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**A Review on the Film "Wołyń" of Wojciech Smarzowski:
On the Contemporary Relationship between Poland
and Ukraine in Memory Politics**

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Introduction

Poland and Ukraine in "Eurasianized" Memory Conflicts

The aim of this paper is to sketch the contemporary relationship between Poland and Ukraine in memory politics through a review on the film "Wołyń" (hereafter, the film) of Wojciech Smarzowski. On October 20, 2016, the Sejm of the Republic of Poland and the Supreme Congress of Ukraine jointly accepted "the Declaration of Memory and Solidarity" in order to pay tribute to millions of victims sustained by both nations during the Second World War. Obviously the Declaration was drafted in a political context beyond both countries, because it explicitly criticized Russian policy since 2014 toward Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, making an analogy representing the policy like as an occupation of "two of totalitarianism regimes," which mean Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union (*Wspólna uchwała parlamentów*).

At first glance, Poland and Ukraine seems to enter into an alliance on the common front toward Russia, but one can easily find that serious disputes happened between Poland and Ukraine over the film that was released in the almost same time with the Declaration. Paradoxically, Kremlin positively evaluated the film, because it represented Ukrainian nationalists as 'fascists' for their collaborations with Nazi German. It means that the Volhynia massacres (hereafter, the massacres) are involved in the complicated process of re-

building a memory order.¹ Moreover, the fact that Russia declared with China that they were against revisionism and distortion of historical "truth" indicated that such process is developing on the whole Eurasia (Hashimoto, 2016a, see Hashimoto, 2016b). Thus, disputes over the massacres can be located in "Eurasianized" memory conflicts, and this is why I am motivated to study this topic.

Since the film won "the Eagles Polish Film Award (Polskie Nagrody Filmowe Orły)" and "the Krzysztof Krauze Award (Nagroda im. Krzysztofa Krauze)", we can find in that film the most recent and common memory in Poland on the massacre. Therefore, analysis on disputes over the film between Poland and Ukraine is appropriate to our aim. This is an introductory note for further study in the relationship between Poland and Ukraine in memory politics.²

First, I will locate the massacres in the historical contexts. Simply said, the massacres could be summarized as that incident that Ukrainians organized by the Ukrainian Nationalists' Organization (in Ukraine, Orhanizatsiia Ukrain'skykh Natsionalistiv) and its Militant Organization, Ukrainian Insurgent Army (in Ukraine, Ukrayins'ka Povstans'ka Armiya) (hereafter, the OUN-UPA) killed Poles including children and women during 1941-1945.³ As it shown later, the difference between the national memories of Poland and Ukraine becomes much clearer through this reflection.

The Palimpsest of Violence⁴

The Volhynia Massacres in Contexts, 1894-1947

Galicia, Austrian Poland is sometimes referred to "Ukraine's Piedmont" as the birthplace of modern Ukrainian nationalism, and Lviv (Lwów) university had the significant role in this context (Magocsi, 2002; see also Hann, Magocsi, 2005). In 1894, a historian Mykhailo Hrushevsky who moved from Kiev lectured on Ukrainian history. He invented the independent national history

¹I learned many from the article, which Dr. Zuzanna Bogmił (Akademia Pedagogiki Specjalnej im. Marii Grzegorzewskiej) wrote in the forthcoming monograph published in Japan. I want to express my thanks to her and the editor of the monograph, Professor Nobuya Hashimoto (Kwansei Gakuin University), who allowed me to refer to her paper.

²Because of my linguistic limitation, I own Polish scholars about Ukrainians' opinion written in Ukrainian. Ukrainian Diasporas and their students in North American Continent write in English, so their works are also accessible for me.

³It is impossible to decipher the exact number. Reliable scholars estimate almost 100 thousand of Poles in Volhynia and Galicia during the period between February 29, 1943 – May 18, 1945. (Motyka, 2016, p. 83; McBride, 2016, p. 639).

⁴I borrowed the word "palimpsest" from, Wiktoria Kudela-Świątek i Adam Świątek (see Kudela-Świątek, Świątek, 2012, pp. 191-213; See also, Uffelmann, 2013, pp. 103-124; Hrytsak, 2015, pp. 732-737).

differentiated from the Great Russian and Polish narrative, and insisted that the Ukrainian nation had been preserved in the history of the Galicia (Halych) – Volhynia principality and in Cossackdom after the end of the Kievan Rus'. Hrushevsky created the national concept of the Ukrainian state, which extended from Galicia and Volhynia, thus forming the "Western Ukraine" via Kiev to the Cossacks' steppe (Ploky, 2014; see also Snyder, 2003).

