

## The July 1943 genocidal operations of the OUN-UPA in Volhynia

This article discusses the apex of the ruthless biological extermination of Poles committed over 17 months (from November 1942 to April 1944) by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (*Orhanizatsiya Ukrayinskykh Natsionalistiv*, OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (*Ukrayinska Povstanska Armiya*, UPA).

The information presented here is based on statistical calculations and analyses of events in Volhynia, as published in 2000 in the two-volume work *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939-1945* (The genocide committed by Ukrainian nationalists against Poles in Volhynia 1939-1945), which I co-wrote with my father, Władysław Siemaszko. That work is the result of years-long examination of source material amounting to approx. 2,500 records.

Poles had been the target of various acts of terror and murder in Volhynia in the fall of 1939, almost immediately after the outbreak of World War Two. However, with Poland's Eastern Borderlands (*kresy*) having been seized by the Soviet Union, these crimes did not become mass-scale operations. This is because the Soviet terror (following a brief period of freedom permitting the Ukrainians to lash out at the Poles) affected the entire population and social life as a whole. These 1939 attacks, indicative of hostile attitudes towards Poland and Polish people, marked the beginning of OUN's plan to build an independent, united, "ethnically uniform" Ukrainian state, described in resolutions passed in Vienna at the First OUN Congress in 1929, and again in Rome at the Second Great Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists in August 1939, just before the war broke out.

Chapter four section 2 of the resolution of the First OUN Congress entitled "External policy" declared: "Complete elimination of all *zajmańcy* (foreign occupiers) from Ukrainian lands, which is to be carried out in the course of national revolution and to create opportunities for the development of the Ukrainian Nation within its own state, will only be possible through a system of our own armed military forces and deliberate allied policy." The content of this section is repeated in slightly different wording in section 3 of chapter five of the Congress's resolution, entitled "Military Policy", namely: "Only military power founded on an armed nation ready to fight stubbornly and fiercely for its rights will liberate Ukraine from the occupants".

The plan to eliminate *zajmańcy*, who – according to Ukraine's nationalist activists – had unlawfully taken possession of Ukrainian lands, was not devised during the war, but 10 years before its outbreak, and its continuation was heralded by the proclamation of the Second Great Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists in Rome: "Ukraine for Ukrainians! We will not leave one inch of Ukrainian land in the hands of enemies and *obcoplemieńcy!* [lit. 'nontribesmen', emphasis mine]". Ukrainian nationalists began to proclaim the need for "cleansing" Ukraine of other nations at the beginning of the German occupation of Poland's Eastern Borderlands in 1941. It was at that time that the killings of Poles and acts of terror occurred. There were, however, no murders carried out on a larger scale against Poles because the nationalists were not yet sufficiently prepared to organize and carry them out.

Undertaking a “cleansing operation against all enemies of the race” (explicit fascist overtone) required expanding the organizational network decimated during the Soviet occupation, assembling military force, and spreading propaganda to prepare Ukrainian society. These tasks were to be carried out in 1941-1942.

All the anti-Polish incidents that occurred up until 1942, when attacks on Polish individuals and families became more common, can now be seen as the prelude to the genocide committed from the late 1942 until 1945.

In February 1943, at the Third Conference of OUN (now led by Stepan Bandera), just before the large-scale extermination of Poles started, it was decided to eliminate all “occupants”, which in practice meant murdering Poles, who were at that time (after the Holocaust of Ukraine’s Jews in 1942) the largest non-Ukrainian ethnic group. The subsequent extermination was therefore obviously linked to the conference’s resolutions. Moreover, the idea of nation-states within ethnic borders was accepted as “the most progressive” at the time generally.

