed to be the desire of the authorities to build a single-national Poland (Drozd and Tyma 2017: 13). The evacuation plan for Operation Vistula includes the statement that the main purpose for the resettlement of Ukrainians was their assimilation into a new Polish environment (AAN 2/196/0/4/784: 9). It is significant that the instructions in the plan of displacement specified that the name 'Ukrainian' should not be used in relation to the people who were to be resettled (ibid.).

The displaced were sent to the so-called Recovered Territories, i.e. the former German territories, including Warmia-Masuria, Western Pomerania, the part of Greater Poland and Lubush Voivodeships, Lower Silesia and the Opole region. Historically, these regions had been located within the borders of the German Reich, although they had been periodically and often even for long periods governed by Poland. These territories were ceded to Poland after the agreements at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences (1945). Poles from various other regions of Poland (the Bialystok, Maziovian, Vilnius, Volyn (also called Kresowiacy) and Rzeszów regions; Drozd 1997a: 6), Ukrainian SSR and European countries were repatriated in this territory. Generally, between 1945 and 1950 more than 4.3 million Poles were resettled in the Recovered Territories (Jacher 2011: 71), including more than 150,000 Ukrainians in 1947 from the territory of Rzeszów, Lublin and Kraków Voivodeships. According to our respondents, apart from exclusively Ukrainian families, mixed Polish–Ukrainian families were also evicted (Krukar 2016: 40). If a husband was Polish and his wife Ukrainian, that family was left, but if the husband was Ukrainian and his wife Polish, the family was deported (FM: Anna, b. 1934).

Polish troops failed to deport some of the westernmost Ukrainian villages (Lemkos and mixed families). Eviction were also carried out as early as 1950 (Misiło 2013: 34–35), in addition to which, at the beginning of the deportation those Ukrainians who provided the local industrial infrastructure were not resettled, such as workers in the oil and forestry industries, railway workers, etc. (Drozd 1997a: 62).

State authorities used the concept of 'latitudinal resettlement' to accommodate the population arriving in the Polish state because they were settled more or less along the same geographic parallels. That was supposed to lead to their easier adaptation to new places due to landscape and climate similarities between the old and new places of residence (Głowacka-Grajper 2018: 200). In 2012, according to a nationwide survey, about 4.5 million people in Poland declared that their parents, grandparents or great-grandparents had come from the eastern borderlands, representing about 15% of Polish society (ibid.: 201). As for the Ukrainians of Western Boykivshchyna, they were resettled from territories that remained part of Poland, while Poles, as mentioned above, arrived mainly from different regions of Poland and the USSR.

For the majority of displaced people, the radical change in environmental conditions did not come without negative consequences. Some people found it hard to move from the mountainous slopes where they used to live to plains landscapes with increased humidity. Thus, the trauma of deportation was deepened by the psychological trauma of adaptation to new living conditions.

THEORETICAL ASPECTS

The American researcher Cathy Caruth (1995) had a significant impact on the formation of the psychoanalytic theory of trauma. According to Caruth, Sigmund Freud's (1920: 237) intuition linked the reaction to trauma with the involuntary re-experiencing of a traumatic experience that simply cannot be left in the past. At the moment of trauma, there is a "gap in the experiences of the mind" meaning that it is not possible to fully comprehend the event, it therefore becomes impossible to leave this event in the past (Caruth 1995: 152–153; Alexander 2012: 14). Being hidden in the unconscious, the event is experienced irrationally "in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the trauma victim" (Alexander 2012: 14). Caruth (1995: 4–5) avers:

> The pathology consists, rather, solely in the structure of its experience or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event.

So, according to Caruth, trauma cannot be localised in an act of violence or an initial event from a person's life, i.e. in the form in which it was unknown for the first time, rather, it returns to haunt one in the future (ibid.: 8–9).

Another American researcher Dominick LaCapra (Nowak 2011: 315) writes that trauma is a destructive experience that creates gaps in the existence of those affected. You cannot control the damage involved in trauma, it will always exist. Moreover, the trauma is renewed whenever it is mentioned. Even if we want to object, remembrances return and eliminate the distance separating us from the traumatic event, taking us back to those times again and again. A typical post-traumatic reactions is the necessity to repeat traumatic stories. This is a particular situation in which suppression of painful experiences involves forgetting and remembering concurrently. This type of trauma induces loss of the previous pre-trauma identity. These tragic recollections are also called the pain of Prometheus, activated when communities have consciousness of their lost worlds (Nowak 2011: 315).

In the case of Ukrainians deported during Operation Vistula, it is worth talking about both psychological trauma and cultural trauma, which affected the immediate participants in the resettlement as well as their descendants, when the lived experience transformed into family life stories, and over time became part of the public discourse. In other words, the psychological and cultural shock from experiencing forced resettlement has not been overcome for many years and has not disappeared but has partially shifted into the plane of cultural trauma for the deported communities, which also affected the consciousness of the children and grandchildren of Ukrainians from Western Boykivshchyna.

