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Nationalities relations in a totalitarian state. The case of East Central Europe under Soviet occupation (1939-1941) – methodological issues and a research agenda

Stosunki narodowościowe w państwie totalitarnym. Przypadek Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej pod okupacją sowiecką (1939-1941) – zagadnienia metodologiczne i program badań

Summary: The aim of the article is to present the specific nature of research on the issues of national relations in a totalitarian state based on the example of the lands of Central and Eastern Europe under the Soviet occupation from 1939-1941. In order to achieve this, the literature on the subject (in English and Polish) was reviewed as well as the most important methodological problems encountered by researchers. The research program was also outlined, along with a proposal for their conceptualization in the form of signalling the main aspects of the above-mentioned issues, including the specificity of the Soviet occupation of 1939-1941, social and ethnic relations in this area, and the Soviet nationalities policy. Several research methods and postulates were proposed, as well as perspectives and theoretical approaches that could facilitate the study of this complex and controversial subject, e.g., the interdisciplinary nature of research, methods of bottom-up formation of political attitudes of the population (the so-called “bottom-up” method), application of theories of the totalitarian state, and different theories of ethnicity. As a result, an interdisciplinary program of comparative studies of ethnic relations in Central and Eastern Europe under Soviet rule (1939-1941) was outlined, taking into account the transnational character of historical processes and the need to conduct micro historic analyses and case studies that would allow capturing of the diversity of ethnic relations and verify the effectiveness of the policy of the central Soviet authorities. The article argues that it seems obvious that the specificity of the analysed problematics can be properly grasped only by consideration it in the historical and theoretical context, adopting a comparative and transnational approach, from a micro-historical as well as every-

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day-life perspective that highlights the most important social factors which facilitated changes in interethnic relations.

Keywords: nationalities relations, totalitarian state, Soviet occupation, East Central Europe, methodological issues, research agenda

Streszczenie: Celem artykułu jest ukazanie specyficznego charakteru badań problematyki stosunków narodowościowych w państwie totalitarnym na przykładzie ziem Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej pod okupacją sowiecką w latach 1939-1941. Dążąc do jego zrealizowania dokonano przeglądu literatury przedmiotu na ten temat (anglojęzycznej i polskojęzycznej), jak również najważniejszych problemów metodologicznych, jakie napotykają badacze. Zarysowano także program badań wraz z propozycją ich konceptualizacji w postaci zasygnalizowania głównych aspektów wspomnianej problematyki, w tym m. in. specyfiki okupacji sowieckiej lat 1939-1941, stosunków społecznych i etnicznych na tym obszarze oraz sowieckiej polityki narodowościowej. Zaproponowano też kilka metod i postulatów badawczych, jak również perspektyw oraz podejść teoretycznych mogących ułatwić badanie tej skomplikowanej i kontrowersyjnej tematyki, np. interdyscyplinarnego charakteru badań, metody oddolnego formowania postaw politycznych ludności (tzw. „bottom-up”), zastosowania teorii państwa totalitarnego czy różnych teorii etniczności. W rezultacie, został zarysowany interdyscyplinarny program badań porównawczych stosunków narodowościowych w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej pod rządami sowieckimi (1939-1941), uwzględniający transnarodowy charakter procesów historycznych oraz potrzebę przeprowadzenia analiz mikrohistorycznych i studiów przypadku, które pozwoliłyby na uchwycenie zróżnicowania stosunków etnicznych oraz weryfikację skuteczności polityki centralnego szczebla decyzyjnego państwa sowieckiego. Artykuł przekonuje, że specyfika analizowanej problematyki może być właściwie uchwycona jedynie poprzez umieszczenie jej w historyczno-teoretycznym kontekście, przy zastosowaniu podejścia porównawczego i transnarodowego, w perspektywie mikrohistorycznej, a także życia codziennego, co ułatwi dostrzeżenie najważniejszych czynników społecznych, które sprzyjały zmianom w stosunkach międzyetnicznych.

Słowa kluczowe: stosunki narodowościowe, państwo totalitarne, okupacja sowiecka, Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia, zagadnienia metodologiczne, program badań

Introduction

The problematics of nationalities' (ethnic) relations in East-Central Europe under Soviet occupation (1939-1941) is one of the most hotly debated issues pertaining to the history of that region of Europe in the 20th century. A number of reasons lie behind the interest taken by both professional historians and amateurs of history all over the world. First of all, the above-mentioned period of time included the first part of WWII and was initiated by the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of the 23rd of August 1939, which set the whole world ablaze for the next 6 years¹.

1 A. Skrzypek, *Nie spełniony sojusz? Stosunki niemiecko-sowieckie 1917-1941*, Warsaw 1992, pp. 5-104.

Apart from this, the Soviet takeover of much of the Eastern part of Europe at that time launched the imperial policy of the USSR under Stalin, which led to the emergence of that country as the second greatest empire in the world after the end of WWII. But what is most striking in that respect is that the Soviet occupation brought about significant changes in the situation of the nations inhabiting East-Central Europe, having made some of them captive, a situation which would continue for the next 50 years as part of the Soviet Union. That process was to be accompanied by the brutal and cynical character of the occupation policy, which is remembered differently by those nations' representatives and has thus led to the emergence of controversies regarding the evaluation of the Soviet rule as well as conflicting memories of the period on the side of practically all ethnic groups witnessing the Soviet dictatorship².

The aforementioned pact greatly contributed to the division of Eastern Europe into the German and Soviet spheres of influence. It resulted in both German and Soviet aggression towards Poland, on September the 1st and the 17th of September 1939, respectively, followed by an almost 2-year-period of brutal Soviet occupation of Poland, followed in 1940 by the Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) and also parts of Romania (Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia), which brought about sweeping socio-political transformations. It was marked by mass repressions based upon the principle of collective responsibility such as deportations, executions, confiscations of property, economic harassment, invigilation, obligatory conscription to the Red Army, and arrests. Many representatives of traditional political and social elites of the nation-states were affected by this process, but also ordinary citizens were preyed upon by the Soviet regime³.