Mass killings of the Polish population were initiated in February 1943 by a nationalist group known as the “bulbowcy”, under the command of Maksym Borovets, aka “Taras Bulba”, who murdered all inhabitants of the Parośla I colony (Antonówka rural commune, Sarny county), that is about 150 people. At the same time, Stepan Bandera’s nationalist fraction, the *banderowcy*, commenced the operation of exterminating Poles. It was time they came to dominate other nationalist groups and became the main executor of the genocide. Anti-Polish attacks grew more severe in March 1943, when the Ukrainian police deserted from German service to join the newly-established nationalist partisan troops under Bandera’s command, later named UPA. That moment marks the beginning of an escalation of mass murders, which continued throughout 1943 in the entire Volhynia region, albeit in varying degrees of intensity in the many counties.

In March 1943, the most severe attacks occurred in Kostopol and Sarny counties, as well as in certain areas of Łuck county. In April, their number increased significantly in Krzemieniec county. In May, more murders swept through the counties of Sarny, Dubień and Zdołbunów. In June, most casualties were in the Łuck county, in three neighboring rural communes, and in the Zdołbunów county. Until the end of August, the Luboml rural commune was completely uneventful. In the Horochów and Włodzimierz counties, there were relatively few attacks on Poles, compared to those in other areas, until July 1943.

By July 1943, the genocide had spread to almost all of Volhynia, with the exception of the Luboml county. The July events were unique in the sense that they were an attempt to exterminate Poles in a short period of time and over large areas. This required assembling considerable forces of attackers, along with recruitment of members of the OUN and the UPA, as well as Ukrainians from outside those organizations. The latter underwent intensive indoctrination and training by the OUN. Also, reinforcements arrived in the form of armed OUN activists from Eastern Galicia.

The “cleansing operation” was carried out according to rules and patterns already tested in previous months. Raids on major Polish settlements were organized by surprise, choosing times when almost everyone was on their farm (at dawn, at night) – and when people did not spend the night at home – during the day, when they were working in the fields. Also, various tricks would be used in order to lull Poles into a sense of security, which made murdering them easier. A village or a settlement was surrounded with a cordon of UPA *Striltsiv* (riflemen), whose task was to shoot those attempting to flee. Other attackers, members of the SKV (*Samooboronnyi Kushchovi Viddily*, Kushch Self-Defense Units) and Ukrainians who did not formally belong to any

nationalist formation, were armed with axes, knives, pitchforks, bayonets, scythes set as bayonets, clubs, crowbars, and other tools, such as hammers used to kill livestock. These people roamed throughout the villages and brutally murdered people in their homes, outbuildings, and gardens.

A document of the Polish underground provides a condensed account of this terrible savagery: “In all villages, settlements and colonies, without exception, the Ukrainians carried out the operation of murdering Poles with monstrous cruelty. Women – even pregnant ones – were nailed to the ground with bayonets, children were ripped apart by their legs, others were impaled on pitchforks and thrown over fences, members of intelligentsia were tied with barbed wire and thrown into wells, arms, legs and heads were chopped off with axes, tongues were cut out, ears and noses were cut off, eyes were gouged, genitals were butchered, bellies ripped open and entrails pulled out, heads were smashed with hammers, living children were thrown inside burning houses. The barbaric frenzy reached a point that people were sawed apart alive, women had their breasts severed; others were impaled or beaten to death with sticks. Many people were killed – after a death sentence – by having their hands and feet chopped off, and only then their heads.”

Among the attackers, Poles recognized Ukrainians they had known, including women and teenagers. In many cases, in order to expedite the murder of more people, they were gathered in one place – a school or a barn. Sometimes their attendance at a church was used. The buildings with the murdered and wounded inside were then set on fire. The area of a village or a colony was thoroughly searched, and victims pulled from various hiding places. Hunting raids were organized for escapees in forests, fields, and roads. In the southern part of the Włodzimierz county, before the destruction of the Polish settlements on July 11-12, 1943, bridges and overpasses over rivers were demolished in order to hinder the Poles’ escape. The hunt for survivors lasted until many days after the Polish settlements had been annihilated.

Poles living in Ukrainian villages and colonies with a mixed population, on Polish farms located off the beaten track, or isolated farming settlements consisting of several Polish cottages, were murdered by small groups of attackers acting by surprise.