The field research materials confirm this. It should be noted that the territory of our study covers the northern and northwestern voivodeships of the Republic of Poland, where displaced Ukrainians have settled, namely the West Pomeranian Voivodeship (the town of Biały Bór and the village of Kaliska in Szczecin County), the city of Koszalin (Koszalin County) and the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship (the towns of Górowo Iławeckie in Bartoszyce County and Lidzbark Warmiński in Lidzbark County, and the village of Wojmiany in Bartoszyce County). The research took place between February 2018 and April 2019. Most of our respondents were women born in the 1930s. One of the informants was born in 1927, and so survived deportation as a young girl. All respondents are elderly people who are living witnesses to the history of their families and the guarantors of collective memory. Narratives from their own lives are mainly from the period in which they were children, less often teenagers. Other sources for this research are archival documents, and the modern Polish press.

First of all I would like to emphasise that the concept of cultural trauma is fundamentally different from psychological or mental (psychic) trauma, which involves the individual in a wound and the experience of severe emotional suffering. In contrast, for the American scientist Jeffrey Charles Alexander (2004: 1), cultural trauma always exists only as a collective trauma. In addition, he claims that events alone do not create collective trauma. He considers that cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, imprinting itself on their memories and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. Trauma is a socially mediated attribution. (Ibid.: 8)

For the American scientist Neil Joseph Smelser (2004: 38), cultural trauma is an invasive and overwhelming event that is believed to undermine or overwhelm one or several essential ingredients of a culture or the culture as a whole. Thus, as he believes, cultural trauma does not come about in the same way as psychological trauma but is discursively constructed. In other words, according to Smelser, cultural trauma is something that has meaning in one or another (socio)cultural environment as trauma. Without questioning Smelser's statement, that trauma is created primarily as a process, although we should admit that it is created primarily from the psychological reality experienced by individuals (Vasylenko 2018: 115).

According to Smelser (2004: 36), trauma is primarily a memory accepted and publicly given credence by a relevant membership group. This traumatic memory is evoked by some event or situation that can be qualified as a trauma at one moment in social history, while it may not be qualified as such at other moments.

Denying the possibility of equating psychological and cultural trauma, Smelser nevertheless sees in psychoanalytical theory elements that are particularly suitable for the study of cultural trauma, according to his observation. In particular, he points to the psychological mechanisms that construct trauma (such as blocking, working out, adaptation, etc.). These mechanisms come into play through the involvement of social agents and trauma subjects in cultural memory transmission practices (texts, rituals, etc.). In addition, the redefinition of a trauma implies a change in the subject: while from the point of view of the psychological concept an individual is a witness (victim, participant, eyewitness), then from the point of view of cultural concept , the witness is the nation, culture, or history, etc. (Vasylenko 2018: 115).

Another researcher of the phenomenon of trauma, Ron Eyerman (2013: 125), believes that cultural traumas are not things, but processes of creating meanings and attribution, a long struggle during which different individuals and communities try to define a situation and manage it. Eyerman (2001: 2) considers that:

> Cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion. In this sense, the trauma need not necessarily be felt by everyone in a community or experienced directly by any or all.

Cultural trauma as a process is the central idea in the work of Polish sociologist Piotr Sztompka (2000; 2004). For Sztompka, trauma is a particular kind of pathology that relates to social subjectivity. Such a pathological condition occurs in specific structural and cultural conditions, under the influence of specific previous social change ("traumatogenic events"), interpreted as traumatic by the available cultural resources (Sztompka 2000: 20–22).

Considering the phenomenon of cultural trauma, Sztompka (2004: 168–169) claims that trauma is neither a cause nor a result, but a process, a dynamic sequence of typical stages with a beginning, but also a resolution (he calls these stages traumatic sequences). In his reconstruction, this sequence can be analytically dissected into six stages:

1. Traumatogenic change;
2. Disorganisation of culture and accompanying cultural disorientation of actors;
3. Traumatic situations or events, appearing as a result of traumatogenic change in areas other than culture and affecting the life-world of the afflicted people;
4. Traumatic conditions, expressed by a set of traumatic symptoms, mental or behavioural reactions;
5. Posttraumatic adaptations employing various strategies of coping with trauma ("social control" according to Smelser's theory);
6. Overcoming trauma, by consolidation of a new cultural complex.

Sztompka (2000: 22) proposes the following four characteristics for a traumatogenic social change: 1) it has special time parameters, i.e. it is rapid; 2) it has a specific content and scope, i.e. it is radical, deep, versatile and touches the very essence of social life; 3) it has a specific origin, i.e. it is perceived as imposed, as something that happens without our participation; 4) it induces a specific state of mind, i.e. it appears to us as something unexpected, unpredictable, surprising, repulsive.