That occupation not only constituted the successful restoration of the old Russian and Soviet imperial projects but also the construction of political, social, economic, and cultural life on the ruins of the old regimes and those nations' socio-cultural traditions, a transition that was carried out along the lines of the communist ideology in a Stalinist version; mainly by means of ruthless violence, extermination, and mass

2 R.C. Raack, *Stalin's drive to the West, 1938-1945. The origins of the Cold War*, Stanford 1995, p. 39.

3 H.A. Jacobsen, *Der Weg zur Teilung der Welt*, Koblenz-Bonn 1979, p. 26f.

repressions. The lower social classes and young people were lured by the occupation regime to collaborate, which led to the formation of groups of supporters of the Soviet political system and thus deepened the social divisions and exacerbated social conflicts. In the realities of East Central Europe's backwardness and conservatism, many such frictions took on the form of interethnic rifts in which such attitudes of certain representatives of a given nation were generalized and ascribed to all its members. As a result, hostility, stereotypes, and prejudices – strengthened by the totalitarian character of occupational rule as well as a growing rivalry for scarce resources – decided the nature of inter-ethnic relations.

The reaction of most of the inhabitants of those areas subject to these policies was mainly growing anti-Soviet feeling and interethnic tensions that turned into profound animosities and sharp conflicts. They came to the fore in the summer of 1941 when, after the outbreak of the German-Soviet war on the 22nd of June 1941 – a wave of political, ethnic, mainly anti-Jewish, violence occurred leading to hundreds of pogroms, massacres, and lynchings. The question of the reasons for those atrocities has remained unanswered⁴.

An objective of this article is to find the sources of those shifts in attitudes and thus establish the nature of the relations among the nations of the above-mentioned territory during the given period, including their evolution from pre-war visible rivalry, weakened by their established position in the social system of their states, up to the virtual “war of nations” at the end of the Soviet occupation. This article also aims to analyse methodological issues springing from that uneasy past and to sketch a research agenda which could help contribute to the further development of studies on this part of East Central Europe's history in the period under discussion.

1. What to research? (Factors affecting the shape of relations between nationalities)

The problematics have not yet been researched in detail regarding the whole territory under Soviet occupation, even though it could of-

4 T. Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, New York 2010.

fer a kind of transnational history of Eastern Europe in the first stage of WWII. So far, it has been dealt with mainly within the national historiographies that have rarely tried to transcend their limitations. There are scarce monographic publications on the issue that could contain any in-depth analyses on the mechanisms of those relationships as well as their perceptions and the realities lying behind them, with the exception of the research concerning Polish-Jewish, Polish-Belarusian, Jewish-Ukrainian, or Jewish-Lithuanian and Jewish-Latvian relations under the Soviets. For example, Israeli historians did this as part of their studies regarding the situation of Jews under Soviet occupation, in which they emphasise the emancipation of Jews under Soviet rule, their loss of cultural subjectivity as well as antisemitism from a number of other nations as a reaction to social advancement of the Jewish population⁵. Polish historiography analysed the attitude of the Polish Jews during this period of time in two ways; firstly, represented by historians pointing to Soviet repressions and the collaboration of ethnic minorities of pre-war Poland (Jews, Belarussians, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians) with the Soviet occupation regime, arguing that this led to increased enmity of Poles toward the Jews and other pre-war national minorities of the Second Republic of Poland⁶, whereas another stream of analysis (the so-called “critical school of Polish-Jewish relations”) emphasized those Jews’ tendency to emancipate after a long period of discrimination in the Polish state as well as in view of the marked antisemitism of those Poles who exaggerated individual cases of Jewish collaboration in order to blame them *en masse* for massacres of members of the Polish community⁷. There are also other monographs, collective works, and articles stressing the context of the Soviet occupation policy and its detrimental influ-

5 See e.g. B.C. Pinchuk, *Sthetl Jews under Soviet Rule*, Cambridge, MA 1990.

6 See e.g. B. Musial, *Konterrevolutionäre Elemente sind zu erschossen. Die Brutalisierung des deutsch-sowjetischen Krieges im Sommer 1941*, Berlin–München 2001; M. Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II RP pod okupacją sowiecką 1939-1941*, Warsaw 2007; idem, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim. Stosunki polsko-białoruskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II RP pod okupacją sowiecką 1939-1941*, Warsaw 2007.

7 See e.g. A. Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego. Żydzi na Kresach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1939-1941*, Warsaw 2006; J.T. Gross, *Upiorna dekada. Trzy eseje o stereotypach na temat Żydów, Polaków, Ukraińców i Niemców w latach 1939-1948*, Warsaw 1999; idem, *Opowieści kresowe 1939-1941. Żydzi i Sowietci*, Cracow–Budapest–Syracuse 2019.

ence on the social system of the occupied territories, that negatively shaped inter-ethnic relations in the years 1939-1941⁸.

1.1. National perceptions of the Soviet occupation

To better grasp and explain this phenomenon, one needs to take several factors into consideration. On the whole, East Central Europe was a backward region of Europe, lagging behind the western parts of the continent in every aspect of life. This added to the specificity of the area as one dominated by an agricultural economy with many backward, mostly small farms owned by peasants and landed estates of great landholders. Therefore, that region – except for Czechoslovakia – had no developed industry or transport infrastructure, with a generally low level of education and relatively high illiteracy. As a result, poverty prevailed and affected considerable parts of the societies in question. That was aggravated by old, often semi-feudal social structures with low upward mobility and the established, rigid position of certain socio-professional groups that often overlapped with ethnic communities, for example, Jews as middlemen dominated in crafts, petty trade, and services. And often, socio-economic conflicts overlapped with ethnic rifts; for example, in the Polish Eastern Borderlands, about 90% of the landowners were Polish whereas peasants were mostly Belarussians and Ukrainians. Similarly, Latvian or Lithuanian peasants faced dependency on the Polish or German landholders⁹.

Besides, one needs to grasp the political specificity of East and Central Europe as a distinct region of that continent. During the interwar period, it was dominated by (increasingly authoritarian) relatively small nation-states that usually pursued a policy of discrimination against ethnic minorities to the benefit of the dominant ethnic groups. Therefore, the latter were treated as “host nations”, whereas the national minorities were treated as “guests” with restricted rights. What was striking as regards ethnic issues in some regions of the discussed ter-

8 See e.g. J.T. Gross, *Revolution from abroad. The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia*, Princeton, New Jersey 1988; *Stalin and Europe. Imitation and domination 1928-1953*; T. Snyder, R. Brandon (eds.), *New York 2014*; *Shared History – Divided Memory. Jews and Others in Soviet-Occupied Poland, 1939-1941*, E. Barkan, E.A. Cole, K. Struve (eds.), Leipzig 2007.