A list of key genocidal operations is presented below in Table 1. It takes into account the periods of their particular severity and the regions in which they were carried out in July 1943 by large OUN-UPA forces and local Ukrainian population supporting them en masse.

**Table 1. Dates and areas of intensified OUN-UPA mass genocidal operations in July 1943**

<b>Date</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Number of murdered Poles*</b>	<b>Number of administrative units where murders occurred*</b>
July 4-5	Łuck	~550	26
July 11	Horochów Włodzimierz	247 +? 2288-2289 +?	11 85
July 12	Horochów	1119 +?	27
	Włodzimierz	429-430 +?	20
	Zdołbunów	204	3
July 13	Horochów Włodzimierz	75 +? 97 +?	3 10

July 14	Horochów Włodzimierz Krzemieniec	43 +? 533 +?	6 4
July 15	Krzemieniec	121 +?	4
July 15-16	Horochów Kowel	575 +? 316 +?	20 9
July 16-18	Kostopol Sarny	538-539 +? 202 +?	25 8
July 30-31	Sarny	115 +?	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>Volhynia</b>	<b>7452-7455 +?</b>	<b>283</b>

*\*Data incomplete*

On the night of July 4/5, 1943, in a large pincers movement, the OUN-UPA attacked Polish settlements and Poles living in Ukrainian villages located around the center of self-defense center Przebraże (Trościaniec rural commune) in the Łuck county . Since the spring of 1943, the Przebraże colony had been a refuge for local Poles fearing Ukrainian attacks, but not all of them moved to the self-defense center, in part because they underestimated the danger, and partly because of the difficult living conditions in the Przebraże camp. UPA militants, advancing from all sides towards Przebraże, burned buildings and murdered Poles who had not left their farms in the rural communes of Kiwerce, Ołyka, Poddebce, Silno, and Trościaniec. The aim of the operation was to “cleanse” a large area of all Poles and eliminate the strong center of self-defense, where several thousand refugees were sheltering. The victims from the settlements surrounding Przebraże were completely defenseless, as the self-defense militias were engaged solely on the outskirts of the defense base. The UPA failed to win Przebraże, but in the over 20 burned and destroyed administrative units around the self-defense center they murdered about 550 people. The attack on Przebraże was preceded by local attempts at “peace talks”, initiated by the UPA. Nonetheless, such talks never actually took place, as the self-defense leaders realized that the UPA simply planned to lure the delegation into an ambush and murder them.

The suspicions that the UPA had never intended to pursue any “peace talks” were confirmed when on July 8, 1943, near Kustycze (Turzysk rural commune, Kowel county), members of a regional delegation of the Polish Government in Volhynia were murdered on their way to pre-arranged talks: the plenipotentiary of the Government Delegate to Volhynia, Zygmunt Rumel (“Krzysztof Poręba”), a member of the Home Army underground, Krzysztof Markiewicz (“Czart”), and their coachman.

Three days later, on July 11, 1943 (Sunday), the OUN-UPA commenced the extermination of Poles in the vast area covering the counties of Horochów and Włodzimierz. It was the largest genocidal operation in Volhynia in 1943.

A Polish Home Army report read:

“Four days before the operation [...] special lectures were held in school buildings, advocating the necessity to murder all Poles in Volhynia. Slogans used on those occasions included: “Slaughter the Liakhs [derogatory for ‘Poles’] seven generations back, including those who no longer speak Polish”. The agitators were people hailing from eastern Małopolska (the region centered on Kraków, stretching eastward toward Ukraine).

Ukrainian clergy played a principal role in the propaganda, calling for the murder of Poles: ‘We have had enough of the Liakhs feeding on Ukrainian land; rip each Polish pawn out from the roots’.

