

Marta Studenna-Skrukwa*

Between socialist homeland and totalitarian dictatorship. The image of the post-World War II period in Ukrainian historical discourse

Między socjalistyczną ojczyzną a totalitarną dyktaturą. Obraz dziejów kraju po II wojnie światowej w ukraińskim dyskursie historycznym

Summary: This paper is devoted to the analysis of selected aspects how Ukrainian schools present the historical narrative that covers the post-World War II history of this country – particularly the period of late socialism. My goal was to establish how post-Maidan textbooks presented the times when Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union in its superpower phase. I was especially interested in the current assessment of such phenomena as: post-Stalinist modernization, the movements opposing communist ideology, and the late socialist concept of the Soviet people. The source material was five new textbooks for historical education at high-school level approved for use by the Ukrainian authorities in 2019. The basic research method was discourse analysis: the content of the textbooks were critically evaluated in light of the ongoing political and social situation. Among the theoretical assumptions that were applied in the paper was that the historical narrative has a key importance as a function of the nation-state and as such serves its interests. To conclude the analysis below, it should be emphasized that historical narrative of Ukrainian Schools presents the past of the country in the second half of the 20th century as a general process of gaining independence from the Soviet centre. In the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, it should be assumed that the emancipatory nature of the interpretation of Ukraine's national history is now irreversible.

Keywords: the Soviet Union, Ukraine, history, nationalism, education

Streszczenie: Artykuł poświęcony jest analizie wybranych aspektów ukraińskiej szkolnej narracji historycznej obejmującej powojenną historię kraju – zwłaszcza okres późnego socjalizmu. Moim celem było ustalenie, w jaki sposób obowiązujące w Ukrainie od Euromajdanu podręczniki do historii przedstawiają okres, w którym kraj ten współtworzył Związek Radziecki w fa-

* Marta Studenna-Skrukwa – PhD, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6197-543X>, e-mail: studnia@amu.edu.pl.

zie supermocarstwa. Szczególnie interesowała mnie aktualna ocena takich zjawisk jak: poststalinowskie procesy modernizacyjne, ruchy antykomunistyczne oraz późno socjalistyczna koncepcja narodu radzieckiego. Materiał źródłowy stanowiło pięć nowych podręczników do edukacji historycznej na poziomie licealnym dopuszczonych do użytku przez władze Ukrainy w 2019 roku. Podstawową metodą badawczą była analiza dyskursu: treść podręczników i jej znaczenie zostały poddane krytycznemu oglądowi w odniesieniu do zaistniałej sytuacji politycznej. Wśród przyjętych założeń teoretycznych kluczowe znaczenie miało to, że narracja historyczna jest funkcją państwa narodowego i jako taka służy jego interesom. Podsumowując poniższą analizę, należy podkreślić, że ukraińska szkolna narracja historyczna przedstawia przeszłość kraju w drugiej połowie XX wieku jako holistyczny proces uniezależnienia się od radzieckiego centrum. W kontekście agresji Rosji na Ukrainę należy przypuszczać, że emancypacyjny charakter interpretacji dziejów narodowych Ukrainy jest już nieodwracalny.

Słowa kluczowe: Związek Radziecki, Ukraina, nacjonalizm, historia, edukacja

1. The current context of Ukrainian disputes over the past

Among the many consequences of the Revolution of Dignity, a very important one is the launch of a new, multifaceted debate on the past of the Ukraine. The key elements of the shift that took place in Ukrainian historical policy after the fall of the Viktor Yanukovich regime include the adoption of decommunization laws, a broad change of the system of naming places throughout the country, the establishment of new public holidays, and the development and implementation of new curriculum governing the process of historical education. The scope of the changes undertaken places Ukraine among those countries implementing transitional justice and is an unquestionable novelty in its history¹. For the first time since 1991, the deep interest in revising the past concerned not only a narrow circle of the academic elite, but it became both an object of official interest on the part of the state authorities and a grassroots social need. The latter was revealed in the spontaneous acts of demolishing the monuments of Lenin. The acts themselves, referred to as collective catharsis², began

1 T. Lachowski, *Od rozrachunków z przeszłością do konfliktu zbrojnego na Donbasie. Sprawiedliwość okresu przejściowego na Ukrainie po Rewolucji Godności*, [in:] *Ukraina po Rewolucji Godności. Prawa człowieka – tożsamość narodowa*, T. Lachowski, V. Mazurenko (eds.), Łódź–Olsztyn 2017, p. 15. See also: K. Jędraszczyk, *Trzydzieści lat dekomunizacji na Ukrainie*, "Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej" 2021, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 125-145.

2 N. Tchernalykh, "We Felt That the Country Was in the Stage of a Rough Cut...": *Vernacular Documentation, Political Affects and the Ideological Functions of Catharsis in Ukraine*, "Visual Anthropology" 2022, vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 103-104.

as a result of a rebellion against the compromised authority, but in fact it initiated changes, the scope of which far exceeded the assessment of the ruling team. Sociological research confirms that the war started in 2014 intensifies Ukraine's search for the truth about its own past at the family, local, regional, and national levels. At the same time, schools are indicated as the main source of historical knowledge³. The same sociological survey revealed that Ukrainians do not have an agreed dominant assessment of the second half of the twentieth century, and in particular the period from the end of World War II to the end of so-called developed socialism. Twenty-five per cent of Ukrainians have a positive opinion of the Soviet social policy between 1950 and 1970, 26% neutral, and 21% negative. The activity of dissidents was a positive phenomenon for 24%, neutral for 22%, and negative for 10%⁴.

