

POLES AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE POLISH MINORITY IN UKRAINE IN THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR (2014 – 2024)

The aim of this study is to present the results of russian-Ukrainian front activities between 2014 and 2024 through the prism of the involvement of people of Polish origin. Representatives of the Polish minority in Ukraine and Poles are considered as key subjects of the paper. As a result of the research, dozens of representatives of the above-mentioned groups were found to have been actively involved in the combat operations and paid a high price for it, including even loss of life.

The study was based mainly on the analysis of Polish-language media published in both Poland and Ukraine. Available reports and scientific conclusions were also used. The research was based on methods at the intersection of the humanities and social sciences.

Keywords: Poles, Poles in Ukraine, volunteers, russian-Ukrainian war 2014 – 2024.

"It should be noted at the outset that thousands of Ukrainian-born Poles are also fighting in the defence of the country. They serve both as voluntary volunteers and are called up, like any other Ukrainian citizen, to fight in the army [...].

To this should be added a group of Polish citizens who decided to go to Ukraine to join the combat actions and fight the Russians. Certainly, each person's story and motivation are different, but the core is similar - the desire to stop Russian aggression bringing hecatomb to a neighbouring nation, to fight for «our freedom and yours» [...]" (*Bruszewski, 2023*).

Introduction

Since the outbreak of the “Dignity” Revolution, Ukraine has faced a series of events often described as an 'unspeakable' or 'creeping' war. Initially, the goal was to separate the Russian-speaking regions of the country—commonly referred to as “Novorossiya”—and reinstate a pro-Russian government in Kyiv. Over time, Russia's objectives evolved. Ultimately, the Kremlin launched a full-scale war aimed at subjugating the entire country. This involved dismembering Ukraine,

Бонусяк Анжей, габлітований доктор гуманітарних наук, професор Інституту політичних наук, Жешувський університет, м. Жешув, Польща.

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annexing parts of its territory, installing pro-Moscow authorities, and derailing its trajectory toward integration with the West.

The Kremlin framed its actions with terms like "denazification" and "demilitarization," using these as coded justifications. Internationally, and for its domestic audience, Moscow emphasized that its primary goal was to counter the perceived threat posed by NATO and to reclaim its influence on the global stage (*Ivanova, 2022; Koziol, 2024; Rzecznik Ministra Koordynatora Szłżb Specjalnych, 2022*).

A decade after the start of hostilities and three years into the full-scale conflict – still referred to by Russia as a “special operation” – it is clear that virtually none of Moscow's original objectives have been achieved. This is despite Kyiv's loss of control over portions of its territory, the displacement of millions of refugees, and the tragic toll of thousands of casualties.

Politically, Moscow has suffered a resounding defeat. The idea of a pro-Russian Ukraine is now inconceivable, and the pro-Western stance of its people has only solidified. Meanwhile, NATO is closer to Russia's borders than ever before. The Alliance has undertaken significant efforts to bolster the security of its so-called “Eastern Flank.” This has included increased armament deployments, the relocation of NATO forces, and the construction of a broad coalition supporting Ukraine's military efforts (*Chilchuk 2024; Pienkowski and Źornaczuk 2024; OSW Team 2023*).

Poles played an active role in the events described, both those residing in Poland and members of the Polish minority in the Dnieper region. This text is dedicated to those who actively supported Ukraine's armed efforts. It draws upon Polish-language media operating in Ukraine, as well as Polish news portals, and incorporates available scholarly research.

The study employs methods from the social sciences and humanities, including press studies, political science, and history. Its primary aim is to highlight Poland's "personal" contribution to the conflict in Ukraine from 2014 to the end of 2024.

War often takes on a dehumanized perspective, reducing individuals to numbers or abstractions. This work seeks to counteract that tendency by focusing on the human dimension—bringing attention to the sacrifice and effort of those involved.

Polish leads – “creeping war”.

According to data gathered and presented in several publications by the author of these words—currently available only in Polish-language sources—approximately twenty Polish Ukrainians lost their lives in the fighting in eastern Ukraine prior to the outbreak of the "full-scale war." (*PAP/RIRM 2019*). A significant proportion of these individuals—approximately one-quarter—were professional soldiers. There is no recorded data from this period concerning the death of a Polish citizen serving voluntarily in Ukraine. The author has managed to identify the identities and circumstances surrounding the deaths of some of these individuals.