When the Ukrainian Republic was founded during the First World War, Hrushevsky was elected its president. However, Piłsudski's victory in both the Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Soviet War provided bitter experiences for Ukrainian nationalists. The Polish Second Republic gained Galicia and Volhynia within its territory. The OUN-UPA was organized by veterans of the Polish-Ukrainian War and younger generations discontented with the policies of Poland. The OUN-UPA was obsessed with building the Ukraine state for Ukraine, without Poles, Jews, and Russians, and even affirmed a terroristic method for this purpose.⁵ In Volhynia province (województwo) in 1931, Poles constituted 17% of all population, Ukrainians – 68%, Jews – 8%, and the rest were Russians, Belarusians, and so on. Poles dominated the administration, fertile soils were distributed mostly to Poles, and the poor peasantry generally consisted of Ukrainians. Such a situation brought discontent among the rural peasantry, among whom urban nationalists could find sympathy (Motyl, 1978, pp. 412-420).

However, it did not mean mass affirmation of the OUN-UPA's terrorism. It was during the Second World War that mass killing happened to an extent that would have been unimaginable before the war. The first target of the OUN-UPA were Jews, and, according to Omer Bartov, in the case of the "Communal Genocide" of Jews in 1941, all Polish, Ukrainian, and even Jewish residents were accomplices. Although it ended in vain, OUN-UPA tried to enter into alliance with Nazis German. Forms of violence were not just limited to forcible roundups to be taken to extermination camps, but also included collective torture (Bartov, 2013, pp. 399-420). Opportunistic subjectivity of collaborators was created in this context and local severe violence happened, as Timothy Snyder described in his well-known monograph (Snyder, 2016). We should pay attention to the fact that the multiculturalism of Volhynia had already started to be lost before the massacres happened in 1943.

Recent research emphasizes the specific war situation over Volhynia when the Soviet army ruled the province once again, and Nazis Germans

⁵The relationship between clergies and Ukrainian national movement was also the serious topic. At least, Andrey Sheptytsky, the Metropolitan Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church 1901-1944, consistently criticized terrorism (see, Himka, 2012, pp. 93-116).

escaped with destruction of properties. It enabled the OUN-UPA to organize the Ukrainian peasantry who were outraged by warfare and economic need. The OUN-UPA represented their action as "ethnic cleansing (czystka etniczna)" of Poles, including children and women. In some villages like Wola Ostrowiecka and Ostrówki, hundreds of Poles were killed with sickles and axes, and the whole villages were destroyed to erase the evidence of their action (McBridge, 2016, pp. 630-631; See also Popek, 2011). Moreover, the chain of violence was followed by Poles' revenge toward Ukrainians. The Wisła operation in 1947, which forcibly banished Ukrainians out of the rebuilt Poland, was achieved as the 'solution' to the Ukrainian question. Revenge actions by Poles also murdered Ukrainians, including children and women, and numbered from ten thousand to fifteen thousand Ukrainians from 1943 to 1947 (Motyka, 2016, pp. 120-123).

As we have seen in this section, in Volhynia violence had been covered by new or other violence, and I want to call it as palimpsest of violence. We can reconstruct the series of historical incidents related with the massacres as such multi-layered experiences of Jews, Poles, and Ukrainians. Then, how are the massacres commemorated in Poland and Ukraine and how different are they from each other?

Focal Points over the Massacres between Poland and Ukraine

Periodization and Terminology

The abovementioned contexts are "too long" for Poles and "too short" for some Ukrainians. Thus, generally in Poland, the memories on the massacres are focused only during 1939-1945 and victims are represented as "innocent." Last year, the Polish Sejm declared the massacres as "genocide (ludobójstwo)", and the demand for Ukraine to apologize for the massacres seem to become more intensive (*Poland's Parliament Declares Volyn*). On the other hand, in Ukraine, the massacres are located in historical exchanges of violence starting from the Polish-Ukrainians War, or sometimes very essentially from the medieval age. The Ukrainian government recognizes the massacres as a "tragedy (трагедія)" between both nations, and Stepan Bandera, one of the leaders of the OUN-UPA is recognized as the national hero for independence (Głowacka-Grajper, 2015, pp. 55-80).

Organized or Spontaneous?

The third focal point is whether the massacres happened spontaneously or not. In Poland, the ideology and intention of the OUN-UPA to eliminate Poles

are emphasized to legitimize the demand for Ukraine's apology. However, in Ukraine, the influential discourse is that the OUN-UPA had been too small to achieve the ethnic cleansing of Poles without support from peasantry, and this meant that the massacres resulted from the peasants' spontaneous actions to revenge Polish colonizers.⁶ Additionally, I want to note that Jewish problems are often lacking from the discourses in both countries.