Most of the respondents included in field research have experienced the trauma of deportation in their childhood. Researchers such as Wiktoria Kudela-Świątek (2013: 179–180) and Zofia Podniesińska (2011: 67) imply that using a child's perspective makes it possible for informants to interpret a past reality with extreme subjectivity, in order to avoid taking responsibility for the objectivity of their accounts. Adopting a child's perspective in their narratives does not omit the effort of adult narrators to give a new sense to their past experience by searching for the motives for a certain course of action that helped them survive in difficult conditions. Rather, this is often an attempt to understand and explain oneself retrospectively. The construction of a biographical narrative from the perspective of a child who has experienced repression could also be seen as a story about overcoming life problems and becoming a person who lives here and now (Kudela-Świątek 2013: 179–180). It is essential to take these peculiarities into account when analysing the research problem.

TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE AS A WAY OF SURVIVING

The characteristics mentioned by Sztompka (2000: 22) are relevant to Operation Vistula, which we may regard as a traumatic event. The military pacification action, later called Operation Vistula, took place from April 28, 1947 to July 12, 1950 and was carried out by the authorities of the Polish People's Republic. According to Wojciech Krukar's (2016: 40–41) calculations, there were approximately 10,160 to 25,031 inhabitants of Western Boykivshchyna located in the Western Bieszczady mountains (mainly in Lesko County and Rzeszów Voivodeship).

The collective image of the Polish military as the main executors of forced evictions constructed during our interviews with witnesses of Operation Vistula cannot be transferred to the entire Polish ethnic community of the studied region. In their narrations, when mentioning the pre-war times of the "small homeland", our respondents often constructed an almost ideal image of their own local community, where the principles of inter-ethnic tolerance and understanding remained dominant against the background of a multicultural town or village, and more importantly, Polish–Ukrainian intercultural interaction prevailed. It was in this space, according to Polish historian Grzegorz Hryciuk, that despite daily conflicts and disputes, everyone was a neighbour, a member of a community connected by emotional bonds (Bodnar 2020: 239). One of our respondents noted that "on Polish holidays, Ukrainians went to visit Poles, and on Ukrainian holidays Poles came to visit us. So we exchanged. And we lived well." (FM: Anna, b. 1934)

Another narrator told of how in 1946, a year before the beginning of Operation Vistula, when a significant number of the Ukrainians in Western Boykivshchyna were under threat of repatriation to Soviet Ukraine, she remained in her native village only because a local Pole who lived in the neighbourhood stood up for her family: "He said that we were his family" (FM: Ol'ha, b. 1937).

Relations between neighbouring ethnic groups became significantly complicated with the beginning of the Second World War, when the Polish–Ukrainian confrontation entered a new "bloody" phase in part of Western Ukraine due to both people's struggles for separate statehood. As a result the image of the Ukrainian as a "bander-

ite" or *rizun* ('murderer') was actively formed among the Polish ethnic group at that time, which later spread to the entire Ukrainian population at the Polish–Ukrainian border. The establishment of a communist totalitarian regime in Polish territory after the war freed hands in implementing the plan to assimilate the Ukrainian ethnic element (Misiło 2013: 167–170).

When talking about experiences of the deportations interviewees often pointed to the main perpetrator of human suffering, while the collective image of the Polish ethnic community itself remained separate from the crimes of the communist regime, and even in some cases this community was subject to victimisation. For instance, in the narratives when referring to Polish People's Republic army troops, which expelled the local population, the constructions "army" and "Polish army" were used, instead of "Poles". At the same time, one of the eyewitnesses noted that 17 Polish families remained in their village after Operation Vistula, who later simply left the village due to the horrors they had experienced (FM: Ol'ha, b. 1937).

The narrators often recalled that Polish troops gave people only two hours to gather their belongings. In most cases people left their homes taking only the most necessary items with them. The deportation was often accompanied by the burning of villages and homes, the destruction of churches and the looting of church property. According to Sviatoslav, from Lidzbark Warmiński, whose home was not damaged during the burning of Bukovets village (Lesko County) before Operation Vistula, in 1946:

> two of them were burned in the house, in their house. And the army came through the forest, because they thought that Banderites would be there, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. They came from the mountains to the villages [...] and set fire to the village, so half of the village was burned. (FM: Sviatoslav, b. 1931)

Another eyewitness remembers the day of Operation Vistula very well: "We were living beyond the river. We moved across the river and our house was already on fire. The whole village burned down." (FM: Anna, b. 1933)

The deportation was accompanied by robberies, arson, mass violence and even murder (Buczyło 2006: 36). People had to go to railway stations. In some cases, moving to the railway stations could take more than 20 hours. According to the rules, two families were to be transported in one wagon. However, it happened otherwise. Iryna (born in 1939) remembers:

> There were also a horse, a cow and a goat in our wagon, as well as a flock of hens. We were under the rifles all the time. The train often stopped for many hours. During one of the stops the soldiers brought us bread and soup in boilers. They shouted "Banderites" at us. The neighbour's daughter had beautiful thick plaited hair. They pulled her out holding her plaits, calling her a banderites, although she had nothing to do with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. She was later taken to prison. (Myślińska 2017; Kołodziejczyk 2017)

It is worth adding that among the Polish military who carried out the deportation there were people full of sympathy for those who were suffering. The daughter of one of the deportees, Melaniya, a nun born in 1954, originally from the village of Tvorylne (Lesko County) in Western Boykivshchyna, recalls an episode from her own family history. When her pregnant mother was walking along the road, one of the Polish sol-

diers pushed her. The woman fell. However, the next Polish soldier who followed them helped the injured woman and calmed her down. (FM: Melaniya, b. 1954)

Transportation to new lands took approximately a week, in some cases being prolonged to 20–30 days due to frequent stops. Inhabitants of Western Boykivshchyna were mainly displaced to the territory of Warmia-Masuria, West Pomerania and the Pomerania Provinces of modern Poland. Many people affected by Operation Vistula tried to return to their former lands and appealed to the authorities to obtain repatriation, citing the difficulties in adapting to the change in climate, poor health and age-related problems. However, most of their requests were dismissed. Moreover, in 1949 the Council of Ministers transferred all the vacant farms into state ownership (Drozd 1997a: 155).

The hope of returning to their native land played an important role immediately after the forced displacements. Our interviewees talked about this feeling of things being temporary (FM: Maria, b. 1927; Anna, b. 1933; Skrypnyk 2019: 159). It is obvious that in their distress, the feeling that they were displaced temporarily and the expectation of an imminent return home helped them to stay in balance and avoid despair (Drozd 1997a: 125). But later, displaced Ukrainians were forced to adapt to the new environment. A gap developed between people's former way of life and their current condition, triggered by traumatic events. As a rule, the more the traumatogenic event affects the core of the collective order, the more deeply the trauma will be felt (Sztompka 2000: 26).

The trauma described in our research is characterised by the symptoms identified by Sztompka. Firstly, the trauma hit the biological and demographic substance of the group causing biological degradation and an increase in mental disorders among the displaced. One of the respondents recalled how her family had suffered psychological stress picking potatoes in their Polish neighbour's field. Displaced people experienced intense humiliation during the first year of resettlement. One of the displaced Ukrainians from Western Boykivshchyna said that she had experienced a childhood trauma when her family wasn't allowed to take some potatoes as a reward for the work they had done in a field belonging to Polish resettlers. In addition, the Poles scoffed at them (FM: Anna, b. 1934). In similar eyewitness narratives negative images of the 'opposite side' are radicalised by childhood experiences, and by fear that cannot be eradicated but rather needs to be understood (Bodnar 2020: 259).

Secondly, the trauma struck at the structure of the community, causing a disturbance in relationships between members. The social structure of the community was violated and its most appreciated features faded away. Families were broken up inside this community, because intergenerational transmission was interrupted (Nowak 2011: 327). Very often some of our narrators' memories related to the difficult destiny of their relatives, when families were separated and a father or son was sent to the prison camp in Javorzno. Juraj Buzalka (2007: 5–6), who conducted his field research mainly in southeastern Poland, in Przemyśl and its surroundings, has emphasised that past violence is an important source of memory (in particular collective memory, which is very important in the context of our research). One of our witnesses describes how her father was imprisoned in Javorzno for six months for unknown reasons. It is interesting that some time before he was a *soltys* (head of village administration) in his village. The family did not know where exactly the father had been sent. According to the respondent, her father sent a message through another prisoner who had been released earlier that when the family arrived at the new place, the mother would bake bread, cut it into four

parts and send it to her father in prison. (FM: Anna, b. 1933) Generally similar life tragedies caused increased psychological stress for the displaced. In total, 3,873 Ukrainians were identified in the prison camp in Jaworzno, of which 162 died (Misiło 2013: 155).

Thirdly, the trauma struck at the cultural structure of the community. American psychiatrist and researcher Bessel van der Kolk (1998) considers that traumatic memories come back as emotional and sensory states, with little capacity for verbal representation. I asked one of my respondents if she had ever taken part in a *vechornytsi* (a form of youth gathering). I noticed how difficult it was for her to talk about this (there were hidden tears in her eyes) because she had to do a lot of housework. For several years her family had been living in a new place without her father, who had been imprisoned in Jaworzno. As a consequence she "had no childhood". (FM: Ol'ha, b. 1937) The loss of parents or difficult child work are examples of the "self-awareness" of trauma (Bodnar 2022: 369; BenEzer 1999: 34).