Table 1

Representatives of the Polish minority in Ukraine fallen in combat 2014 – 2022

Name	Comments	Circumstances of death
Alexander Boruszewski	Contract soldier, in the army for 10 years. Senior sergeant. Fought in the 58th Sumska Mechanised Brigade.	He was seriously injured near Verkhniotoretsk (Donetsk region) on 1 July 2016 and died of his wounds.
Igor Branowicki	Experienced military officer, participant in the Angola mission. Participated in Kyiv Maydan, volunteer 2014. Member of the elite 81st Independent Airborne Brigade. Cyborg.	Taken prisoner after blowing up the main terminal of Donetsk airport, he confessed to operating a machine gun, although he was not in it. Tortured and killed by Pavlov "Motorola". Knight of the Order of the Hero of Ukraine, the Order for Valour and the Medal for the Defence of Donbas Airport.
Paweł Dyjak	Member of the Border Guard.	He was killed during a routine inspection of the border area near the town of Marynówka as a result of a mine explosion, on 12 February 2014.
Andriy Havryluk	Senior sergeant, scout from 72nd Mechanised Brigade, cyborg	Donetsk airport? Circumstances of death undetermined.
Ivan Isyk	Soldier in the Ukrainian Armed Forces.	Fallen in 2014, ambush near the town of Vesela Hora, Luhansk.

Name	Comments	Circumstances of death
Pavel Jaszcuk	Volunteer in the Separate Assault Battalion "Aidar".	He was killed while carrying out a special task near Luhansk airport on 24 July 2014.
Václav (Vyacheslav) Kutkovsky	Hlibiv near Nova Ushytsia (Khmelnyskyi Region).	He died at the end of January 2015 in the town of Shchastia.
(?) Lozinski	(?)	Fallen during the ATO. Circumstances of death undetermined.
Vasily Malanovsky	Senior sergeant of the 26th Berdychiv Separate Brigade, in the Army on contractual basis since 2010.	He was killed on 31 August 2014 during fighting in the ATO.
Ivan Marchenko	Private, call sign "MIM", classified as Cyborg	Donetsk airport? Circumstances of death undetermined.
Vitaly Miyushevsky	He volunteered to serve with the 30th Mechanised Brigade from Novgorod-Volynsk.	He died on 4 August 2014 near the town of Szczastie killed by a sniper.
Amina Okujewa	A soldier from a Polish- Chech family.	Fallen as part of the ATO. Circumstances of death undetermined.
Leonid Ordynski	Member of the regular army.	He was severely injured in the fighting between Izium and Kharkiv in June 2014 and died of his wounds.
Ruslan Pivov	Senior sergeant, defender of Avdiivka	Circumstances of death undetermined.
Eugene Sarnawski	The commander of the sapper company, Captain.	Circumstances of death undetermined.
Maksym Słomczyński	Junior Sergeant	Circumstances of death undetermined.
Leon Smolinski	Volunteer, with extensive combat experience from the Soviet era – Afghanistan.	Headed to the front in a group of 12 soldiers, the car carrying them was ambushed. They were all captured and shot.
Valery Szyszak	Platoon leader, call sign "Szyszak"	Circumstances of death undetermined.
Victor Wereszczak	Soldier of the 26th Berdychiv Artillery Brigade.	He died on 13 May 2014 due to a mine explosion under a self-propelled cannon.
Vadim Zabrodzki	Captain (posthumously major). Deputy commander of the chief of staff of the 95th Zhytomyr Airborne Brigade.	He was killed on 13 May 2014 in an ambush near Oktiabrsk.
Alexander Zalizko	He was sent to the army as part of the 6th mobilisation wave and served 14 months at the front.	He died on 24 April 2016 during clashes with saboteurs on the eve of demobilisation.