This means that the national canon of Ukraine's history, shaped since 1991, enters the next phase, in which the redefinition of relations with neighbours, mainly with Russia and Poland, may play a decisive role⁵. In this context historical education that is institutionalized and financed from the state budget is also being changed. Research conducted in recent years on the changes in the picture of the history of Ukraine in schools, under the influence of Euromaidan, the annexation of Crimea, and the war in Donbas, focused on capturing the general direction of the revision and comparing it, for example, with the changes taking place in Polish historical education in the face of the conservative shift after 2015⁶.

3 J. Konieczna-Salamatin, T. Stryjek, N. Otrishchenko, *Wydarzenia. Ludzie. Historia. Raport z badań sondażowych o pamięci współczesnych Polaków i Ukraińców*, Warsaw 2018, pp. 18, 20, 29.

4 *Ibidem*, p. 48.

5 A. Cherviatsova, *On the Frontline of European Memory Wars: Memory Laws and Policy in Ukraine*, "European Papers", vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 129-135.

6 M. Studenna-Skrukwa, *What history? What homeland? The nationalization of history in the school education before the breakthroughs in 2014-2015 and after*, [in:] *The Politics of Memory in Poland and Ukraine. From Reconciliation to De-conciliation*, T. Stryjek, J. Konieczna-Salamatin (eds.), London 2021, pp. 85-103; D. Moskwa, *Opponents in battle, allies in suffering: a dualistic picture of Poland and Poles in Ukrainian history textbooks*, [in:] *The Politics of Memory in Poland...*, pp. 150-165. The first of these texts also deals in part with the differences between the history textbooks before and after the Revolution of Dignity.

2. Research approach, methods, and data

In this text I was interested in how the post-Maidan authorities dealt with the presentation in textbooks of the period in which Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union in the superpower phase. In particular, the presentation of such a significant phenomenon as post-Stalinist modernization including post-war reconstruction, social policy, successes of Soviet sports and science, together with the conquest of the space programme, and also the broadly understood evolution of values close to Soviet society, was presented. Moreover, I was interested in the extent to which the authors of the textbooks deal with currents and movements opposing communist ideology and how they interpret the late socialist concept of the Soviet people, the consequences of its practical application, and contemporary reminiscences. I tried to trace the attitude of the current Ukrainian authorities to these phenomena, expressed in the authoritative text of the textbook, and then to determine to what extent they are incorporated into the national history of Ukraine, and to what extent they are treated as externally imposed oppressive phenomena.

The assessment of the post-war and, above all, the late socialist period in the history of Ukraine brings with it many challenges. It was a time of peace in which the USSR achieved the highest level of prestige in its history in the international arena, there was a relative improvement in the living conditions of the population, and its end was mostly determined by the authorities of individual republics negotiating with each other, and not a grassroots revolt⁷. Moreover, although the assessment concerns a distant period in time, the people who remember it are still alive, therefore their memories and relationships, everything that they pass on to the next generations, provides material with which the image of history learned at school can be confronted on an ongoing basis. Finally, when analysing Ukraine's place in the USSR, it is impossible to escape from the complicated discussion about Ukrainian-Russian relations, which changed irreversibly after 24 February 2022.

7 K. Świder, *Ewolucja elity władzy w Związku Radzieckim i Rosji*, Warsaw 2013, pp. 143-168.

The current Ukrainian high school history textbooks analysed in this text, which cover the chronological scope of the post-war history of Ukraine, were published in 2019: four new textbooks for the history of Ukraine school subject⁸ and one for the subject Ukraine and the world⁹. The authors of all the textbooks discussed here are academic historians. Although they represent different historiographic trends, the textbooks are quite similar both in terms of construction and interpretation. What is particularly important is that the history of all Ukrainians regions has been equally presented in the textbooks. All of them are available online for free, and the teacher in a given school decides on the choice of the textbook. While working with their content, I had in mind that, reflecting the results of the research work of Ukrainian professional historians, they say more about the present, which they explain and legitimize, than about the past as such¹⁰. I also shared the belief that history written in textbooks is a function of the nation-state, so whenever textbook authors refer to “historical truth” they serve its current *raison d’etat*¹¹.

- 8 W. Danylenko, M. Smolnička, *Istoriya Ukrainy: riweń standartu: pidrucz. dla 11-ho kl. zakł. zah. seređ. osvity* [В. Даниленко, М. Смольницька, *Історія України: рівень стандарту: підруч. для 11-20 кл. закл. заг. серед. освіти*], Kyiv 2019; H. Chlibowśka et al., *Istoriya Ukrainy. Riweń standartu: pidrucznyk dla 11 klasy zakładiw zahalnoji seređnioji osvity* [Г. Хлібовська et al., *Історія України. Рівень стандарту: підручник для 11 класу закладів загальної середньої освіти*], Ternopil 2019; N. Soroczynśka, O. Hisem, *Istoriya Ukrainy [riweń standartu]: pidrucznyk dla 11 kl. zakł. zahaln. seređ. Oswity* [Н. Сорочинська, О. Гісем, *Історія України [рівень стандарту]: підручник для 11 кл. закл. загальн. серед. освіти*], Ternopil 2019; W. Własow, S. Kulczyćkyj, *Istoriya Ukrainy (profilnyj riweń): pidrucznyk dla 11 klasy zakładiw zahalnoji seređnioji osvity* [В. Власов, С. Кульчицький, *Історія України (профільний рівень): підручник для 11 класу закладів загальної середньої освіти*], Kyiv 2019.
- 9 M. Mudryj, O. Arkusza, *Istoriya: Ukrajina i swit: (intehr. kurs, riweń standartu): pidrucz. dla 11 ho kl. zakł. zah. seređ. osvity* [М. Мудрий, О. Аркуша, *Історія: Україна і світ: (інтегр. курс, рівень стандарту): підруч. для 11 го кл. закл. заг. серед. освіти*], Kyiv 2019. The publication of the first part of this textbook, devoted to the period from 1914 to 1945, caused a stir in the scientific community. Some historians concluded that the information about the Ukrainian battalions Roland and Nachtigall and the photos of Roman Shukhevych included in the subsection entitled “Symptoms of collaborationism” repeats the Soviet simplified interpretation of the history of Ukraine. See: O. Kyrychuk, *Wijna pamjati i wyzwolnyj ruch, “Ukrajina mołoda”* [О. Киричук, *Війна пам’яті і визвольний рух, “Україна молода”*], 13 November 2018, pp. 12-13.
- 10 W. Burszta, *Silencing the Past, Retrotopia, and Teaching History*, “Sprawy Narodowościowe. Seria nowa” 2018, vol. 50, pp. 1-13.
- 11 G. Kasianov, *The “Nationalization” of History in Ukraine*, [in:] *Convolutions of Historical Politics*, A. Miller, M. Lipman (eds.), Budapest 2012, pp. 143-144.