9 See e.g. K. Jasiewicz, *Zagłada polskich kresów. Ziemiaństwo polskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej pod okupacją sowiecką 1939-1941*, Warsaw 1997.

ritories (e.g., in the Polish Eastern borderlands, populated not only by national communities of Poles, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Jews and in small numbers Russians, Armenians, Tartars, or Czechs but also – mostly ethnic – communities of Byelorussians, regional groups such as the Poleshuk, or religious communities of Catholics, Muslims, or Orthodox and Greek-Catholic Orthodox), was that many of the inhabitants did not possess fully-fledged national consciousness, living without an awareness of belonging to a wider community of people related to each other by the same history and political ambitions. The combination of the above-mentioned factors gave rise to a strong position of certain ideologies, first of all, nationalism, conservatism, and socialism, that contributed to the emergence of differentiated but still powerful nationalist, conservatist, and (often radical) leftist movements¹⁰.

Another element of this region's specificity was the strong position of religion, first Catholicism, then Protestantism, Orthodox, Greek-Catholicism, Judaism, Mahometanism etc., in social life since religious ideas had shaped the mentality of the faithful throughout the centuries. All this fortified the role of cultural – mainly conservative – traditions that deepened a feeling of separateness among the nations and ethnic groups having made them more prone to mutual isolation and rivalry. It became clear during the Soviet occupational rule (1939-1941) in the annexed areas of East Central Europe when the churches or denominational unions (especially those of the Catholic, Greek Catholic, Orthodox, and Judaist) underwent a measure of repression in terms of confiscation of church estates and buildings, liquidation of religious primary and secondary schools, orphanages, care homes, dissolution of religious orders, and elimination of religious instruction from schools. Some priests and monks were arrested or deported into the interior of the USSR. However, these repressions were not as ruthless as those in the Soviet Union immediately after the Bolshevik revolution, and priests were allowed to carry on their religious activities such as giving mass, preaching, and administering of sacraments. The religious life helped uphold the resistance of a large part of

¹⁰ See e.g. J. Rotschild, *East Central Europe between two world wars*, Seattle 1974; I.T. Berend, *Decades of crisis. East Central Europe before World War II*, Berkeley 1998; E.D. Wynot, *Caldron of conflict: Eastern Europe 1918-1945*, Wheeling 1999.

the population against the Soviet regime together with its oppressive policy, but at the same time served to strengthen some ethnic stereotypes, especially that concerning Judeo-bolshevism (the belief in Jewish collaboration with the Soviets, who were commonly and rightly perceived as enemies of religion was widespread then)¹¹.

The outbreak of WWII strengthened national affiliations as civic bonds were weakened by the destruction of pre-war socio-political systems together with their institutions and elites. No wonder it also dominated the perceptions of particular national/ethnic communities' memory of those times, contributing to a considerable degree to the emergence of nationalist perspectives, emphasizing the specific perception of the past through which all the above-mentioned nations viewed the time of the Soviet occupation. They were focused on each nation's martyrology and resistance to the Soviet occupiers, and at the same time, perceived other nations as rivals or even enemies. For example, the Poles (especially the wealthy and well-educated, who held important positions in administration, in the army, or in the educational system before 1939), because many of them suffered from the activities of local Belarussians, Jews, or Ukrainians, who were Polish citizens with communist leanings and supported the new Soviet regime. Institutions of the Polish state were destroyed by the Soviets, and the Polish community of Eastern Poland lost their privileged position in comparison with other national and ethnic groups, who experienced actual national discrimination. The elites were systematically repressed and exterminated. Therefore, there is a large amount of bitterness in their accounts, as they were dominated by negative aspects of the occupation reality¹².

The collective memory of Jewish communities, in turn, was permeated by the conviction that the Soviet occupation was a time that separated their difficult though peaceful existence in East Central Europe in the interwar period from German rule, which ended with the Holocaust. Therefore, the years 1939-1941 were often idealized in Jewish testimonies as an idyllic time before the tragedy befell. Apart

11 W. Bonusiak, *Polityka ludnościowa i ekonomiczna ZSRR na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w latach 1939-1941 ("Zachodnia Ukraina" i "Zachodnia Białoruś")*, Rzeszów 2006, pp. 385-396.

12 M. Wierzbicki, *Western Belarus in September 1939: Revisiting Polish-Jewish relations in the kresy*, [in:] *Shared History...*, pp. 135-146.

from that, Jewish witnesses emphasise the opportunity they had to avoid German occupation which would mean severe persecution as well as the necessity to adjust to the conditions of Soviet totalitarian rule, having also stressed the social advancement of the Jewish community experienced during that era. Similarly to other nationalities, they usually paid little attention to what happened to other ethnic groups, even if that was connected with the activities of the Jews actively supporting the new authorities¹³.

The Ukrainian perception of the Soviet occupation of the former Polish territories was shaped on the one hand by the national concessions given to the Ukrainian people by the Soviets in terms of their social advancement as well as the promotion of the Ukrainian language in cultural life and education, while on the other, the Ukrainians were far from happy given the Soviet repressions against those involved in the Ukrainian nationalist movement, which was preparing to restore the Ukrainian statehood lost in 1920 as a result of the outcome of the Polish-Bolshevik war. However, both memory flows excluded any kind of continuity of Polish rule in any form on what was considered by most Ukrainians as indigenous Ukrainian territory¹⁴.

As regards Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians' attitude to Soviet rule, they primarily pointed to the lawlessness of the annexation of their nation-states into the USSR in June 1940, which ended the little-over-twenty-years of their independent existence. Therefore, the Soviets were treated almost exclusively as occupiers, and all their supporters from within the national community as traitors. This led to a growing interethnic rift with their Jewish communities, who became stereotypically perceived as Soviet collaborators and quite commonly hated. The same perspective was adopted by the Romanians inhabiting both Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia – Romanian provinces unceremoniously incorporated into the USSR at the same time¹⁵.