Frequently, traumatic events are just short sequences in someone's memory. However, events such as wars expose people to trauma for a long time. The end of the deportations did not bring about release. The accounts from our research participants show that it was just the beginning of the trauma. People were surrounded by foreign cultures that did not have roots in the Recovered Territories. These areas were populated by people and groups from various parts of the country and of various ethnic origins. Analysing this type of trauma, we can talk about the deepening of cultural disorder. A collision of old culture with the new ways of life was produced. The number and type of unfavourable circumstances that accompanied these events can be explained by the fact that the new ways of life were not yet accepted or sanctioned in the new circumstances, while traditional culture had already lost its all-encompassing prestige (Nowak 2011: 328). The Ukrainian resettlers who arrived in western and northern Poland differed significantly from the Polish settlers in terms of their lifestyle and housekeeping practices. Other differences were manifest in clothing, customs and rites, as well as confession and language. The Ukrainians of the Bieszczady mountains could easily be distinguished from other inhabitants of former German lands by their appearance. The rest of the inhabitants of Warmia-Masuria looked on critically at their level of their culture and appearance: long hair in men, old *koufaykas*, skirts longer than those of the locals (Sakson 1998: 181).

The Ukrainian community turned out to have deeply rooted rites and customs, something that the displaced from other regions could not understand. Therefore, Ukrainians were often ignored and were not allowed to participate in local community events (for example, they were not allowed to come to common dances). Preservation of their own traditions and customs was very often forbidden. Speaking Ukrainian, and singing and practicing customs were considered manifestations of Ukrainian nationalism (Drozd 1997a: 138).

Another factor that deepened the traumatic experience was the perception of displaced people as "enemies of Poland", "Ukrainian bandits", "banderites". This stereotype of the Ukrainian had emerged earlier during the Polish–Ukrainian confrontation on the territory of Volyn and the Ukrainian nationalist action in Galicia. In the post-war period, this stigmatisation put strangers in a difficult situation, because they had to face the disregard and hostility of their new neighbours. (Ibid.: 138, 141) In fact, the complex vicissitudes of the Polish–Ukrainian confrontation during World War II left a

major imprint on the further relationship between the ethnic communities and finally established the collective image of the Ukrainian as some kind of criminal in the Polish mental picture of the world. As one of the narrators recalls: "When we came to the West, the Poles hated us. After all, Ukrainians are Banderites. We were called 'Banderites!' They watched over us when we were harvesting potatoes. You know, it was terrible." (FM: Anna, b. 1933)

The relationship between displaced Ukrainians with other population groups developed differently. The most difficult of these, which led to numerous conflicts, was the relationship between Ukrainians and displaced people from the Bialystok and Mazovian regions (who were called *tsentraliaki*, 'people from the central territories'). There was a prejudice that people from the central territories had 'better Polishness', and consequently a higher social status. Poles also remembered the Polish–Ukrainian struggle of the 1930s, causing them to think of displaced people from the mountains simply as criminals. This is why they called them bandits or cutthroats. (Sakson 1998: 172–176) However, according to witness memories there were also those who helped Ukrainians survive and integrate into the local population (FM: Maria, b. 1939).

Relations between displaced Ukrainians and Poles from the Vilnius and Rzeszów regions were better. These were people who were very helpful to Ukrainians. Ukrainians went to them quite often to do paid work (FM: Anna, b. 1933; Anna, b. 1934).

Finally, a different relationship developed with the indigenous population (Germans/Warmians and Masurians), who remained for some time during the eviction of all Germans from these territories. These communities treated the Ukrainians without hostility, often seeking to negotiate with this persecuted and isolated group (Sakson 1998: 180). During repatriation the German population left behind houses in good condition, interior items, potatoes in the cellars, which were then used by the newly arrived Ukrainian and Polish resettlers (FM: Maria, b. 1927; Anna, b. 1933). Before being resettled to the west some Germans visited the homes of Ukrainians and asked them to occupy their apartments (Kołodziejczyk 2017). This collective help and sympathy for those experiencing a similar destiny did not appear immediately among local German population, but became the result of a certain evolution of their emotional and psychological attitude (Linkiewicz 2005: 121). Generally, according to modern researchers, it was the bitter experience of the events of the 1940s that united local population groups (Germans, Ukrainians, some Polish repatriates) into a community of destiny (Domagała 2005: 95; Wylegała 2009: 60; Kosiek 2017: 70).

At the same time, the position of Ukrainians in a new community immediately after the forced displacement caused self-isolation (Sakson 1998: 179). One of the most important factors that influenced the psychological state of the Ukrainian population was the attitude of Polish society and the Polish authorities. Since the arrival of the displaced Ukrainians, some Polish people had shown contempt and hostility towards them (Drozd 1997b: 233).