These contradictory opinions do exist between Poland and Ukraine. In the next section, I will summarize the content of the film and discuss on its location in Polish national memories.

The Film "Wołyn" of Wojciech Smarzowski

The Plot of the Film

The film starts from the marriage of a Ukrainian man and a Polish woman who is a sister of the heroine, Zofia (Machalina Łabacz) in the spring of 1939. Zofia also loved a Ukrainian, Petro (Ukrainian actor, Wasyl Wasyluk). However, an ominous future was predicted within such a harmonic scene through the emergence of a Ukrainian nationalist coming from Lviv, and Zofia's undesired marriage with a rich and rather elder Polish peasant, which her father decided.

After September of 1939, at first the Soviet Union had ruled villages in Volhynia. Soviet officers arrested Zofia and her husband as "Kulak" (rich peasant). Although Petro tried to save Zofia by sacrificing his life, many other Ukrainians were described as opportunistic collaborators in the film. When the Nazis-Germans occupied Volhynia after that the Soviet-German War started, the Ukrainians also tried to expel Jews from their region. Zofia saved an old Jewish couple, but relief for Jews was not enough and they were killed inhumanely. Moreover, the security in Volhynia for Poles also became worse. Zofia lost her husband because of the resentment of Ukrainian peasants, and bandits attacked her. The Polish resistance organization started to recognize that the OUN-UPA had attacked Poles, and tried to organize self-defense for Poles. Here we can find the romantic, and somehow mundane, scene where Zofia cares for the wounded Antek (Adrian Zaremba), a young resistance fighter who had paid attention to Zofia and her family.

However, the Ukrainians' actions did not stop. They attacked Poles in villages and Roman Catholic churches. Even though there was a Greek Ca-

⁶Motyka estimates that 4.5 thousands of Ukrainians took part in the massacres. (Motyka, 2016, p. 92).

tholic clergy, obviously it is the model person was Andrei Sheptytsky, who had preached love without any deference for ethnicity, the Orthodox Church clergies were represented as Ukrainian nationalists. The killing scene of Poles was represented so cruelly. As we can see in the film, the Ukrainians killed the Poles, without any differentiation of age and gender, with sickles, axes, and fire. No scene depicts that the OUN-UPA fought against the Soviet Union, unlike the Ukrainian image of the OUN-UPA as the fighter of independence. In this film, the OUN-UPA was described as the eliminator of Poles. There were Ukrainians who suffered from the killing of their Polish neighbors, but the OUN-UPA forced them to join with the threat that those who had sympathy for Poles deserved to die. Zofia barely escaped from the disaster but witnessed that the Poles killed her sister, who was married to a Ukrainian. Finally, the film ends with the scene where Zofia, losing any vitality, leaves Volhynia with her baby and Antek.

In Polish Memory Discourse

From the accounts of periodization and terminology, the film of Smarzowski shows the typical memory on massacres in contemporary Poland. As we have seen, the film starts from 1939. In the film there is no explanation on whether the massacres were genocide or not, but we should pay attention to the famous phrase inserted in the film of Jan Zaleski, a survivor of the massacres. The phrase states: "People in Kresy were killed twice: first with the edge of sickles, and second by silence." (*Nasz wywiad. Ks. Isakowicz-Zaleski*). Considering that Jan Zaleski's son is an Armenian Catholic priest, Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zaleski, a famous opinion leader who demands that Ukraine apologize for the massacres as "genocide," this citation has a clear meaning. That is to say, the film recognizes the massacres as "genocide."⁷

The official album complements the world of the film. The album narrates how the eastern borderland between Poland and Ukraine from medieval age was. At first, the album seems to make the film an exceptional work as a memory of the massacres, but the album never tells about the Polish-Ukrainian conflicts before the Second World War, and provides Polish nostalgia, even an imperialistic narrative as regards the eastern borderland.⁸ Smarzowski did not give his own answer to another focal point as to whether the massacres were organized or spontaneous. However, as for his silence on the process of how Ukrainians began to hate Poles to such an extent, the film

⁷He himself mentioned to the massacres as "genocide" (*Wsparcie dla filmu*).

⁸Sometimes "Kresy" sounds imperial aspiration of Poles to east, whether it consciously or not. (see Głowacka-Grajper, 2015, p. 70).

does not make any critique as to whether Ukrainians were (are) essentially regarded as brutal or culturally undeveloped.