13 See: D. Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils. Eastern European Jewry under Soviet Rule, 1939-1941*, Philadelphia-Jerusalem 1995.

14 K. Struve, *Deutsche Herrschaft, ukrainischer Nationalismus, antijüdische Gewalt. Der Sommer 1941 in der West Ukraine*, Berlin-Boston 2015, pp. 142-205.

15 See: D. Levin, *Baltic Jews under the Soviets, 1940-1946*, Jerusalem 1994; D. Dumitru, *The State, Antisemitism, and Collaboration in the Holocaust. The Borderlands of Romania and the Soviet Union*, New York 2016.

This subjective character of the attitudes towards the Soviet rule during the period in question resulted in a number of scientific studies being published; these were, however, limited by using or treating with greater confidence sources produced by one of the above-mentioned national groups. Inevitably, this type of researchers' approach consolidates the subjective view of events, shown only from the perspective of a particular nation. This, in turn, makes it impossible to objectify the historical memory of individual nations of the occupied territories. Therefore, the postulate of criticism towards all sources, which by their nature are subjective and as such require careful verification, is of particular importance. In this particular case, it would consist in confronting historical sources created within individual national groups, e.g., Polish, Jewish, Belarusian, Romanian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian, or Estonian, which, despite the fact that they reflect the subjective historical memory of individual national communities, can not only create separate subjective historical narratives but also objectify divergent visions of the past.

Conscious resignation from this procedure will deprive us of the possibility of getting closer to the truth about issues that are still the object of heated controversy and, therefore, are interpreted differently. It seems that researchers should make an effort to reduce this "ethnic" perception of the past, and thus distance themselves from historical narratives created on the basis of the memory of only one ethnic or national community. The point is rather to use the sources and ideas created within individual national communities in order to reduce subjectivism as much as possible, i.e., to develop the most objective view of the history of national relations in the areas of Central and Eastern Europe occupied by the USSR in the years 1939-1941.

1.2. Soviet policy vis-à-vis national and ethnic communities of annexed territories

It seems that what affected interethnic relations under Soviet occupation the most was the nationalities policy of the Soviet authorities in relation to the occupied territories. Officially, the communist leadership of the USSR proclaimed a policy of equal rights for all nationalities inhabiting the subjugated territory, denouncing the wrongdoings of nationalism including antisemitism and other types of chauvinism. However, in practice, national issues played a vital role in both

foreign and domestic policy, which led to the instrumentalization of this question to the detriment of the interests of many nations. First of all, those that had earlier dominated in the countries conquered in the years 1939-1940 faced numerous repressions and even extermination, since their elites were to be eliminated as untrustworthy and replaced by new groups, entirely subordinated to the Soviet authorities. They were also turned into second-rate ethnic groups because they had lost their privileged position and were subjected to all kinds of discrimination. In turn, the pre-war minorities experienced – at least in the first half of the period in question – social and political advancement, done to make them satisfied with Soviet rule. Therefore, the Poles, Romanians, Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians (all of them so-called “host”, meaning dominant, nations) were not treated – at least in the first months of the occupation rule – favourably by the occupation authorities, unlike the ethnic minorities of their pre-war nation-states¹⁶.

As regards the Polish national community of the occupied areas, their plight changed for the better only from the middle of 1940, together with a visible turn of the Soviet empire’s foreign policy in preparation for the war with Nazi Germany. New liberalization trends in the German policy towards the Poles included relaxation of repressions or administrative discrimination, for example, in schooling, culture, or employment in the Soviet administration. Other “host nations” experienced discriminative policies connected with dismantling the remnants of their statehood. Therefore, the minorities inhabiting Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian, and Romanian (that is Bessarabia and Bukovina) territories were officially treated as victims of pre-war nationalist regimes at that time. However, in fact, certain groups (e.g., the wealthy, middle class, and socio-political elites) also suffered repressions and discrimination to a varying degree. The same type of policy was directed at the minorities of the Second Republic of Poland, who originally experienced an improvement in their situation, i.e., were in a privileged position in comparison to the Poles, but with

16 A. Żbikowski, op. cit., p. 55; see also D. Levin, *Baltic Jews...; Estonia 1940-1945. Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity, Part I Soviet Occupation 1940-1941*, Tallin 2006, pp. 1-410.

time were largely categorized (e.g., some Ukrainians or Jews) as “enemies of the people” and, as such, not [for] trustworthy political, social, or economic reasons¹⁷.

It should be borne in mind that the very character of the Soviet occupation policy characterized by the annexation of territories of independent states and the demolition of the pre-war socio-political order within them led to a radical shift in the position of both individuals and social groups, including their ethnic communities. The reversing of roles and places in the social hierarchy in the aftermath of these revolutionary socio-economic transformations as well as political repressions and extermination were the factors that – though indirectly – affected the shape of the nationalities relations in the areas under discussion. What is important is that the Soviet authorities tried to keep the relations between them under control, intervening whenever any of them upset the officially proclaimed balance, when the proportion of some ethnic groups exceeded the expected level, but their efforts in that respect proved hardly effective¹⁸.

1.3. Social factors

For several reasons, socio-economic factors also played an important role in the relations between the nationalities. Primarily, the totalitarian nature of the Soviet occupation regime exerted a particular influence on the shape of the socio-political reality, and thus on ethnic relations. The victorious campaign of the German and Soviet troops on the territory of the Second Polish Republic in September 1939, and the annexation of the Baltic states and Bessarabia and Bukovina in June 1940, brought not only a new political order, new borders, or new administrative structures but also a new type of dictatorship, which aimed at subjugating the public and even private life of the citizens under the complete control of the political regime. They dismantled the existing social and political structures, which was combined with the extermination of traditional elites. The existing moral norms on which the then social order and public safety were based were also

17 See *Stalinist Terror in Eastern Europe*, K. Mc Dermott, M. Stibbe (eds.), Manchester 2014; D. Levin, *The Lesser of two evils...*

18 See e.g. E.S. Rozenblat, “Contact Zones” in *Inter-Ethnic Relations – The Case of Western Belarus 1939-1941*, [in:] *Shared History...*, pp. 201-224.

destroyed. A visible sign of these revolutionary changes was the introduction of the principle of collective responsibility as well as far-reaching attempts to introduce social engineering such as the liquidation of certain socio-professional groups (e.g., the bourgeoisie, gentry, military settlers, policemen, professional soldiers, individual farmers), and the creation of completely new, e.g., *kolkhozniks* or militiamen. The ultimate goal of social and cultural policy thus understood was to create a “new (Soviet) man”, i.e., one that completely rejected the old values and customs, recognizing only the ideology of communism and the policy of the communist regime as one’s own.