Two days before the synchronized, organized attacks, leaflets in Polish and Ukrainian were planted in Polish cottages in all villages, signed by the OUN and calling on Poles and Ukrainians to unite in the face of the common enemies, that is the Germans and Russians. When talking to Poles, who had already sensed the danger, their Ukrainian neighbors reassured them that they had nothing to fear, because no one would do them any harm. Often, they were friends, colleagues, people with whom they were on a first-name basis. In many cases they warned Poles that if they were to flee the country, their homes would be burned down. They kept saying: a Pole who leaves a Ukrainian village is an enemy to the Ukrainians. In this way, until the very last day, the Ukrainians kept up the pretense of solidarity in order to lull the Polish population into a false sense of security. Then, when the pogrom was signaled, Polish homes were attacked by their closest Ukrainian neighbors, who murdered the Poles with whom they had been living in the best harmony and friendship for decades.”

Another Home Army report stated that on July 10, 1943, “patrols were dispatched in the evening on all roads; they stopped everyone and sent them home, saying that nobody was allowed to leave their home or they would be shot. About 9 p.m. the same day secret messengers were sent out to all Ukrainian homes, telling all men except those who had Polish relatives to come at midnight to a pre-arranged meeting place: those who had guns were to come armed; those who did not – with blunt instruments, axes, scythes, pitchforks, etc. This was done under the guise of a test mobilization or attack on the nearest railway station or German border outposts. Women were not to be told as they might give away the secret. Polish homes and colonies were already being watched by dispatched local peasants and guerrillas, so that nobody could leave their home all night. About 11 p.m., the militia or guerrillas came out of the forest, armed from head to toe, carrying hand guns. After eating dinner at designated homes, they called a meeting, during which they declared that in order for free Ukraine to exist, first and foremost all Poles must be exterminated, because they are an obstacle; also, the guerillas must avenge the blood of their brothers, murdered [in 1942] by Poles in the Chełm region [west of the Bug River]; this resolution was accepted at the same time in all villages. Immediately after the meeting, hordes of peasants and bandits set out to Polish homes and Polish colonies. [...].

About 2:30am on July 11, 1943, the slaughter began. Each Polish home was surrounded by no fewer than 30-50 peasants with blunt weapons and two with firearms. They ordered the door to be opened, or, in case of refusal, they hacked the door down. They threw hand grenades inside the house, they split people open with axes and stabbed them with pitchforks, and if someone tried to flee, they shot him with machine guns. Some wounded were in agony for two or three days before they died. Others, also wounded, managed to reach the boundary of the Sokal county with the last of their strength. [...] After the murder, in the afternoon of the same day, the looting started. Peasants from neighboring villages came and took horses, wagons, clothing, bedding, cows, pigs, chickens – all the livestock and other property.”

In the Horochów county, Poles were attacked in the rural communes of Chorów, Kisielin, Podberezie and Świniuchy; in the Włodzimierz county, in the rural communes of Chotiaczów, Grzybowica, Mikulicze, Poryck, and in some settlements within the rural communes of Korytnica

and Werba. On that day, Poles were killed in at least 96 administrative units of the Horochów and Włodzimierz counties, as well as in three units of the Kowel county. About 2,580 people died, plus an unspecified number ((+?), the majority of whom hailed from the Włodzimierz county.

Particular focus should be given to attacks on churches and chapels, where Poles were attending masses. On July 11, 1943, in four churches and one chapel Ukrainians killed approximately 540 people. One church was attacked in the Horochów county (Kisielin), a chapel in the Kowel county (Krymno) and three churches in the Włodzimierz county (Chrynów, Poryck, Zabłoćce), where, in addition to the mass attendees, priests were also killed (Table 2). As for other attacks on churches in July, during which Poles were killed, no exact dates have been determined.

**Table 2. OUN-UPA attacks on churches and chapels with worshippers in July 1943.**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Number of victims</b>
July 11	Chrynów	~ 150
	Kisielin	~ 100
	Krymno	~ 40
	Poryck	~ 100
	Zabłoćce	~ 150
July	Wyszogródek	~ 150
	Sokół	~ 6
	Żabcze (Uniate church)	5

The “cleansing operation” was continued on July 12. Poles were attacked in at least 50 administrative units in the Horochów county (rural communes of Kisielin, Podberezie, Świniuchy) and the Włodzimierz county (rural communes of Chotiaczów, Mikulicz and certain settlements in other rural communes, where genocide had been committed on July 11). That day about 1,750 and unspecified number (+?) of people died. Altogether, over the two days of July 11 and 12 1943, Ukrainians murdered about 4,330 Poles and a further unspecified number (+?) of people. This is when the genocide in Volhynia reached its apex.