3. Numerous shadows and a few glows of post-war modernization

Modernization is understood here after Mikhail Minakov as “mutually reinforcing processes of change in values, human identities, political and economic practices. Each included the following processes; in terms of values: the secularization of values and norms, and the argumentative justification; in terms of human identity: the conceptualization and practical application of the idea of rights, the invention of individuality as a political and economic player, the institutionalization of formal education, and urban life as the dominant style of life; in terms of politics and governance: the formation of nations; in terms of economics: accumulation of capital, production development, and increased labour productivity”¹². Soviet modernization was, of course, very specific: based on the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, a one-party system and a command-and-order economy. This approach gives rise to a wide range of questions, the key of which are the following. First, how is Ukraine’s contribution to the economic development of the USSR after World War II presented today? Second, whether so-called developed socialism is presented in contemporary historical education in Ukraine as an era of prosperity or rather as an era of stagnation? Third, do the school textbooks present the Soviet heritage in Ukraine as Ukrainian heritage?

A study of the textbooks shows that the Soviet modernization of the post-war period is presented as extensive and full of contradictions:

Over 70% of industrial workers followed the production standards with mostly manual work. The lack of the right technique often led to accidents. The ecological aspects were hardly taken into account when reconstructing and setting up new facilities. Ignoring world experience and ideological ambitions did great damage to scientific, technical and social development¹³.

When characterizing the post-war reconstruction, the authors of the textbooks point out that it was subordinated to the general

12 M. Minakov, *Development and Dystopia. Studies in Post-Soviet Ukraine and Eastern Europe*, Stuttgart 2018, p. 23.

13 W. Własow, S. Kulczyckij, op. cit., p. 43.

goal of rebuilding the strategic industry of the USSR, while Ukraine, as a republic, lost out in this:

The central government in Moscow was in no hurry to restore the economic potential of the republic. Some evacuated businesses have never returned. The Soviet arms industry, associated with the latest scientific and research achievements, developed mainly outside Ukraine, in remote regions of Russia. Only a few enterprises were located in Ukraine [...], but the mining industry remained the leading industry. Ukraine was also required to have huge harvests of food crops¹⁴.

Post-war reconstruction is compared to the industrialization of the 1930s, when heavy industry had a clear priority over industry meeting the needs of the population¹⁵. The human costs of modernization are clearly visualized – the difficult working and living conditions during the reconstruction are described in detail, including the famine of 1946-1947. Students receive references to source texts on this subject, e.g. workers' letters from Donbas after 1945, confiscated by censors¹⁶ – these documents were introduced into scientific circulation in 2010¹⁷.

The assessment of the Brezhnev period, which evoked nostalgic sentiment among some living inhabitants of Ukraine¹⁸, is dominated by a negative tone. The main term for this era is “the period of systemic crisis” – a concept that has long been established in Ukrainian academic historiography¹⁹. There are also references to the journalis-

14 M. Mudryj, O. Arkusza, op. cit., p. 137.

15 H. Chlibowska et al., op. cit., pp. 20-21; W. Danylenko, M. Smolnicka, op. cit., pp. 22-23; N. Soroczynska, O. Hisem, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

16 W. Danylenko, M. Smolnicka, op. cit., p. 42; W. Wlasow, S. Kulczyckij, op. cit., p. 63.

17 O. Jankowska, *Socialna polityka derzawy oczyma robotnykiw i selan*, [in:] *Powojenna Ukrainina: narysy socialnoji istoriji (druha polowyna 1940-ch – seredyna 1950-ch rr)*, W. Danylenko, N. Łaas (eds.) [O. Янковська, *Соціальна політика держави очима робітників і селян*, [in:] *Повоєнна Україна: нариси соціальної історії (друга половина 1940-х – середина 1950-х рр)*, В. Даниленко, Н. Лаас (eds.)], book 2, Kyiv 2010, pp. 293-351.

18 O. Hrycenko, *Kultury pamjenci Ukrainy i Polski w związkach wzajemnych i porównaniach*, [in:] *Kultury historyczne Polski i Ukrainy. O źródlach nieporozumienia między sąsiadami*, T. Stryjek, V. Sklokin (eds.), Warsaw 2021, p. 128.