Generally speaking, in the years 1939-1941, life under the Soviet occupation was characterized by the loss of political and civil subjectivity of the citizens of the countries conquered in 1939-1940. The Soviet state granted them a new legal status (“Soviet citizens” or “enemies of the people”), characterized by *de facto* objectification, whose essence was the loss of influence on political decisions concerning the country that they had inhabited. It also imposed on them a new socio-political and economic order, built on the ruins of the old one, through the application of widespread discrimination based on nationality, social affiliation, and political preferences as well as mass repression against both those who opposed this policy and were deemed potentially harmful.

One of the far-reaching changes was the profound restructuring of ownership relations, ultimately aimed at the liquidation of private property. The most important repressions included forced resettlement, removal from administration, arrests, executions, deportation to concentration and labour camps, or deprivation of property and social prestige. Under Soviet rule, most of the population of the incorporated territories obtained Soviet citizenship, but without political and civic subjectivity. Most of them had a chance to enter the public life of the Soviet state and were even forced to do so, e.g., by forced participation in various pseudo-elections, demonstrations, rallies, or subscriptions for a state loan, but they had no real influence on how the state functioned. Compulsory military service was a form of repression and at the same time the price for the possibility of enjoying the privileges of a Soviet citizen. In the spring of 1940 and 1941, the authorities announced general conscription to the Red Army, which comprised about 150 thousand Polish citizens. In addition, most of

them took part in the first stage of the war with Germany and died on the battlefield or died of starvation and exhaustion as German POWs¹⁹.

As a result of the above-described policy of the Soviet authorities, the societies of the territories conquered and incorporated into the USSR could free themselves of the greatest social and economic inequalities, but simultaneously they became almost completely dependent on the state, impoverished and deprived of civil and legal subjectivity. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the Soviet regime's policies often left much to be desired, and even though the inhabitants of the occupied areas used various survival strategies to mitigate the negative effects of these actions, the situation of the population (except the poorest) in the areas in question radically deteriorated. The result of this process was the intensification of competition between individual social and professional groups, which often took the form of rivalry easily turning into ethnic conflict²⁰.

2. How to research (research methods and postulates)?

The key issues of relations between nationalities under Soviet rule outlined above posit a natural question, namely how to research such complex problematics comprising at least eight bigger national or ethnic communities on a vast, and widely differentiated territory? It seems that several postulates need to be taken into account when trying to formulate a research agenda and its methodological shape. Firstly, the question of interethnic relations undoubtedly requires a comparative approach, so that one could not only reconstruct the experience and perceptions of a particular nation under the Soviet occupation but also – or perhaps primarily – the multi-ethnic relations based on establishing similarities and differences of all larger ethnic communities' interests, attitudes, and plight. Thus, one can distinguish not only the context of the occupation regime with its evolving priorities in each of the occupied territories/countries but also the mutual

19 A. Głowacki, *Sowietci wobec Polaków na ziemiach wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1939-1941*, Łódź 1997; W. Bonusiak, op. cit.; M. Wierzbicki, *Soviet economic policy in Annexed Eastern Poland, 1939-1941*, [in:] *Stalin and Europe...*, pp. 114-137.

20 R. Conquest, *Stalin. Breaker of nations*, New York 1991; *Katyn. A crime without punishment*, N.S. Lebedeva, A.M. Cienciala, W. Materski (eds.), New Haven 2007.

relations between nations inhabiting the common land. What is significant is that the relations should not be confined to bilateral interactions of, say, Lithuanians and Jews, Poles and Belarussians, or Romanians and Ukrainians but, if possible, ought to be analysed in national or ethnic “triangles”, e.g., Poles-Lithuanians-Jews, Poles-Ukrainians-Jews, or even in “squares” such as Romanians-Jews-Ukrainians-Russians (in Bessarabia). This approach will offer a wider perspective on the issues of the 1939-1941 realities of Eastern Europe under Soviet occupation, including the national interactions then and there²¹.

Similarly fruitful might be the transnational perspective in terms of researching differentiated social responses to the more or less uniform communist ideology as well as Soviet policy that crossed the borders of the countries or territories under occupation. Officially, those national communities were isolated, as confirmed by the keeping of the old borders of those territories by the Soviets even after the territories were incorporated into the USSR. However, the imposition of the same socio-political system implemented by similar methods brought about specific reactions from all the societies in captivity in terms of similar social practices that could slightly differ, but their roots were indeed the same. And they often reached beyond the borders of the pre-war nation-state. Take the practice of finding better provision of food in neighbouring Soviet republics, for example, where people from one territory, e.g., so-called Western Belarus, regularly visited its Lithuanian neighbour to do the shopping there and thus mitigate supply shortages. Or the spread of the patterns of resistance to collectivization across the old borders by passively or actively defending one’s rights to one’s own land so as to slow down the collectivization process. One may add to this the black market practices connected with contraband of scarce resources from adjacent areas. Thus, transnational approaches enable us to spot strong interdependencies between the main actors, institutions, and relationships crossing or operating over the still existing borders of pre-war states and the societies that inhabited them. The discovery of those transnational phenomena might facilitate our grasping of the complexity of the socio-economic and political realities of the occupied territo-

21 See e.g. K. Struve, *op. cit.*

ries, thus allowing us to comprehend the unique context and essence of the interethnic relations of 1939-1941 in the researched territory²².