Hunting down the few survivors who managed to escape lasted until July 13/14 or even later, thus in some administrative units Poles were murdered for several consecutive days. In Horochów and Włodzimierz counties, on July 13, at least 172 people were killed in 13 administrative units, and on July 14 at least 43 people in six administrative units.

The slaughter on July 11 and 12 did not always involve setting houses ablaze, probably due to lack of time. After having been looted, cottages were set on fire over the next few days, mainly on July 14, and even (for example, in the Kisielin rural commune) much later.

It is worth noting that the OUN-UPA decided to carry out genocide on such a large area simultaneously because the Ukrainian leaders were perfectly aware that the Polish population as a whole was unprepared for any form of defense.

In addition to a large area of two counties (Włodzimierz and Horochów), where carefully planned and organized genocide was carried out, on July 12, 1943, in the remote Zdołbunów

county, the large Polish village of Huta Majdańska (Buderaż rural commune) was completely slaughtered, although the UPA had guaranteed its safety in writing (!). Also killed were Poles in the neighboring Ukrainian village Majdan – a total of 203 people.

The extermination of Poles in the Horochów and Włodzimierz counties on July 11–12 and the murder of regional envoys of the Polish Government Delegation in Volhynia sent for talks with the UPA on July 8 triggered a defensive reaction among Poles in the Kowel county, where on July 13 in Zasmyki (Lubitów rural commune) a self-defense group was established, one that very quickly became a strong center. The rate at which it was formed provoked an immediate reaction from the UPA, which demanded that the center surrender its arms and dissolve the self-defense function just mere days after it had been established. At the same time UPA declared its allegedly peaceful intentions, but carried on its attacks on Poles all the while. Later, the UPA, demanded during peace talks to be given control over self-defense in Zasmyki.

In the Krzemieniec county also located at a distance from Horochów and Włodzimierz, on July 14 and 15, 1943, four large communities of Poles were killed, namely Kołodno and Czajczyńce in the Kołodno rural commune, and Bodaki and Maniów in Wiśniowiec rural commune also lacking any organized defense, as well as Poles living in the surrounding villages – a total of 654 and an unspecified number (+?) of people in at least seven settlements. It seems that the OUN-UPA forces, involved at the time in the southwest and unable to carry out the liquidation of Poles in the Krzemieniec county on a wider scale, sought at least to destroy large groups of Poles living together before they had a chance to think of any defense or moving to safer places, such as cities or towns in which German troops were permanently stationed.

This could also be the reason why the aforementioned Huta Majdańska was annihilated. The destruction of major Polish centers contributed to the murder of Poles living scattered among the Ukrainian population, as the places where they had sought refuge disappeared.

On July 15 and 16, 1943, the OUN-UPA attacked Poles in other parts of the Horochów county: in the rural communes of Skobełka and Brany, where before there had been attacks only on isolated individuals; in several settlements of the Kisielin rural commune, where Poles, despite earlier massacres in the area, hoped that the situation would calm down; and in adjacent places in the Kupiczów rural commune in the Kowel county. In total, 891 died on July 15-16 and an unspecified number (+?) of Poles in at least 29 administrative units. Most likely, the death toll was much higher, because it cannot be ruled out that in the same period genocide was also carried out in the neighboring Beresteczko rural commune (adjacent to the Brany rural commune) in the same county where massacres were carried out in July, but exact dates have not been established. In this area, there was no organized self-defense either.