Source: *Bonusiak 2022: 105-110; Bonusiak 2023.1: 644-647; Bonusiak 2023.2: 45-46; PAP/RIRM 2019.*

History has a way of remembering those who gave their lives in defence of the homeland, while forgetting those who survived. As it has been established among the latter were the following: Vitaly Bielski, Roman Boryta, Oleg Braslavski Jerzy Franciszek Khvorostowski, Valery Dolinowski, Daman Duda, Konrad Kamilski, Gleb Kozachuk, Feliks Kozinski, Leszek Kloszewski, Vladislav Kuczynski, Olkesandr Krzyzanowski, Oleksij Lavrynovich, Aleksandr Nisdzielski, Volodymyr Nezhaniecki, Roman Onyshchuk, Viktor Milinchuk, Yuri Rakovych, Oleksandr Sosovski, Anatoly Scivchenski, Vitaly Svitsky, Yaroslav Voytsky... (*Bonusiak 2022: 107-113; Bonusiak 2023.1: 647-649*). This list does not, of course, exhaust the full composition of the Polish minority members engaged in fighting, but only those who were picked up from the analysis of press materials.

Ukrainian citizens of Polish origin were generally enlisted into Ukrainian army units based on their place of origin. Unsurprisingly, many served in formations recruited from the most "Polish" regions, such as Zhytomyr, Vinnytsia, and Lviv. However, individuals of Polish descent could also be found in units formed in other parts of the country.

According to the information available, they served in: 81st Airborne Brigade (AB) and 95th Zhytomyr AB; mechanized formations: 30s Mechanised Brigade (MB) from Novohrad Volynskiy, 54th MB., 58th Sumy MB and 72nd, 93rd MB., as well as artillery formations, in this case in 26th Berdychiv Artillery Brigade. They also fought in volunteer and paramilitary formations such as the Border Guard (*Bonusiak 2022: 105-115; Bonusiak 2023.1: 644-649; Bonusiak 2023.2: 45*).

It has not been possible to confirm whether members of the Polish minority fought on the separatist side. However, given the recruitment practices in those areas, this possibility cannot be entirely ruled out. Statistically, such cases would likely involve only a few individuals, as the Polish diaspora in eastern Ukraine was relatively small, numbering just over 6,400 people in 2001. In the intervening years, many members of this community relocated—some to western Ukraine, others to Poland. Additionally, following the outbreak of fighting, approximately 200 individuals were evacuated from Donbas and Mariupol areas during two operations organized by the Polish government (*Bonusiak 2018: 287-293; Lubicz Miszewski 2020; BIIH 2001*).

The vast majority of Ukrainian Poles fought on the side of the central authorities. This is unsurprising, as they identified more closely with the broadly defined values of the "West" rather than the "East." For the Polish minority, this alignment was consistent with the positions of key Polish organizations, such as the Federation of Polish Organizations in Ukraine and the Union of Poles in Ukraine, both of which issued unequivocally pro-Ukrainian statements (*Bonusiak 2016: 16-19; Bonusiak 2023.2: 44-47*).

Based on official statements from representatives of Polish diplomatic institutions, it can be assumed that several Polish volunteers participated in the ATO. However, this information remains unverifiable. It is known that a fighter nicknamed "Polak" served on the frontlines as part of the "Donbas battalion". Another volunteer, identified only by the name Konrad, was also active. Additionally, there is evidence of a Pole from London who volunteered to fight against the separatists and Russians, participating in battles in Donbas and Mariupol between 2014 and 2015. Vadim Krzyzhaniak, a writer and therapist from Poland, fought for several months during the ATO. Notably, he is the only individual whose full identity has been confirmed (*Andrushevskaya 2016; Bonusiak 2023.2: 44; mojawyspa.co.uk 2015; TOK FM 2015; Woznicki 2015*).

It is important to note that during the early stages of the conflict, supporting the so-called 'people's republics' gained some popularity in certain circles. On the side of the separatists, there was a group of several hundred volunteers from various countries, including Serbia, France, Hungary, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Spain, Germany, Italy, and even the USA. Among them, there was a small group of four Poles. One of them was Dariusz Lemanski, who had moved to Donetsk after living in London for many years. Another was an unnamed resident of Żywiec. (*Bonusiak 2023.2: 46-47; Stankiewicz 2014*).

Polish paths. Full-scale war

The events that began on 24 February 2022 saw an incomparably greater involvement of Poles of both groups discussed. However, due to wartime restrictions and an understandable information blockade, data on this involvement is limited. To date, few names of Polish-origin individuals are known who fell on the frontlines after 24 February 2022.