Another problem with previous historical research of relations between the nationalities under Soviet rule was too excessive an emphasis on ethnicity to the detriment of socio-economic and political issues. Yet, the latter could highlight the real motivation and interests of each of the above-mentioned ethnic groups, thus allowing us to explain controversial issues in their mutual relations. When examining the Soviet occupation policy in the discussed period, one can easily find a preponderance of socio-political issues that determined the shape of the interethnic relations on the analysed territory. Furthermore, this policy evolved with time together with the changing priorities of the Soviet domestic and foreign policy. Even though ethnic identification prevailed in the occupied territories, quickly replacing – relatively weak – civic identity and loyalties, the Soviet authorities segregated the inhabitants of those territories with the use of social and political categories rather than ethnic ones. Therefore, I am convinced that this complex reality can be explained mostly by the application of social history methods, approaches and interpretations which emphasize socio-economic rather than cultural factors.

Quite a lot of the above could be effectively studied along the lines of the social change occurring under Soviet rule, the emphasis on, for example, the shift within the social structure, namely the disappearance of some socio-professional groups (landowners, military settlers, policemen, military officers), and the emergence of new ones such as kolkhozniks, Komsomol members, militiamen, or employees of the Soviet administration. The same is true of the removal of those countries' elites, which consisted in the elimination – and often extermination – of representatives of the national elite circles, and simultaneously the formation of a new one, composed of indigenous sympathizers of the new system and newcomers from the interior of the Soviet Union.

Another issue is following the processes of continuance and change as far as social life is concerned as well as the intra-societal relations

22 See e.g. *Comparative and Transnational History. Central European Approaches and New Perspectives*, H.G. Haupt, J. Kocka (eds.), New York 2012; *Tygiel Narodów [Melting Pot of Nations]. Stosunki społeczne i etniczne na dawnych ziemiach wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej 1939-1953*, K. Jasiewicz (ed.), Warsaw 2002.

including the way in which the particular national communities received, adapted, negotiated, and internalized the patterns of social behaviour imposed from above by the Soviet authorities. Also, the issue of competition for resources (in the aftermath of the nationalization of the main branches of the economy, which brought about acute food shortages), prestige, and personal survival as well as the process of changing social and gender roles, together with the shift in the social hierarchy and the impact of migrations on the social and economic landscape of the occupied territories, should be studied. Researchers often overlook the social class perspective and view the societies of East Central Europe mainly in ethnic terms. Meanwhile, social relations – *inter alia* – the conflicts between the poor and the wealthy as well as other forms of securing those groups' interests often played a crucial role in shaping the map of interethnic rifts²³.

The occupation regime brought about a visible change in the intimate life of the inhabitants of those territories, especially young people. New living conditions, characterized by a lower level of personal security, the appearance of new cultural patterns, and the radical decline in the living standards of many led to the rejection of old patterns of inter-human relations and the emergence of sexual emancipation in the lives of many young people, particularly those involved in official youth organizations or those studying at secondary schools and universities. From the point of view of the above-mentioned processes, those relations between nationalities might often be seen as a manifestation of social problems or phenomena. All those issues require the application of not only classical, historical research methods but also those belonging to the social sciences, namely monographical, comparative, systemic, and behavioural analyses.

An important part of the research methods of historical social science that can be of use in this research is the perspective of everyday life. For the last 40 years or more, it has been popular among not only historians but also sociologists and social as well as cultural an-

23 See K. Jasiewicz, *Pierwsi po diable. Elity sowieckie w okupowanej Polsce 1939-1941*, Warsaw 2004; idem, *Oni. Okupacyjny aparat sowiecki na ziemiach północno-wschodni okupowanej Polski w latach 1939-1941*, Warsaw 2015; M. Wierzbicki, *Der Elitenwechsel in den von der UdSSR besetzten polnischen Ostgebieten (1939-1941)*, [in:] *Gewalt und Alltag in besetzten Polen 1939-1945*, J. Bohler, S. Lehnstaedt (eds.), Osnabrück 2012.

thropologists, contributing to the emergence of a new sociological paradigm (the so-called “third sociology”). In line with this, many sociologists claim that real social life can only exist and be observed at the lowest level of human existence. It emphasizes the importance of everyday experience that springs from repeatable actions and practices in the micro-world of individuals. And that in turn shapes one’s attitude regarding politics, society as well as ethnic issues. This corresponds with the so-called “bottom-up” analytical method that has been popular in Anglo-Saxon historiography, according to which political views are formed at the grass-roots level of social life. This research perspective offers the researchers an opportunity to analyse the process of formation of individuals’ views against the backdrop of everyday experiences, for example, living conditions. Despite the fact that there is no exact definition of everyday life and there are numerous controversies among historians regarding this perspective’s scientific usefulness, it possesses genuine potential for studies of totalitarian dictatorships in which the central authorities impose their will on society but the latter modify them to a considerable degree.

It seems that the problematics of relations between nationalities needs to be contextualized at least twice, that is, firstly against the backdrop of pre-war interethnic relations on the territory under discussion as well as in the context of the Soviet occupation of the Eastern part of Europe in the years 1939-1941. This will certainly facilitate finding an answer to the question of the causes of the enmity among the ethnic communities, namely, whether it was intensified by long-lasting social prejudices and grudges (such as anti-Semitism or the hostility of peasants towards the landowners, their plenipotentiaries, or civil servants). The current secondary literature on the issue offers two explanations; the first stresses the significance of traditional ethnic divisions based upon racial or chauvinistic prejudices which came to the fore in the time of chaos and anarchy of the summer of 1941. The other points to the importance of situational factors, including brutality, cynicism, and the ruthlessness of the Soviet rule that eventually triggered the deep layers of ethnic hatred which erupted at an appropriate time. What is needed is further research that should enable historians to determine which explanation corresponds better to the reality of the Soviet occupation of 1939-1941.

The issue of ethnic relations under Soviet occupation and their mostly negative outcome can be explained by analysing the concepts of zones of ethnic contact. They should be understood in both geographical and socio-political terms, identifying the places where the interethnic encounters took place as well as areas of life where ethnic community representatives dealt with each other. It is apparent that the idea of zones of this kind could enable researchers to better comprehend the reasons behind the evolution of the ethnic relations under Soviet rule in the subjugated part of East-Central Europe. However, this conception may be challenged on the grounds there is a controversial understanding of the effect of contact between the ethnic groups in social sciences. One of these stresses the correlation of greater intensity of contacts with decreasing intensity of antagonism, another points to the increase in conflicting situations together with greater frequency of encounters. As regards the discussed problematics, the analyses of historical sources confirm the occurrence of both approaches, which means that more frequent contact, e.g., at universities or work, led to the spread of a more tolerant atmosphere among different ethnic groups. However, a number of new conflicts took place in specific situations in which those groups' interests were somehow infringed²⁴.

