

Institute of National Remembrance

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What is next for the exhumations in Volhyn?
President of the IPN: The IPN's options have been exhausted, despite the fact that we have been expressing goodwill for a long time

“Even though the works of the Polish-Ukrainian Forum of Historians have been practically suspended, the publications that are the records of the meetings held are appearing soon. The crisis concerns the search, exhumation and commemoration of the victims of the Volhyn genocide. The IPN's activity in this matter is either blocked or hindered. However, we are very happy about the fact that the memory of Poles and their rich cultural heritage in the Borderlands has reached the young generation”.



wPolityce.pl: Mr President, has there been something new going on about the exhumation of Polish victims of genocide in Volhyn?

President of the IPN Dr Jarosław Szarek: We are waiting for a reply to the letter that the IPN addressed to the Ukrainian Minister of Culture a month ago. It includes a proposal of ten places where the IPN would like to initiate the search.

What places?

These are places connected with the events of 1915-1916, i.e. the fight of the Polish Legions. Furthermore, the fallen soldiers near Kukle and Kostiuchnówka, from 1939, among others Holosko and Tynne, German and Soviet victims and the victims of Ukrainian nationalists from 1943-1944. So far, the IPN has not received any answer. The letter was sent following the exhumations in Hruszowice. When it turned out that at the local cemetery, in the place of the monument glorifying the UPA units, only human remains from earlier times had been found, and there had been no members of the UPA resting there, this being clearly indicated by these works. Thus, the demands of the Ukrainian side - to commemorate the UPA there - became groundless. Now we are waiting for the reaction of the Ukrainian side.

A negative answer may come from Ukraine. Then what?

We leave this matter to politicians. The IPN's capabilities have already been exhausted, even though we have been expressing goodwill for a long time. Even the last letter is a proof of this. We indicate in it places important for many periods of our history, also those that should not raise any controversy on the Ukrainian side, those that do not include victims of genocide in Volhyn and Eastern Lesser Poland. We can not look for soldiers from September 1939, and I remind you that among those buried at the beautiful cemetery in Mosciska, which is the work and effect of previous searches - still outside the IPN - by the Freedom and Democracy Foundation - Ukrainians serving in the 49th Hutsul infantry regiment are also buried. All these actions were discontinued by the decision of the Ukrainian authorities.

The years 1916 and 1920 should not raise any doubts or controversies. At that time, many Ukrainians fought alongside Poles.

And among the soldiers of the Ukrainian People's Republic fighting together with the Polish Army who were killed in the battles with the Bolsheviks, it is worth mentioning gen. Marko Bezruczko, who, among others, defended Zamość in 1920.

Last week, an international scientific conference organized by the IPN "World War II in Polish-Ukrainian relations - state of research and research perspectives" took place. Ukrainian historians also took part in it. Was it not to take place?

I have great satisfaction that it happened and went very well. When the idea of organizing it a few months ago came up, many people said that it was impossible to organize such a conference because no one would come.

Why?

Various reasons were mentioned. First and foremost, the amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance. The conference was very successful, the names of the scientists involved speak for themselves. Not only historians working at the Institute of National Remembrance, but a large group of the most outstanding researchers of Polish-Ukrainian relations from home and abroad, from the United States, Ukraine ... We intend to publish the conference materials as soon as possible.

Some joint conclusions were arrived at as a result of the conference?

Above all, basic research must be carried out - this is what the IPN Branch in Rzeszów is at the forefront of. Papers of young scientists Marcin Bukała, Piotr Chmielowiec and Tomasz Bereza were very well received. Perhaps the next conference will be dedicated to the collaboration of the German occupation - its scale - on the Polish and Ukrainian side. In addition, Prof. Ludmiła Hrynewycz from the National University of Kyiv-Mohylanska Academy heading the Ukrainian Center of Research on Holodomor recommending signing an agreement with

us and already agreed that in December we will meet in Warsaw at a conference organized by the Institute of National Remembrance and dedicated to victims of the Holodomor, this year it is the 85th anniversary of this Communist genocide that claimed millions of victims.

The cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian archives looks very good.

The structure of the IPN makes it possible to conduct activities in many fields, and thus to undertake cooperation. We do not forget about the drama of our compatriots - victims of the NKVD's anti-Polish operation - and this can be investigated into more thoroughly through the cooperation with Ukrainian archives. Soon you will be able to see specific results of this cooperation, including documents or exhibitions.

Were it not for Volhyn, Polish-Ukrainian cooperation would be almost perfect.

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reaches out to young generation There have been many private and social initiatives, numerous trips, during which cemeteries are organized and crosses are put in places where our ancestors rest. The memory of the Borderlands heritage does not die.

The Borderlands, Volhyn genocide are important elements of Polish history. How does the IPN bring them closer to Poles?

On the occasion of the National Day of Remembrance of Genocide Victims carried out by Ukrainian nationalists on citizens of the Second Polish Republic, the IPN has prepared dozens of projects throughout Poland. We co-organize not only these official celebrations, among them traditionally the central celebration at the Volyn Square, together with Office for War Veterans and Victims of Oppression, but we also participated in the unveiling of the Volhyn Triptych in Toruń, a monument is to be erected in Lublin, and in Brussels in the European Parliament we open the exhibition "Unfinished Volhyn Masses"; the session under this title took place in Krakow. We also organize numerous screenings of films and the *Volhyn Ballad* of the Nie Teraz Theater, discussions on books, workshops for pupils and teachers (the next edition in September in the new school year). It is impossible to list all the activities of the IPN in individual cities. We also run the zbrodniawolynska.pl website in Polish, Ukrainian and English.

Let me remind you that the day after the National Day of the Commemoration of the Victims of Genocide committed by Ukrainian nationalists on the citizens of the Second Polish Republic, for the first time on July 12, we celebrate a new national holiday, i.e. the Day of Struggle and Martyrdom of the Polish Village. On this occasion, the IPN is opening together with the Kielce Village Museum a completely new version of the martyrologiawspolskich.pl portal about Polish villages pacified during the Second World War. The Czechs were able to make the whole world famous for the extermination of the civilian population in Lidice, the French - Oradour-sur-Glane. We in Poland have hundreds of such villages, but we could not show their fate abroad, and we all pay for it today. The portal being opened by the IPN - soon also in the English version - is a modest attempt to change this situation.

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