July 16-18 saw the complete defeat of a large self-defense center in the Kostopol county, which had protected a cluster of Polish settlements in the rural communes of Stepan and Stydyń, around two villages: Huta Stepańska and Wyrka, as well as several colonies in the neighboring rural commune Antonówka in the Sarny county. The course of the attack was similar to that against Przebraże on July 4-5. UPA militias, advancing from all sides towards Huta Stepańska, eliminated the surrounding settlements, burning and killing the people who had not moved to Huta Stepańska or Wyrka earlier and did not manage to escape. Ultimately, Huta, where about three-thousand people had found refuge, came under siege. After two days of dramatic fighting against overwhelming UPA forces, Poles along with their self-defense forces fled Huta to Antonówka and Rafałówka rural communes in the Sarny county, having suffered huge losses before and after the

escape. 738 and an unspecified number (+?) of people were killed from 33 administrative units, while 37 Polish villages, colonies, and isolated farming settlements were destroyed and burned.

On July 30, 1943, there was another mass attack of UPA forces on Poles in a cluster of Polish settlements in the rural commune of Antonówka and Włodzimierz in the Sarny county; the attack brought complete destruction of the cluster and 27 administrative units were destroyed.

The Self-defense centers located in six of the attacked settlements were unable to stand their ground and to perform their role of reducing casualties among completely unarmed people and facilitating their escape. The surviving Poles fled to railway stations along the Kowel-Sarny line. In comparison with other similar attacks, there were fewer casualties: 115 and an unspecified number (+?) of people were killed.

There were also failed operations, such as the one on July 14 or 27 (date uncertain) attempting to liquidate the Pańska Dolina colony (Młynów rural commune) in the Dubień county, where Poles from the area found shelter. The UPA attack, which lasted all night, was pushed back by effective self-defense forces.

On July 31, the OUN-UPA undertook a second, also unsuccessful, attempt to annihilate a Polish settlement in Przebraże. The self-defense center fought hard against overwhelming forces of the UPA, which allowed several thousand Poles sheltering in the Przebraże camp to survive.

The July genocide was not limited to the major operations described above, carried out over large areas and lasting from one to several days, and which claimed most of the casualties. Poles were murdered in July in all Volhynian counties apart from that of Luboml, also at other times than the mass operations. There were killings of Poles who lived in Ukrainian villages, who were moving from one village to another for various reasons, fleeing to safer places, or returning to their old farms for food. The exact date of certain murders is unknown, thus we do not know whether they were victims of mass operations, or if they were killed on some other day in July, when the OUN-UPA murdered as many Poles as they could. The approximate ratio between the number of victims of mass operations and casualties of other circumstances are shown in Table 3. The table demonstrates that the majority of Poles murdered in July were killed in well-planned attacks, carried out over large areas at the same time.

**Table 3. Number of Poles murdered by the OUN-UPA in Volhynia on different days in July 1943\***

<b>Apex of genocide: 4-5, 11-18, 30-31 July</b>	<b>Other, specified dates in July</b>	<b>Non-specified dates in July</b>	<b>In July in total</b>
7452-7455 +?	1176-1177 +?	1845-1895 +?	10 473-10 527 +?

\* *Incomplete data.*

It is obvious that the OUN-UPA militias' simultaneous destruction of Polish settlements and Poles living in the Ukrainian settlements over a large area was a result of decisions and orders of the leadership high command of the OUN and the UPA. Regarding the July operations, no texts of such orders have been found, but it cannot be claimed on this basis that such orders did not exist.

Criminal orders may have been issued orally, OUN-UPA “offices” were poorly developed and documents were probably deliberately destroyed after a while to eradicate all traces of genocidal operations. Indirect evidence that orders to exterminate Poles existed is seen in the report of the first UPA group, describing the attack on Huta Stepańska and the surrounding Polish settlements, published in Ukraine.

The scale of the genocide committed in July against Poles in various counties is shown in Table 4. These are not definitive data, nor are any other figures concerning the genocide in Volhynia, as there are still many questions as to the places of murders, the fate of Poles living in each settlement, the number of casualties, etc. However, it can be assumed that the July genocide affected mostly the following counties: Włodzimierz, Horochów and Łuck.