In spite of these controversies, one can analyse the problematics through the selection of several concrete zones of contact. The first of these may be the realm of political relations, characterized by the subjugation of conquered countries after the Soviet invasions of 1939-1940 as well as the dismantling of the old socio-political order in their aftermath. During that process, differentiated attitudes of representatives of various ethnic groups emerged and sometimes led to clashes of interests that led to rifts or enmity between, for example, Latvians and Jews, Poles or Belarussians, Ukrainians and Jews, Lithuanians and Jews, Romanians and Jews, Russians or Ukrainians. This also manifested itself in the social conflicts as Poles, Romanians, Latvians, and Lithuanians played the role of "the host nation", which was challenged by those ethnic minorities who saw their chance to get rid of their label of "second-rate citizens". However, it is quite obvious that political

24 The idea of "ethnic zones" in this article has been borrowed from Evgienii Rozenblat's article. See E.S. Rozenblat, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-224.

attitudes within ethnic groups were differentiated, even though it was often overlooked by others.

The second type, socio-economic relations, were linked to the establishment of the Soviet model of the socio-political system that was built on the ruins of the old, traditional system, which entailed the process of deep reorganization of social hierarchy, loyalties, and prestige. The already-mentioned socio-professional groups (landowners, merchants, civil servants, military settlers, teachers, policemen, and military officers) as well as activists of pre-war NGOs and political parties, were eliminated from the administration, education, and the economy to the benefit of both local supporters of leftist ideas and (with time, more numerous and influential) “Vostochniki” – newcomers from the Soviet Union. The two latter groups created a new political, social, economic, and cultural elite that was entirely subordinated to the central authorities of the communist party of the Soviet Union, which kept both the Soviet state and society in an iron grip under ruthless control. Thus, the Soviet totalitarian state produced a kind of “new Soviet man”, totally deprived of his own unique subjectivity, initiative, or traditional morality. This aspect of interethnic zones of contact included dynamics of a revolution imposed and implemented from above and, as usual in such situations, it brought about radical social change undermining the position of some social groups to their detriment, whereas other groups (especially the poor) were promoted. This, in turn, aroused bitterness and hostility in those who were discriminated against by the new authorities and lost their dominant position in society. This kind of social relationship often overlapped with the ethnic affiliation of those concerned.

The third zone of that type concerned the everyday life of new Soviet citizens with all its aspects including their cooperation with the new political system, accommodation to its demands as well as various forms of resistance to it. After the initial several months of the occupation rule, during which the Soviets pretended to put the interests of the former ethnic minorities at the fore of a transition toward the Soviet Stalinist model of the socio-political system; this made most of the citizens defenceless vis-à-vis a totalitarian power, which aimed to turn them into the objects of its domestic and foreign policies. Despite the impression of the Soviet state being all-mighty, the everyday life of Stalinism brought in – apart from many conflicts for scarce resources

– also many opportunities for cooperation between the members of various ethnic groups, especially on the basis of common class interests (e.g., numerous peasants, regardless of their nationality, resisting collectivization, workers fighting for better working and living conditions, students cooperating at universities to achieve a better education). However, at this stage of the research, one cannot determine which of the above-mentioned attitudes of cooperation, accommodation, and resistance prevailed, or how they shaped the social, and particularly ethnic, relations.

3. Theoretical research perspectives and proposals

It seems that in order to better explain the character of interethnic relations under Soviet occupation, at least two working hypotheses can be proposed:

1. The prevailing – as it seems in the light of past historical research – animosities among the ethnic communities were the result of the popularity of nationalist ideology among most of the nations and ethnic groups inhabiting this region of Europe, which preferred to pursue their own interests to the detriment of others. Besides, strong traditions of antisemitism led them to perceive all actions of Jews aimed at obtaining equal social status as acts of treachery. The collapse of the nation-states of East Central Europe in the aftermath of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, and the outbreak of war, revealed the weakness of civic ties and the ineffectiveness of the idea of civil society as compared with national bonds and loyalties²⁵.

2. Social life under Soviet occupation was rebuilt under specific conditions of a totalitarian dictatorship in which all the citizens were deprived of human or civil rights, material wealth, financial independence, or prestige, and left alone vis-à-vis the totalitarian state. Those who wanted to survive, needed to renounce any open independence of mind or choice, agreeing to instrumental treatment by the state-party apparatus. Their attitudes and survival strategies, based mostly upon

²⁵ On the significance of nationalism as an ideology see e.g. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London–New York 2006; E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge 1992.

accommodation to the socio-political system imposed by the Soviets or passive resistance to it, can be explained by the concept of totalitarian deprivation that consisted of bitter rivalry for resources and social prestige among members of various social groups deprived of the above-mentioned goods. In this struggle, ethnic or national bonds were a significant type of identity that ensured social cohesion at the grass-root level, but not the only ones, because of the existence of social and class identity that crossed the ethnic divisions. For example, most peasants of all ethnic communities resisted collectivization. The same attitudes were displayed by workers exploited ruthlessly by the Soviet economic administration.

The latter conception, based upon the output of social history, seems to propose the most convincing explanation for those processes. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary approach also seems to be necessary to explain the complex problematics of interethnic relations under Soviet rule, by means of output from disciplines other than the history of science (e.g., sociology, political science, social psychology, and socio-cultural anthropology). For instance, social science's theories may be of use in that respect, namely those of the totalitarian state (in its classic and revisionist versions), ethnic conflict, and totalitarian deprivation. The latter is based upon the relative deprivation theory formulated by Anglo-Saxon social psychologists after WWII. Its findings – though challenged in scholarly debates – may be employed concerning social relations under the Soviet occupation of 1939-1941. They were characterized by widespread deprivation in terms of the loss of the inhabitants' civil subjectivity, human rights, economic independence, and personal autonomy (in private life as well). All this brought about a common feeling of deprivation, which in turn mobilized those who felt deprived to seek revenge on those who were commonly believed to have become privileged under the new regime. This specific type of deprivation, intensified by profound reconstruction of the social hierarchy and the social fabric as well as political relations, to the detriment of most of the society under occupation,

led to acute rifts, hostilities, and consequently, outbreaks of individual and communal violence, which also affected the ethnic relations²⁶.