Controversy over the Film

Polish Academic Supporters

After the film was released, one million tickets were sold in just two weeks (*Film Wołyń*). The film obtained great popularity among Poles and won the prizes. At the same time, the film received academic support for its production process since 2011. Władysław Siemaszko and his daughter Ewa, the authors of important monographs on the massacres (Siemaszko, Siemaszko (2000), made an appeal for donations for the foundation of the film (Fundacja na rzecz filmu Wołyń). The Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) also welcomed the project of Smarzowski because it "would call for larger concerns for the destinies of Poles murdered by Ukrainian nationalists." (*Fragment pisma z Instytutu*). Grzegorz Motyka, a specialist on the history of Polish-Ukrainian relationship, positively regards the film because it entirely described 1) the deportation organized by the Soviets, 2) the Nazi extermination of the Jews, and 3) the organized (not spontaneous) operation of the OUN-UPA to murder Poles (Wilczak, 2016). In his most recent monograph, Motyka represents the Volhynia massacres as one of the "small genocides (małe ludobójstwa)" similar to the Croats' action against Serbs, and the Nanking massacres (Motyka, 2016, pp. 83-85). Of course, there is severe criticism toward the film, and Adam Balcer, a scholar of Warsaw University criticized the film for it is full of stereotypes. According to him, Ukrainians in the film were represented as being along the phrase of a Polish woman: "Ukrainians are worse than animals (Ukraińcy są gorsi od zwierząt)," and this results from the projection of the Polish image of Ukrainians as Cossacks. The Ukrainians' sentiment should have been reconsidered in the context of the interwar period.⁹

I think the film successfully described that the norm over age, gender, and ethnicity, which had been considerable in peacetime, disappear in the revenge actions, though it happened broadly in local violence in Eastern and Central Europe, in other words Poles were not the only victims of such violence. In addition, although Smarzowski did not describe Polish collaborators, embedding of Jews in the narrative is another valuing aspect of

⁹In fact, the official album of the Film refers to Cossacks as Ukrainian symbol. In addition, it is worth noting that Balcer also mentioned the massacres as "genocide." (*Adam Balcer o „Wołyniu”*).

the film. However, I generally agree with Balcer's opinion, as the silence of the film on the process of how Ukrainians began to hate Poles functions to enforce the stereotype toward Ukrainians.

Ukrainian Critics and Polish Reactions

In contrast with Poland, contemporary Ukrainians received the film negatively. The Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs asked the Polish Institute in Kyiv (Польський Інститут) not to release the film for the sake of "public order." (*Kiev screening of Polish film*). This shows the distance in opinion between Poland and Ukraine on the massacres. Tetiana Chornovol, a famous female activist of the Euro-maidan said, "If Ukrainians committed genocide in Volhynia, I am sorry for it. But on the other hand, the members of the UPA are heroes for me." (Motyka, 2016, pp. 246-247). As I have already mentioned, the OUN-UPA fought against not only the Poles, but also against the Soviet Union, although at first the OUN-UPA tried to make an alliance with Hitler (Motyka, 2016, pp. 43-44). Therefore, it is easy to understand that for many Ukrainians, the film is so one-sided and anti-Ukrainian. A Ukrainian commenter in Lviv represents the film as even a kind of horror film with zombies, and that it just reproduces the common memories in Poland on the massacres (*Z ukraińskiej perspektywy*).

According to Motyka, Ukraine demands that in exchange for an apology for the massacres, Poland must recognize the "symmetry of sin," that is to say, the Home Army (Armia Krajowa) committed the same sin in killing citizens, just as the OUN-UPA did. Motyka said that such Ukrainians' opinion as unreasonable, and a younger historian, Sandra Błażejewska argued that in reflecting on the Ukrainians' response to the film, Smarzowski did not resort to cheap sensationalism in the film, but that there was need to brutally represent the murder of the Poles by the OUN-UPA in keeping with the exactness of "historical truth." (Błażejewska, 2016, p. 169).

Concluding Remarks

Poland and Ukraine seem to enter into an alliance on the same front against Russia, but, as analysis on disputes over the film indicated, both countries still do not succeed in reaching a dialogue on the Volhynia massacres. Their memories seem to be organized along the framework of each country's national interest, and even scholars cannot stand on a higher dimension regarding such conflict. I think that the situation in East Asia is very similar, because here also dialog on histories and memories is difficult and nationali-

stic views on past gain popular support, although there are many alternative opinions differentiated with nationalistic ones in each country.

In my opinion, it is productive to narrate the Volhynia massacres through a meta-structure like the palimpsest of violence, which I summarized in the first section. It was not only the Poles, but also the Jews, the Ukrainians and even the Russians who experienced war suffering, but one national memory tends to focus on only experiences that are very suitable to itself and overlook the experiences of others. I think historians can contribute to resolution of memory conflicts through reconstruction of the palimpsest of violence and suffering experiences that can be a framework to compare and connect various narratives.

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