19 W. Baran, W. Danylenko, *Ukrainina w umowach systemnoji kryzy (1946-1980-i rr)*. [В. Баран, В. Даниленко, *Україна в умовах системної кризи (1946-1980-і рр.)*], Kyiv 1999; S. Kulczyckij, *Czerwonyj wuklyk. Istorija komunizmu w Ukraini wid joho narodzennia do zahybeli* [С. Кульчицький, *Червоний виклик. Історія комунізму в Україні від його народження до загибелі*], book 3, Kyiv 2013, pp. 221-222.

tic term “stagnation period”, although usually in quotation marks²⁰. One textbook even criticizes the term “stagnation”:

This name does not fully accurately represent the processes that took place from the second half of the 1960s to the first half of the 1980s, but it reflects the general tendency of the socio-economic and political development of the Soviet system²¹.

The power system of this era is characterized by such terms as “oligarchy”, “gerontocracy”²², and “neo-Stalinism”²³. There is talk of an unfair distribution of investments – priority was given to the centre of the USSR, Siberia, and the Far East. One of the textbooks even explicitly describes the economic situation of Ukraine as colonial – Ukraine was treated by the central authorities as a resource and food base²⁴. Attention is drawn to the pathologies of the command economy, such as mismanagement, inability to implement technical innovations, excess bureaucracy, failure to respect professional skills, low quality of production, poor work culture (shirking), and corruption. In these contexts, Soviet satirical drawings are eagerly used, and while in Soviet times this satire in principle stigmatized temporary imperfections in the implementation of socialism, it is now treated as an illustration of the overall ineffectiveness of the system²⁵.

When it comes to living conditions, the point of reference is the West:

The standard of living in the USSR, especially in the Ukrainian SSR, was significantly different from that of the developed Western countries. The Soviet economic system was not able to meet the needs of the people in the way that the Western economy did. This distance could not be compensated by free higher education, nor by medical care (practically, the fact that these services were free was often only declarative). In 1970, consumption in the USSR was

20 H. Chlibowska et al., op. cit., p. 9; W. Własow, S. Kulczycki, op. cit., p. 117; M. Mudryj, O. Arkusza, op. cit., p. 185.

21 N. Soroczynska, O. Hisem, op. cit., p. 80.

22 W. Własow, S. Kulczycki, op. cit., pp. 121-122; M. Mudryj, O. Arkusza, op. cit., p. 185.

23 N. Soroczynska, O. Hisem, op. cit., pp. 81-82.

24 H. Chlibowska et al., op. cit., p. 123.

25 W. Własow, S. Kulczycki, op. cit., pp. 147-149; W. Danylenko, M. Smolnicka, op. cit., pp. 80, 118.

only about half that in the US. And this is without taking into account the quality of goods and services, which in the USSR was much lower²⁶.

Soviet social policy is described as a façade. For example, textbooks openly write about the necessity to pay bribes to doctors²⁷. They point to the underdevelopment of rural infrastructure and the persistence of a deep difference in the standard of living between the city and the countryside²⁸. It is also recalled that despite the egalitarian ideology, the USSR was in fact a state of social inequality – the authorities had various privileges, such as special stores, high-quality imported goods, higher-level medical care, and a privileged start in life for children²⁹. At the other extreme, there were various disadvantaged categories of the population: single mothers, invalids, families that had lost the main breadwinner – in total about a fifth of the population during the Brezhnev era lived below subsistence level³⁰.

According to the textbooks, the negative side of Soviet modernization was also the improper development of nuclear energy, and broadly the threats to the natural environment caused by ignoring the ecological aspect and the gigantic projects of “great transformations of nature”³¹. It is indicated that in the Ukrainian SSR there was an excessive concentration of nuclear power plants forced on the country by Moscow:

Within a short time in Ukraine, without proper justification, calculation, and geological suitability, five nuclear power plants were built using old and imperfect technology³².

One of the few threads of post-war modernization that is assessed positively is the Ukrainian contribution to the development of Soviet science. This applies to those figures who may be associated with Ukraine (either by origin or by work in the territory of the Ukraini-

26 M. Mudryj, O. Arkusza, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

27 W. Danylenko, M. Smolnicka, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

28 *Ibidem*, pp. 116-117.

29 *Ibidem*, p. 89; M. Mudryj, O. Arkusza, *op. cit.*, pp. 175, 201; W. Własow, S. Kulczycki, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-153; H. Chlibowska et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 130-131; N. Soroczynska, O. Hisem, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-97.

30 N. Soroczynska, O. Hisem, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

31 *Ibidem*, pp. 91-92.

32 H. Chlibowska et al., *op. cit.*, p. 122.

an SSR) and whose role has long been ignored, or were popularized as Soviet scholars without national identification (they are still portrayed as such on the Russian Wikipedia). Currently, Ukrainian authors are trying to reclaim, for example: Serhiy Korolev, the main designer of rockets and space flight systems, who came from the Zhytomyr Oblast and was a victim of Stalinist repressions³³; Oleksandr Palladin, biochemist and neurochemist; and Serhiy Lebedev, creator of the first Soviet computer³⁴; Viktor Hlushkov, founder and manager of the Institute of Cybernetics³⁵; Kateryna Yushchenko, who developed the first programming language³⁶; Borys Paton, a pioneer of new welding technologies³⁷; and Oleh Antonov, creator of large transport aircraft³⁸. In one of the textbooks, the biographies of Hlushkov, Paton, and Korolev even bear the headline “With Ukraine in the heart”, as do the biographies of leading dissidents³⁹. Another mentions that Antonov tried to intercede with the authorities in defence of political prisoners⁴⁰, while it is significant that there are no affirmations of people of science and technology associated with Ukraine who can be unequivocally identified with the development of industry or armaments of the USSR, such as the outstanding tank designer Oleksandr Morozov.