When studying ethnic conflicts under Soviet rule, one needs to take into account the theoretical aspects of ethnic relations, e.g., definitions of ethnicity including the objective and subjective criteria of this social and cultural phenomenon. What is important in that aspect is that there has been no universal definition of ethnicity yet that could be applied to all types of research since many scholars define this phenomenon differently, paying attention to its various aspects. As a result, Wsevolod W. Isaijw, the author of the first study whose goal was to work towards a uniform definition of ethnicity, suggested that it should be defined loosely, that is as a group that identifies itself or is identified by others based on certain characteristics, e.g., as Germans, Indians, or Ukrainians²⁷. In turn, Beatrice Drury defines ethnicity and ethnic groups as a collective of persons who share certain patterns and norms of behaviour included in their common culture, religion, language; usually identify themselves with the same social-cultural qualities, phenomena, and being perceived in this manner by others, they constitute also part of a greater population, a wider social system²⁸.

Besides, the relations between dominant and subordinated communities (mostly ethnic minorities vis a vis the majority community), the reasons for the occurrence of ethnic discrimination, the role of the state in terms of its institutionalized nationalities policy, the emergence of ethnic stereotypes and prejudice, and their role in fuelling rifts, conflicts, and violence should be analysed also including the reasons for their appearance. Another aspect of such a study should include the issue of ethnic and national identity, focusing on the similarities and differences between national and ethnic communities. All

26 See on that e.g. I. Walker, T.F. Pettigrew, *Relative deprivation theory: an overview and conceptual critique*, "British Journal of Social Psychology" 1984, no. 23, pp. 301-310; J.H. Turner, *Toward a Unified Theory of Ethnic Antagonism: A Preliminary Synthesis of Three Macro Models*, "Sociological Forum" 1986, vol. 1, no. 3; R. Backer, J. Rak, *Challenging the theoretical framework of the totalitarian syndrome*, "Studia nad Autorytaryzmem i Totalitaryzmem" 2021, vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 7-17.

27 See W. W. Isaijw, *Definitions of Ethnicity*, "Ethnicity" 1974, no. 1.

28 M. Bieńkowska-Ptasznik, *Tożsamość etniczna jednostki w kontekście pogranicza*, [in:] *Etniczność i obywatelskość w Nowej Europie. Konteksty edukacji międzykulturowej*, J. Nikitorowicz, D. Misiejuk, M. Sobiecki (eds.), Białystok 2007, pp. 324-332. See also on that B. Drury, *Ethnic mobilisation: Some theoretical considerations*, [in:] *Ethnic Mobilisation in a Multi-Cultural Europe*, J. Rex, B. Drury (eds.), Hampshire 1994; R. Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity*, London 1998.

this remains vital in gaining a proper understanding of the specificity as such, as well as that of the ethnic relations in East Central Europe under the Soviet occupation, given the differentiation of the process of the development of national consciousness in the first half of the 20th century²⁹.

Moreover, the combination of comparative analysis, the perspective of everyday life, and a micro-historical approach in order to embrace the complexity of ethnic relations seems to be necessary. The former requires optionally dividing everyday-life activities into four main areas of research interest, being: 1 – Political reality, work, education; 2 – Living conditions; 3 – Leisure, recreation, relaxation; 4 – Culture, mentality, attitudes. The latter, in turn, calls for selecting several smaller regions of the annexed territory to enable the study of the social relations' problematics in detail, including ethnic issues against the wider backdrop of social relations.

One may propose the following regions: 1 – The Riga region in Latvia; 2 – Vilnius and its district; 3 – The Białystok oblast (province); 4 – The Lviv oblast; 5 – The Kishinev oblast, because they all embraced multi-ethnic territories with both urban and rural populations. Thus, we may see the Soviet occupation policy in close-up, which can protect us from excessive generalization of its issues and also enable an escape from too great a focus on ethnicity and ideological (that is cultural) issues that so often obscure the complexity of socio-economic relations and political realities, encouraging superficial, emotional, and nation-focused interpretations³⁰.

Conclusion

When formulating the general research findings, one needs to bear in mind that interethnic relations were one of the most significant aspects of the Soviet occupation, given the multi-ethnic character of East Cen-

29 J. Mucha, *Oblicza etniczności. Studia teoretyczne i empiryczne*, Cracow 2005, pp. 9-50.

30 On microhistory see e.g. E. Domańska, *Mikrohistorie. Spotkania w międzyświatach*, Poznań 2005; R. Shimon, *Together and apart in Brzezany: Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians, 1919-1945*, Bloomington 2002; J. Brewer, *Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life*, "Cultural and Social History. The Journal of the Social History" 2010, vol. 7, issue 1, pp. 87-109; O. Bartov, *Tales from the Borderlands. Making and unmaking the Galician past*, Yale University Press 2022.

tral Europe, the importance of nationalist ideology, and the specificity of the occupation itself, that was not simply restricted to subjugating a conquered territory but also caused its incorporation – against the provisions of international law – into the USSR, having torn down the structures of the nation-states against the wishes of most of their societies, and particularly of the “host nations”. The Soviet rule brought about deep transformations of the socio-political system that shook the foundations of the social order in those countries. Therefore, one should avoid focusing on ethnicity, without taking into consideration the other aspects of social life and the fact that, although the issues of the relations between nationalities played a vital role in the Soviet occupation policy, it was treated instrumentally by the Soviet leadership at various stages of the occupation. One should also bear in mind that all those developments took place under a totalitarian dictatorship, which brought in a completely new concept of social life, that of total control of state and society’s structures that consequently led to the profound aggravation of social relations in the annexed territory. Therefore, the specificity of the analysed problematics can be properly grasped only by taking it into consideration in the above-outlined historical and theoretical context, a comparative and transnational approach, and micro-historical as well as everyday-life perspective that highlights the most important social factors which facilitated changes in interethnic relations.

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