**Table 4. Number of murdered Poles and number of administrative units in which the OUN-UPA committed genocide in July 1943.**

County	Number of casualties*	Number of administrative unites – places of genocidal operations
Dubień	151 +?	18
Horochów	2569 +?	119
Kostopol	783-784 +?	36
Kowel	637 +?	42
Krzemieniec	885 +?	23
Luboml	2	2
Łuck	1113 +?	85
Równe	148-149 +?	26
Sarny	381-431 +?	36
Włodzimierz	3581-3583 +?	127
Zdolbunów	223	6
<b>Volhynia</b>	<b>10 473-10 527 +?</b>	<b>520</b>

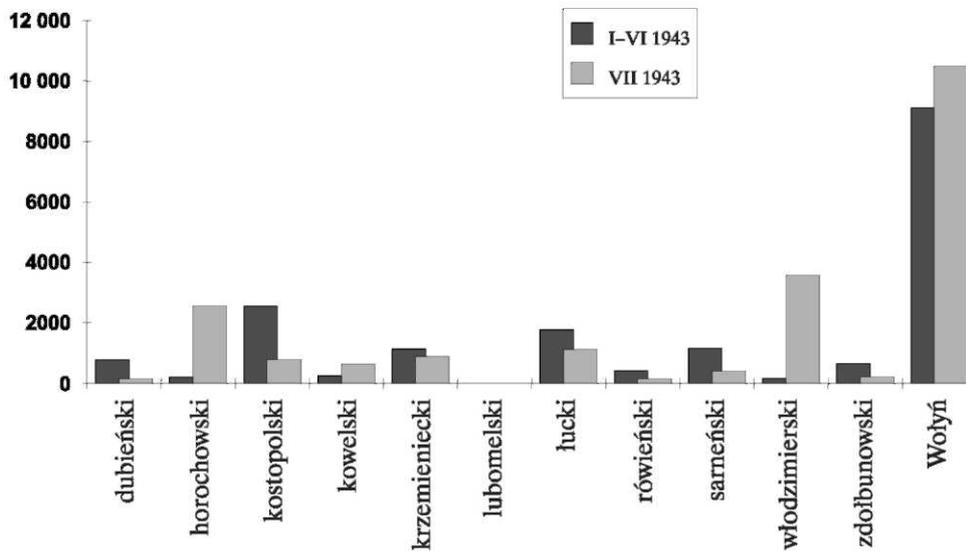
\* *Incomplete data.*

The scale of the losses the Polish population suffered in Volhynia in July 1943 can be gleaned from a comparison of the number of people killed in that period and the number of murdered Poles in the first half of 1943. This is illustrated in the diagram below.

This comparison demonstrates that **the number of Poles murdered by the OUN-UPA in July 1943** (10 473–10 527, and an unspecified number of [+?] people) **exceeds the number of those killed in the first six months of 1943** (9121–9130 and an unspecified number of [+?] people). These data are, of course, incomplete. In the case of Polish losses in July 1943, and with taking into account the intensity and ruthlessness with which the OUN-UPA exterminated Poles and the

huge gaps in data as to the exact number of kills, one may estimate that there were 16 thousand victims. For the period of 1939–1945, the estimate is 50–60 thousand.

The number of Poles murdered during the first six months of 1943, and in July



\* *Incomplete data.*

The physical extermination of Poles was followed by looting of their property and destruction of objects that indicated Polish presence, such as houses, farm buildings, communal houses, schools, churches, tombs, orchards. In July 1943, 18 churches and chapels were destroyed or burned.