The positive aspects also include: development of housing (although always inadequate to needs)⁴¹, automation of production and a partial increase in production efficiency, and the creation of an admittedly imperfect, but nonetheless operating, social security system. The general assessment of this period seems to be aimed at counteracting any nostalgic feelings towards the Soviet period and the USSR. The Brezh-

33 W. Danylenko, M. Smolnicka, *op. cit.*, p. 71; W. Własow, S. Kulczyckij, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

34 W. Danylenko, M. Smolnicka, *op. cit.*, pp. 15, 36; W. Własow, S. Kulczyckij, *op. cit.*, pp. 52, 53; H. Chlibowska et al., *op. cit.*, p. 38.

35 W. Danylenko, M. Smolnicka, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-71; W. Własow, S. Kulczyckij, *op. cit.*, p. 108; N. Soroczynska, O. Hisem, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

36 M. Mudryj, O. Arkusza, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

37 W. Własow, S. Kulczyckij, *op. cit.*, p. 107; N. Soroczynska, O. Hisem, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

38 W. Danylenko, M. Smolnicka, *op. cit.*, p. 111; W. Własow, S. Kulczyckij, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-157.

39 H. Chlibowska et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88.

40 N. Soroczynska, O. Hisem, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

41 W. Danylenko, M. Smolnicka, *op. cit.*, p. 63; W. Własow, S. Kulczyckij, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89, 153; H. Chlibowska et al., *op. cit.*, p. 129.

new period is presented as a time of unrealized promises of a dignified life and a crisis of social ties⁴².

The consumer ideal of the Soviet man of the 1960s-1980s – “an apartment, a car, a dacha”. But it was difficult to achieve it [...] This supposedly equal and fair social security existed only on paper, and in real life a person was faced with insufficient equipment at the clinic, bureaucratic hassle, bribery and a sense of a lack of protection⁴³.

4. Fighting totalitarianism – from an armed fight to a peaceful one

In contemporary Ukraine, the political system of the USSR is unequivocally seen as totalitarian – in 2015, the Supreme Council officially condemned the “communist totalitarian regime of 1917-1991”⁴⁴. In this context, we can ask the following questions: To what extent are manifestations of resistance to the regime presented as a Ukrainian nation-building process? Does the school narrative create a link between the forces of opposition to communism in Ukraine and the Western world? In this subject area, the authors of the textbooks devote most of their space to the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UIA). It is presented as an anti-Stalinist formation that defended the people against terror, extermination, starvation, and deportations. The UIA propaganda materials in characteristic woodcut technique, mainly the works of Nil Khasevych, are widely popularized and have become iconic images of the era⁴⁵. The resistance movement in gulag camps, led by Ukrainian political prisoners, is equally widely recognized⁴⁶. The books emphasize that although the Ukrainian resistance had to take other (non-military) forms after the suppression of the UPA, there was a certain ideological link between them, as early as in the 1950s – although

42 W. Danylenko, M. Smolnicka, op. cit., p. 117; M. Mudryj, O. Arkusza, op. cit., pp. 175-176.

43 M. Mudryj, O. Arkusza, op. cit., pp. 175-176.

44 T.A. Olszański, *Wielka dekomunizacja. Ukraińska polityka historyczna czasu wojny*, Warsaw 2017, p. 17.

45 W. Danylenko, M. Smolnicka, op. cit., pp. 28-33; W. Własow, S. Kulczyckij, op. cit., pp. 27-29; H. Chlibowska et al., op. cit., p. 32; N. Soroczynska, O. Hisem, op. cit., pp. 23, 26.

46 W. Danylenko, M. Smolnicka, op. cit., pp. 44-45; W. Własow, S. Kulczyckij, op. cit., pp. 74-76; M. Mudryj, O. Arkusza, op. cit., pp. 107-109; H. Chlibowska et al., op. cit., pp. 61-62; N. Soroczynska, O. Hisem, op. cit., pp. 28-29.

the opposition groups were loose and dispersed, they were inspired by the recent memory of the UIA. Here a particularly important figure is Levko Lukyanenko, one of the first and most radical dissidents, who started engaging in pro-independence activity as early as 1959⁴⁷.

As for the post-Stalinist period, it is emphasized that Ukrainian political prisoners were rehabilitated after 1956 to only limited extent. The return of the repressed people from the camps and exile did not apply to those sentenced to long sentences for “Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism” – politicians, members of the UIA underground and many clergy⁴⁸. Consequently, the school narrative shows that rehabilitation in the post-Stalinist period does not resolve the issue of settling accounts with the past. It is noted that among those posthumously rehabilitated were also former leaders of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic: Pavlo Postyshev, Stanislav Kosior, and Vlas Chubar, who were responsible for the organization of the Great Famine in Ukraine 1932-1933; however, after 1956 their rehabilitation was supposed to be constitute historical justice⁴⁹.

The issue of the Great Famine occupies an important place in education. The textbooks report that in the 1980s, there was a renewal of the memory of the Great Famine – here the question arises as to how appropriate the word “renewal” is as used by the authors of the textbooks, because one should probably rather talk about creating a narrative about the Great Famine. The authors try to show that this topic was not only taken up by Ukrainians, but was also a topic that foreign historians such as James Mace and Robert Conquest, and political institutions such as the US Congress, were dealing with. In other words, the textbooks paint a picture that the truth about the Great Famine was discovered in parallel by Ukrainians themselves and by the world⁵⁰. The role of the Ukrainian diaspora in publicizing this issue is emphasized.