Periods of acute Polish–Ukrainian conflict during the Soviet era have today been replaced by strong Polish solidarity with and support for Ukraine in the context of the contemporary Russian–Ukrainian war. Poland's current support for Ukraine is the strongest it has been in all the years of relations between the two states. According to Polish official sources, about 77% of Poles today have been more or less involved in helping Ukrainian refugees. Seven percent of Poles settled Ukrainians in their homes (*Rzeczpospolita* 2022). At the official level, Poland recognises that Ukraine's response to Russia's armed invasion is a lesson that it must learn from Ukraine (Zerofsky 2023).

Against this backdrop it is quite possible that attitudes to the difficult common history between Ukraine and Poland will change over time. Today, universal values of empathy and humanity have come to the fore.

For the last few years, even before the start of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, we have observed that memories of the difficult past are an integral part of the lives of the resettlers from Western Boykivshchyna. These remembrances maintain the state of trauma and indirectly contribute to the revival of memories of native culture. When a person concentrates on the positive memories of his or her homeland before deportation, they tend to idealise the past. This is part of a collective defence mechanism and at the same time the basis for the revitalisation of one's ethnicity, as well as an effect and an empirical indicator of being constantly in a state of trauma. At the same time the connection between past and present has central significance for psychological recovery, whether this occurs spontaneously or with the help of psychoanalysis or psychotherapy (Rosenthal 2003: 924).

The resettlers from Western Boykivshchyna did not create a separate social or ethnographic group,[2] they became part of the community of memory in their new place of residence. This became possible only after 1956, when with the liberalisation of the communist regime, Ukrainians were granted certain rights and allowed to form their own cultural organisations. The Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (UGCC) was also legalised. (Drozd 2001: 125–158) One of the examples of such a settlement is the town of Biały Bór in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship in Poland, which became part of my ethnographic research. In 2018 I experienced the unity of the local memory community during the commemoration of the 71st anniversary of Operation Vistula, held in the centre of the town around the monument to deportees – "commemorative of a violent past" in Buzalka's (2007: 6) determination. However, this event deserves a special study. It should be noted that the UGCC and its local shrine played a significant role in the creation of this local community of memory, which in a spiritual and symbolic way united the scattered families and social groups of people not only of the displaced people of the town, but also of the surrounding areas (Buyskykh 2019: 253–262). Divine services according to the Eastern rite in Ukrainian, held in the local Greek-Catholic church (initially in the chapel), was extremely important for the Ukrainians of Biały Bór. According to Iuliia Buyskykh (ibid.: 250), during a liturgy in Ukrainian, one of the resettled people was able to experience the feelings she used to have when going to church with her mother in her home village. My narrators also emphasised the importance of the church in their own lives, memories that have remained with them since childhood:

> We always went to church on Sundays. I went with my mother when I was little. And I am so attached to church. I have taught this to my children. I have taught this to my children, that they should go to church, and my grandchildren and great-grandchildren, everybody goes. (FM: Anna, b. 1933)

Apart from the Christian (Greek-Catholic) faith, other cultural markers such as language and traditional culture also play an important role in the formation of the Biały Bór resettlers' Ukrainian identity. Speaking about maintaining a 'living' memory of the inherited cultural traditions of one's family and "lost homeland", one should pay attention to the following fact. After deportation the traditional local and regional folk culture, which did not have a specific name, tended to be considered Ukrainian (AAN 2/196/0/4/784: 9). At the same time, differences between individual Ukrainian regional groups began to fade (Drozd 2001: 92). In the case of the displaced Ukrainians from Western Boykivshchyna the former territorial identity was replaced by a general identification with Ukrainians, and its bearers were assimilated into the Ukrainian population in the western and northern parts of Poland (Beba 1998: 101). This could often be heard from the resettlers themselves, who were forced to choose between Polish and Ukrainian identities (Buyskykh 2019: 261). Accordingly, the choice of Ukrainian identity dictated not only the acceptance of everything Ukrainian, but also its cultivation. The preservation of native culture and family traditions, as well as sharing memories of the past, are also strategies that help people cope with the trauma they have experienced. For example, a respondent from Gurowo-Iławeckie city, recollecting Christmas Eve, focused on garlic, salt and special pastries which were always the main traditional food of the customary twelve Christmas dishes. The respondent explained: "I did it then, and I do it similarly now" (FM: Anna, b. 1934). Another person said that she prepared *kutia* – an important dish on Christmas Eve – according to a recipe brought from her homeland (FM: Ol'ha, b. 1937; Kolomyychuk 2021: 63). However, it must be said that such cultural and religious traditions are often limited to the inner, private sphere of the respondents' family lives (Domagała 2007: 237).