**Table 5. Churches and chapels burned and destroyed by the OUN-UPA in July 1943**

County	Churches	Chapels
Dubień	Łysin, Złoczówka	
Horochów	Kisielin	Woronczyn, Zagaje
Kostopol	Huta Stepańska, Wyrka	Huta Stepańska, Małyńsk
Kowel		Krymno
Krzemienie	Domaninka, Szumbar, Wyszogródek	
Łuck	Sokół Żabcze (Uniate church)	
Równe	Hłuboczek	
Włodzimierz	Chrynów, Poryck, Zabłoće	

In July 1943, there were 12 self-defense centers which played an important, but limited to the nearest vicinity, role in the defense of Poles: Bielin-Spaszczyszna in the Włodzimierz county; Rożyszcze with the surrounding settlements Przebraże and Antonówka Szepelska in the Łuck county, Pańska Dolina in the Dubień county; Rybcza and Dederkały in the Krzemieniec county, Ostróg and Witoldówka in the Zdołbunów county; Huta Stara, Huta Stepańska-Wyrka in the Kostopol county; Antonówka with several colonies in the Sarny county. In July 1943, these centers could protect Poles who lived in 60 administrative units at the most. Meanwhile, Poles were murdered in at least 520 units. Two of these centers – Huta Stepańska and Antonówka in the Sarny county – were destroyed by the OUN-UPA in the second half of July, as mentioned above. It is worth noting that neither in the first half of 1943, nor at the height of genocidal operations in July, did a single Polish partisan group operate in Volhynia. Thus, there were no forces that could effectively oppose the OUN-UPA operating all over Volhynia and assisted in the genocide by the local population en masse.

The July massacres prompted the establishment of two new self-defense centers – in the second half of July 1943 in Zasmyk in the Kowel county, and in August 1943 in Andresówka-Stefanówka in the Włodzimierz county. Most rural areas still inhabited by Poles were, however, left without any protection, and the genocide continued.

## Conclusions

This brief outline of events of July 1943, when the genocide of Poles reached its apex, provides a portrayal of the shape and scope of incidents which occurred in other months of 1943, as well. They suggest a planned and carefully organized operation of the OUN-UPA, conducted jointly with the Ukrainian population and **deliberately aimed at the biological destruction of the Polish population as a national group** - if not in its entirety, then in a significant part. Due to the presence of German (and some Hungarian) troops in cities and towns, which hindered the UPA, these operations primarily affected Polish rural populations.

These operations were directed against all Poles, regardless of age and gender, and, characteristically, they involved unprecedented cruelty. They were carried out under slogans circulated in different versions and forms, both before the genocidal operations, as well as during their course, expressing a single idea: **death to every Pole**. The particular intensification of attacks at different times in subsequent regions of Volhynia is evidence of the intent to annihilate the Polish people throughout the Volhynia region.

These facts clearly meet the definition of genocide, as formulated in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1948. Under Article II of the Convention, “genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: a) killing members of the group; b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its total or partial physical destruction; d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group”.

The desire to murder all Poles, regardless of sex or age, which was to be helped, among other things, by insidiously creating the appearances of safety and hampering escape, as well as cruelty

and torture accompanying the killing, also used against all Poles, even the most helpless and vulnerable, namely children, are – as Professor Ryszard Szawłowski aptly described it – two (out of seven) “horrid distinctions” of the Ukrainian genocide in comparison with those committed by the Germans and Soviet.

Other such distinctions include: involvement of the Ukrainian peasantry in the crimes alongside members of nationalist militias who had specially prepared the former, formally not associated with nationalist formations (often including women and teenagers); particularly criminal treatment of mixed Polish-Ukrainian families, who were murdered in whole or just lost their Polish relatives; crimes being committed by fellow citizens of the occupied territory of the state and at the same time by fellow inhabitants, neighbors, with whom relations had generally been correct, and sometimes even friendly; destruction of everything which was associated with the Polish presence, namely all facilities, equipment, green architecture; and finally no admission of these crimes on the part of Ukrainians for nearly sixty years, nor any remorse, not in the least, on the contrary – using various tactics to avoid this problem, that is attempts to conceal, minimize, or compare the genocide to crimes of allegedly similar scale committed by the Polish side (!), to shift the blame on the victims or occupants (Germans or Soviets), while there is no excuse for the crime of genocide.