47 N. Soroczynska, O. Hisem, op. cit., pp. 72-73; op. cit., p. 81; W. Wlasow, S. Kulczykyj, op. cit., p. 95; W. Danylenko, M. Smolnicka, op. cit., p. 66.

48 W. Danylenko, M. Smolnicka, op. cit., p. 49; M. Mudryj, O. Arkusza, op. cit., pp. 131-132; H. Chlibowska et al., op. cit., p. 65; N. Soroczynska, O. Hisem, op. cit., p. 51.

49 M. Mudryj, O. Arkusza, op. cit., p. 131-132.

50 W. Danylenko, M. Smolnicka, op. cit., p. 106-108; W. Wlasow, S. Kulczykyj, op. cit., p. 168-170.

The Ukrainian non-military anti-regime opposition includes two very broadly presented and partially overlapping phenomena in textbooks. The first is the so-called Shistdesiatnyky (the Sixtiers) – a generation of young intelligentsia and artists who were most active during the Thaw period and who postulated increasing the scope of creative freedom and the freedom to use national themes in art, and who tried to return to circulation the work of the so-called “Executed Rebirth” from in the 1920s and promoted the Ukrainian language⁵¹. The second phenomenon is groups of dissidents, that is, people who demanded that the Soviet authorities obey the Helsinki principles for the protection of human rights, and defended Ukrainian national identity and religious freedom. The textbook authors try to systematize these phenomena:

There should be a clear distinction between the terms “dissident movement”, “Shistdesiatnytstvo” [“Sixtism”] and “national liberation movement”. The national liberation movement is the broadest concept. The dissident movement was only one of the components of the national liberation movement, as it touched upon national problems. In the 1960s and 1980s, the dissident movement was the dominant component of the national liberation movement. Shistdesiatnytstvo is a broad artistic and civic movement of the Ukrainian intelligentsia. Due to historical circumstances, Shistdesiatnytstvo and dissidence are to some extent the same, but membership in Shistdesiatnytstvo does not warrant calling one or another activist a dissident. Dissidents include those who expressed political discontent through active actions that exposed them to repression by the authorities, including arrest and imprisonment⁵².

The movement of the Sixtiers and dissidents is described much more broadly than the official political and economic life of the USSR, and is definitely positively valued:

Most of the Shistdesiatnyky valiantly defended their beliefs, more and more often analysed the problems of socio-political life, and were realizing the need

51 Broadly: B. Berdychowska, *Szestydesiatnicy – bunt pokolenia*, [in:] *Bunt pokolenia. Rozmowy z intelektualistami ukraińskimi*, B. Berdychowska, O. Hnatiuk (eds.), Lublin 2000, pp. 9-26; S.A. Bellezza, *Wings to Lift the Truth Up High: The Role of Language for the Shistdesiatnyky*, [in:] *The Battle for Ukrainian. A Comparative Perspective*, M.S. Flier, A. Graziosi (eds.), Cambridge (Mass.) 2017, pp. 247-269.

52 N. Soroczynska, O. Hisem, op. cit., p. 75.

to create an organized liberation movement. From the mid-1960s, an opposition movement towards the totalitarian regime began to form in the milieu of Shistdesiatnyky⁵³.

In one of the textbooks, the art of the Sixtiers is the leading graphic material illustrating the period of the 1960s⁵⁴.

Much attention is also paid to the Crimean Tatar national-democratic movement⁵⁵. This is in line with the post-2014 revision of the attitude towards Crimean Tatars at the political level, and much earlier at the academic level – they are starting to be perceived as members of the political Ukrainian nation. However, there is no affirmation of Soviet party and state officials of Ukrainian origin in the textbooks. Even Petro Shelest, the first secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine in 1963-1972, who defended the independence of the republic and the position of the Ukrainian language and culture, is in part of textbooks either briefly and laconically mentioned, or with a degree of criticism. His contributions to the defense of Ukrainian identity are counterbalanced by accusations of complicity in fighting dissidents, opposition to the return of the Crimean Tatars to Crimea and supporting the intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968⁵⁶. Shelest's best assessment boiled down to the following statement: "In his activities, P. Shelest remained faithful to the communist party ideology and moderate Ukrainian philism"⁵⁷. Where Shelest's contribution to the defense of Ukrainian culture outweighs the negative sides of his rule, the relatively positive tone is counteracted by the headline "Non-Ukrainian Ukraine", which is Shelest's biography, as well as Khrushchev, Kyrychenko and Shcherbytskyi⁵⁸.

53 W. Własow, S. Kulczykyj, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

54 *Ibidem*, pp. 103, 113-114.

55 W. Własow, S. Kulczykyj, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-133; W. Danylenko, M. Smolnicka, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-106; H. Chlibowska et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 117-119, 145-146; N. Soroczynska, O. Hisem, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-108.

56 M. Mudryj, O. Arkusza, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-192.

57 N. Soroczynska, O. Hisem, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.

58 H. Chlibowska et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 103-105.

5. Pressure on identity and language

The third thematic area is the assimilation pressure in the sphere of language and identity, and here the point of reference is the concept of the Soviet people. In 1971, Leonid Brezhnev formulated the idea that “a new historical community of people had arisen, the Soviet people.” This definition has been and still is the subject of scientific research⁵⁹. The most important question that can be raised in this context is, What is the attitude towards the processes of cultural homogenization in the USSR today?