At the same time, very often Ukrainians' preservation and support of their own ethnic and national traditions is an obstacle to the development of Polish–Ukrainian intercultural dialogue (in particular in Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship). The Polish population perceives the cultivation of native traditions by Ukrainian neighbours to be a method of self-isolation from the rest of society (Domagała 2005: 94–95).

The bits of information and transmitted experiences of deported Ukrainians are retained by the representatives of the second and partially the third generation of displaced, a fact that proves the existence of a "post-memory generation" among Ukrainians according to Marianne Hirsch (2008: 106–107). Intergenerational transmission of trauma is the way in which those who have not directly experienced an event can experience and manifest its post-traumatic symptoms (LaCapra 2009: 141). During my ethnographic research in Biały Bór, I visited a very patriotic and nationally conscious family. Maria Mandryk-Fil, the daughter of resettlers from Western Boykivshchyna (Zawój and Jaworzec villages), is extremely reverent and scrupulous in preserving the smallest memories and inherited cultural value from her mother, who is no longer alive. Together with her son, who visited his grandparents' native land in Bieszczady mountains for the first time at the age of six (Fil 2014: 113), Maria published a brochure dedicated to the history of her family and its "small homeland". It is a very good example

of the preservation of collective memory by children and grandchildren in the families of resettlers. Magdalena Zowczak (2017: 31–32) states that resettlers from Biały Bór are strongly connected and have a sense of close connection with their "small homeland" on the one hand, and with a have a strong connection with Ukraine and its destiny on the other hand. The practice and cultivation of Ukrainian values is one of the forms of active opposition to the assimilating influences of the Polish environment.

At the same time, a significant part of resettlers' cultural values and cultural heritage is excluded from the process of intergenerational transmission, i.e. from parents to children and grandchildren. Maria, born in Żernica Niżna (Lesko County), states: "I follow that old one [tradition], that my mother taught me, but whether my daughter will be like me, I don't know that" (FM: Maria, b. 1937). The influences on assimilation that come from the homogenous Polish linguistic and cultural environment are slowly eroding Ukrainian identity, especially of the third, and even more so of the fourth, generation of resettled people. Primarily the influence of the ethno-linguistic environment is indicated, with a large number of young Ukrainians in Poland understanding Ukrainian but not being able to speak it (Khaliuk 2013: 101). According to Barbara Domagała (2007: 248), the general tendency is that Ukrainian is replaced by Polish in public life. For a large percentage of school-aged youth Ukrainian is primarily the language of communication with the closest people (Domagała 2005: 98). However, representatives from the third and even fourth generations of forcibly resettled people often continue to preserve their Ukrainian identity, even if they speak Polish or a mixture of languages. This is expressed in the wearing of national clothes, and knowledge of folk dances and songs (Buyskykh 2019: 257).

CONCLUSIONS

More than 150,000 Ukrainians and mixed Polish-Ukrainian families from the territory of Rzeszów, Lublin and Kraków provinces (Voivodeships) were forcefully displaced to the western and northern territories of Poland during Operation Vistula, which took place mainly in 1947. At the same time in the life stories of witnesses, when mentioning pre-war times in their "small homeland", our narrators often created an almost idyllic image of their own local community, where Polish–Ukrainian intercultural interaction prevailed. Accordingly eyewitnesses in their memories clearly distinguished the military of the communist Polish People's Republic, who actually carried out the deportations, from their neighbours – Poles who in some cases defended Ukrainians from forced resettlement. Deportation was accompanied by robberies, arson, mass violence and even murder. The journey into the unknown became a hardship for the resettles. Although two families were supposed to be transported in one rail wagon very often people travelled in the same wagon with their cows and chickens. During the journey they were subjected to all kinds of oppression by the military.

The Ukrainians from Western Boykivshchyna were mainly sent to the territory of Western Pomeranian, Pomeranian and Warmian-Masurian Voivodeships. For the majority of displaced people, such a radical change in their environment did not occur without negative consequences and the trauma of experiencing deportation was deepened by the psychological trauma of adaptation to new living conditions. Many hoped

to the last moment that they would return to their homeland in the Bieszczady mountains. However, eventually they were forced to adapt to their new environment and neighbours. The most difficult problem, which led to numerous conflicts, was the relationship between Ukrainians and displaced people from the Bialystok and Mazovian regions. At the same time, relations with the native population and Polish resettles from the Vilnius region were based on the principles of sympathy, kindness and assistance. Nevertheless, the position of Ukrainians in a new community immediately after forced resettlement caused self-isolation. However, after 1956, under the influence of confrontations with local authorities, increasing levels of xenophobia, discrimination on the basis of cultural identity, etc., the trauma these people had experienced actualised new interpersonal contacts and social ties, consolidated the scattered groups of resettlers from Western Boykivshchyna and other regions of southeastern Poland along Ukrainian (ethnic) linguistic and cultural lines within certain territorial frameworks, and initiated the formation of new communities. These were based on collective memory of trauma and past violence and were united by a shared idea of their lost homeland. Along with the linguistic and cultural factors, the religious affiliation of the members of such communities often played an important role.