The “new historical community of the Soviet people” proclaimed by Brezhnev is classified as a newspeak concept and is presented as part of a deliberate effort to suppress the national ambitions of non-Russian nations⁶⁰. However, an imagined community uniting all the citizens of the USSR emerged (possibly due to propaganda efforts):

There was no shortage of patriots of the Soviet pattern in the USSR. It is assumed that in the early 1960s, the “world of the Soviet man” was formed. The realities of the Soviet order were accepted as a norm even by those who did not believe in the construction of communism, because in the opinion of the Soviet man, the West had even more shortcomings. Soviet propaganda portrayed the capitalist world as an enemy. In order to focus society against the imagined West, the memory of the USSR’s victory in the war was actively exploited⁶¹.

The actions of the Soviet authorities aimed at linguistic Russification are analysed and negatively assessed, and subsequent decisions of the party and state authorities that removed the Ukrainian language from education, culture, and the media are mentioned. On the other hand, Ukrainian intellectuals who were opponents of Russification are lauded, especially those who were associated with the political opposition, such as Ivan Dziuba, Viacheslav Chornovil, Mykhailo Bra-

59 Broadly: R.O. Rasiak, *“The Soviet People”: Multiethnic Alternative or Ruse?*, [in:] *Ethnic Russia in the USSR. The Dilemma of Dominance*, E. Allworth (ed.), New York 1980, pp. 157-191; Z. Wojnowski, *The Soviet people: national and supranational identities in the USSR after 1945*, “Nationalities Papers” 2015, vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 1-7.

60 W. Własow, S. Kulczycki, op. cit., p. 152; M. Mudryj, O. Arkusza, op. cit., pp. 196-198; N. Soroczynska, O. Hisem, op. cit., p. 94.

61 M. Mudryj, O. Arkusza, op. cit., p. 186.

ichevskyi, and Vasyl Stus⁶². Those who functioned in the official system of the literary establishment and did not cross the line of opposition, such as Oles Honchar or Mykola Bazhan, are also praised for defending the Ukrainian language and identity, but their relationship with the system is also revealed⁶³.

Textbooks often contain information about the presence of Russians in Ukraine. It is highlighted that they were sent to Ukraine in the 20th century as specialists for large industrial plants and for military service, and that they settled, of course, in cities, not in the countryside. The textbooks also draw students' attention to the fact that at the same time, many Ukrainians were forced to work outside the borders of the Ukrainian SSR and were subject to Russification⁶⁴. The presence of the Russian language in Ukraine is also explained. Among the reasons why it is widely used in Ukraine, textbooks point to the Soviet educational and publishing policy, and to better career opportunities for Russian-speaking people⁶⁵. At the same time, it can be noticed that the textbooks seem to support the current shift towards the Ukrainian language. One of the textbooks cites data (although without citing sources) that in 1959, 93.5% of Ukrainians used the Ukrainian language, while in 1979 that number dropped to 89.1%⁶⁶. Both of these numbers are at least debatable.

Conclusion

The narrative about the period 1945-1985 in contemporary Ukrainian textbooks is definitely emancipatory. It builds an image of the Ukrainian SSR as a country struggling with dependence on the Soviet centre, and thus by this centre operated. The negative aspects of the post-war history of the USSR clearly outweigh the positive ones. The achievements of the Soviet modernization that Ukrainians can be proud of are limited to quite strictly delineated areas: "apolitical" science and tech-

62 W. Własow, S. Kulczycki, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-132, 136-139; W. Danylenko, M. Smolnicka, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-95; H. Chlibowska et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 146-150; N. Soroczynska, O. Hisem, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

63 M. Mudryj, O. Arkusza, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-161.

64 W. Własow, S. Kulczycki, *op. cit.*, p. 144; W. Danylenko, M. Smolnicka, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

65 M. Mudryj, O. Arkusza, *op. cit.*, pp. 197-198; N. Soroczynska, O. Hisem, *op. cit.*, pp. 64, 111-112.

66 H. Chlibowska et al., *op. cit.*, p. 127.

nology, and – although with critical reservations – the development of housing, education, and health care.

Ukraine is excluded from the cultural space of the USSR. The history of culture presented in the textbooks is the history of that segment of culture in the Ukrainian SSR which was written in Ukrainian or, if it belonged to the visual arts, had a clear connection with national traditions. The leading achievements of culture are the work of the generation of Shistdesiatnyky and part of the work of the previous generation. This work demonstrates to the readers of textbooks that in the second half of the 20th century, Ukraine had its own autonomously developing and high-value culture. It is a counterbalance to the peripheral variant of the all-Soviet culture oriented towards Moscow (Stalinist monumentalism in architecture, socialist realism) implemented in Ukraine and to the conventionalized folklore which dictated and perpetuated the rural and provincial nature of Ukrainian culture. The processes of homogenization, primarily linguistic, taking place in the USSR are shown to be unambiguously negative and intentionally aimed at undermining Ukrainian identity. Similarly, Ukrainian dissidents are embedded in the chain of processes of Ukrainian opposition to communist totalitarianism. While the iconic figures of the Russian dissident movement, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Andriy Sakharov, appear occasionally, the Ukrainian dissident movement is shown to be independent, embedded in historical Ukrainian aspirations for self-rule, and not as a peripheral variant of the Russian dissident movement.

The emancipatory interpretation of history in terms of the evaluation of the USSR and Ukrainian-Russian relations in Ukrainian textbooks for the 11th grade introduced in 2019 is the result of profound changes in the attitude of the Ukrainian state and society to history, which have been taking place since 2014. In the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, this tendency is most likely irreversible and will deepen. On 17 May 2022, Ukrainian political scientist Yevhen Mahda published a post on his Facebook profile saying: "Russia does not like our history textbook. They will like the new textbook even less"⁶⁷.

67 Y. Mahda, Yevhen Mahda – Facebook profile, Facebook.com, 17 May 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/yevhen.mahda> [17.05.2020].

References

Primary sources

- Chlibowska H. et al., *Istoriya Ukrainy. Riweń standartu: pidruchnyk dla 11 klasu zakładiw zahalnoji seredńioji osvity*, Ternopil 2019.
- Danylenko W., Smolnicza M., *Istoriya Ukrainy: riweń standartu: pidruch. dla 11-ho kl. zakł. zah. sered. osvity*, Kyiv 2019.
- Mudryj M., Arkusza O., *Istoriya: Ukrajina i swit: (intehr. kurs, riweń standartu): pidruch. dla 11 ho kl. zakł. zah. sered. osvity*, Kyiv 2019.
- Soroczynska N., Hisem O., *Istoriya Ukrainy [riweń standartu]: pidruchnyk dla 11 kl. zakł. zahaln. sered. Oswity*, Ternopil 2019.
- Własow W., Kulczyckij S., *Istoriya Ukrainy (profilnyjriweń): pidruchnyk dla 11 klasu zakładiw zahalnoji seredńioji osvity*, Kyiv 2019.

Secondary sources

- Bakare L., *The force awakens (in Ukraine): Darth Vader statue replaces Lenin monument*, "The Guardian", 23 October 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/oct/23/darth-vader-statue-erected-ukraine>.
- Baran W., Danylenko W., *Ukrajina w umowach systemnoji kryzy (1946-1980-i rr.)*, Kyiv 1999.
- Bellezza S.A., *Wings to Lift the Truth Up High: The Role of Language for the Shistdesiatnyky*, [in:] *The Battle for Ukrainian. A Comparative Perspective*, M.S. Flier, A. Graziosi (eds.), Cambridge (Mass.) 2017.
- Berdychowska B., *Szestydiesiatnicy – bunt pokolenia*, [in:] *Bunt pokolenia. Rozmowy z intelektualistami ukraińskimi*, B. Berdychowska, O. Hnatiuk (eds.), Lublin 2000.
- Burszta W., *Silencing the Past, Retrotopia, and Teaching History*, "Sprawy Narodowościowe. Seria nowa" 2018, vol. 50.
- Cherviatsova A., *On the Frontline of European Memory Wars: Memory Laws and Policy in Ukraine*, "European Papers", vol. 5, no. 1.
- Hrycenko O., *Kultury pamięci Ukrainy i Polski w związkach wzajemnych i porównaniach*, [in:] *Kultury historyczne Polski i Ukrainy. O źródłach nieporozumienia między sąsiadami*, T. Stryjek, V. Sklokin (eds.), Warsaw 2021.
- Jankowska O., *Socialna polityka derżawy oczyma robotnykiw i selan*, [in:] *Powojenna Ukrajina: narysy socialnoji istoriji (druha połowyna 1940-ch – seređyna 1950-ch rr)*, W. Danylenko, N. Łaas (eds.), book 2, Kyiv 2010.
- Jędraszczyk K., *Trzydzieści lat dekomunizacji na Ukrainie*, "Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej" 2021, vol. 19, no. 2.
- Kasianov G., *The "Nationalization" of History in Ukraine*, [in:] *Convulsions of Historical Politics*, A. Miller, M. Lipman (eds.), Budapest 2012.
- Konieczna-Sałamatin J., Stryjek T., Otrishchenko N., *Wydarzenia. Ludzie. Historia. Raport z badań sondażowych o pamięci współczesnych Polaków i Ukraińców*, Warsaw 2018.

- Lachowski T., *Od rozrachunków z przeszłością do konfliktu zbrojnego na Donbasie. Sprawiedliwość okresu przejściowego na Ukrainie po Rewolucji Godności*, [in:] *Ukraina po Rewolucji Godności. Prawa człowieka – tożsamość narodowa*, T. Lachowski, V. Mazurenko (eds.), Łódź–Olsztyn 2017.
- Mahda Y., Yevhen Mahda – Facebook profile, Facebook.com, 17 May 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/yevhen.mahda> [17.05.2020].
- Minakov M., *Development and Dystopia. Studies in Post-Soviet Ukraine and Eastern Europe*, Stuttgart 2018.
- Moskwa D., *Opponents in battle, allies in suffering: a dualistic picture of Poland and Poles in Ukrainian history textbooks*, [in:] *The Politics of Memory in Poland and Ukraine. From Reconciliation to De-conciliation*, T. Stryjek, J. Konieczna-Sałamatin (eds.), London 2021.
- Olszański T. A., *Wielka dekomunizacja. Ukraińska polityka historyczna czasu wojny*, Warsaw 2017.
- Rasiak R.O., “The Soviet People”: *Multiethnic Alternative or Ruse?*, [in:] *Ethnic Russia in the USSR. The Dilemma of Dominance*, E. Allworth (ed.), New York 1980.
- Studenna-Skrukwa M., *What history? What homeland? The nationalization of history in the school education before the breakthroughs in 2014-2015 and after*, [in:] *The Politics of Memory in Poland and Ukraine. From Reconciliation to De-conciliation*, T. Stryjek, J. Konieczna-Sałamatin (eds.), London 2021.
- Świder K., *Ewolucja elity władzy w Związku Radzieckim i Rosji*, Warsaw 2013.
- Tchermalykh N., “We Felt That the Country Was in the Stage of a Rough Cut...”: *Vernacular Documentation, Political Affects and the Ideological Functions of Catharsis in Ukraine*, “Visual Anthropology” 2022, vol. 35, no. 2.
- Wojnowski Z., *The Soviet people: national and supranational identities in the USSR after 1945*, “Nationalities Papers” 2015, vol. 43, no. 1.