One example of such community is the town of Biały Bór in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship in Poland, which became part of my ethnographic research. This community, based on the trauma of resettlement and strong emotional and cultural ties with the lost homeland on the one hand, and Ukraine on the other hand, is united by the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church and its local shrine. In addition a significant role in the life of this community is played the cultivation of the collective (family) memory of one's roots, which is manifest in joint trips to the native land in Western Boykivshchyna and to other regions, as well as support for a 'living' memory of family and national cultural traditions. Such trips are not only an opportunity for several generations to visit the land of their ancestors, but also to reactualise the collective memory of their past through visits to native places (Koval-Fuchylo 2022: 189).

Cultural trauma entails a dramatic loss of identity that affects a group of people. The trauma described in my study is characterised by all the symptoms defined by Sztompka (2004: 168–169), one of the creators of the theory of cultural trauma. Firstly, traumatic experience struck at the biological and demographic substance of the group. Secondly, the trauma struck at the social structure of the community, causing a disturbance in the relationships between its members. Thirdly, the trauma struck the cultural structure of the community. All of this together creates a cultural trauma, which for Sztompka (2004: 168) is primarily a process. In the case of the Ukrainians deported during Operation Vistula, we should speak of both psychological and cultural trauma, both of which affected the direct participants in the resettlement, and their descendants some time later, when the lived experience was expressed in family life stories and eventually became part of public discourse. The preservation of resettlers' native culture and family traditions, as well as their sharing of memories of the past, are also the strategies to cope with experienced trauma. Today, the preserved cultural and religious practices of those who were forcibly displaced from Western Boykivshchyna play an important role in the formation of their Ukrainian identity and continue to influence the modern worldview of their descendants.

NOTES

1 Boykivshchyna is one of the largest historical and ethnographic regions in modern Ukraine covering parts of Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv and Zakarpattia regions (Oblasts) in Western Ukraine, extending to the territory of neighbouring Slovakia and Poland. Western Boykivshchyna was a constituent part before 1947 as a historical sub-region in the Middle Beskids (Bieszczady) on the territory of what is now southeastern Poland. In 1939 it covered the territory of Lesko, Turka and Dobromyl Counties in Lviv Voivodeship.

2 Resettled groups from the territories of Western Boykivshchyna could not restore their former social and familial links since the community (part of the ethnographic group) ceased to exist (Halczak 2009: 52). Some contemporary researchers (for example, Koziura 2009: 4; Libera 2011: 20) reject the existence of Boykos as a separate ethnographic group and the ethnonym Boykos to definite their regional identity. In the case of displaced Ukrainians from Western Boykivshchyna we can speak rather about Boykos as locals (*tutejshyh*), whose integration was based on spatial (territorial) identity, i.e. on a special connection to their dwelling place (Trzeszczyńska 2016: 161; Smoleński 2017: 44).

SOURCES

AAN: Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw, 2/196/0 Ministry of the Recovered Territories in Warsaw, Series: 4 Department of Settling (sign. 648a – 975), File/unit: 784 Operation 'V' – the resettlement of Ukrainian population from East territories of Poland to the Recovered Territories: evacuation plan, protocols of conferences, reports, information from local correspondents, lists of transports, official notes and correspondence.

FM: Fieldwork materials, kept in the author's private archive.
FM: Maria, b. 1927 = Maria, interviewed by the author in Kaliska, Szczecinek County, Western Pomeranian Voivodeship (26/04/2018).
FM: Sviatoslav, b. 1931 = Sviatoslav, interviewed by the author in Lidzbark Warmiński, Lidzbark County, Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship (18/04/2019).
FM: Anna, b. 1933 = Anna, interviewed by the author in Biały Bór, Szczecinek County, Western Pomeranian Voivodeship (26/02/2018).
FM: Anna, b. 1934 = Anna, interviewed by the author in Górowo Iławeckie, Bartoszyce County, Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship (17/02/2019).
FM: Maria, b. 1937 = Maria, interviewed by the author in Koshalin, Western Pomeranian Voivodeship (08/05/2018).
FM: Ol'ha, b. 1937 = Ol'ha, interviewed by the author in Biały Bór, Szczecinek County, Western Pomeranian Voivodeship (24/02/2018).
FM: Maria, b. 1939 = Maria, interviewed by the author in Wojmiany Bartoszyce County, Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship (17/02/2019).
FM: Melaniya, b. 1954 = Melaniya, interviewed by the author in Koshalin, Western Pomeranian Voivodeship (01/05/2018).

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