We know that near Kherson, already at the beginning of these clashes on 5 April 2022, Vyacheslav Kaurkin, a native of Zhytomyr,

was killed (*Tęcza Żytomierszczyzny* 2022.4: 13). He was only buried in his hometown after the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) had recaptured the area. In the same area, but at the end of 2023, Yuri Marcenjuk, a volunteer from near Vinnitsa, was killed (*Słowo Polskie* 2023.12: 5). On the other side of the front near Kharkiv, the Berdychiv citizen Włodzimierz Gałęcki, who was studying medicine in Warsaw when the full-scale war began, gave his life. After its outbreak, he abandoned his studies and volunteered for the army (*Włodzimierz Gałęcki* 2022; *Werwińska* 2022: 6-7). It is also known that on 17 September 2022, a veteran of the 2014 ATO, Marian Matusz from Mościska, who was mobilised after the outbreak of full-scale war, died (*Czawaga* 2022.21: 5). Another veteran of these battles, this time from 2015. Wasyl Skrupski from Zhovkva fell as a result of artillery shelling in the first half of 2023 (*Słowo Polskie* 2023.8: 1). In the same year, another ATO volunteer (from 2014) Vitaly Swinsky was also killed (*Chavaga* 2023.3: 23). At the very end of 2023 (22 December), Vladimir Czasanovsky from the village of Mychivka was killed during a combat mission in the Novopokrovka area of Zaporizhzhya Oblast (*Słowo Polskie* 2024.1-2: 16), after nearly a year of military service (appointment card dated 13 January 2023). A few months later, during the execution of a combat action near the village of Robotyne, volunteer Tadeusz "Tadek" Matwienko was killed (*Słowo Polskie* 2024.11:7). Also in 2024, a graduate of Polish School No. 24 in Lviv, Sergei Havrylov - a soldier of the 128th Independent Transcarpathian Assault Brigade of the Operational Command "West" AFU and another participant in the ATO fighting - was mortally wounded (*Kurier Galicyjski* 2024.3-4: 3). In 2025, just before this work was handed in, information was made public about the death of Volyn scout Igor Paziuk, a soldier of the 128th Separate Transcarpathian Mountain Assault Brigade (*Churczak* 2025).

We also have information about other members of the Polish national minority who fought in this conflict. One of them was Krzysztof from Mostyska, who defended Mariupol and was wounded there, taken prisoner and eventually rescued in one of the first exchanges of wounded prisoners. We also know that Marian Tracz fought at Donetsk and was wounded, and Andrzej Biszko from Strzelczysk at Bachmut (*Bonusiak* 2022: 115; *Bonusiak* 2023.2: 47, 48; *Kurier Galicyjski* 2023.13-14.1: 12; *Kurier Galicyjski* 2023.13-14.2: 13).

On 27 February 2022. Kyiv officially announced the formation of the International Legion of Territorial Defence of Ukraine (IL),

which was to be based on volunteers coming from outside Ukraine, willing to fight on the side of Ukraine against the Russian aggressor (*Międzynarodowy Legion Sił Zbrojnych Ukrainy* 2022). Among them there were also people coming from Poland, who, thanks to this decision, had a different situation from their predecessors fighting since 2015 within the ATO. The former could only serve in volunteer formations, and their formal and legal situation in relation to the provisions of Polish law was very complicated (serving in a foreign army was punishable by three to five years - as stipulated by Article 141 of the Penal Code) (*Dz. U.* 2024, *item 17*; *Bonusiak* 2023.2: 44, 48).

Their position was also unclear in relation to Ukrainian law. There were even cases where, in order to avoid problems, Poles applied for Ukrainian citizenship, hoping that this step would provide them with more “normal” conditions (*Woźnicki* 2015). Here too, the existing rules have changed, with Kyiv introducing a fast-track “path” to citizenship for International Legion volunteers. However, this did not occur until 2024 (*PAP* 2024).

In the first three weeks of the full-scale war alone, the relevant applications to the Polish Ministry of Defence were submitted by 19 people wishing to fight in Ukraine in accordance with the law. Significantly more volunteers did not even make such an attempt, which was risky given the experience with the Polish justice system of volunteers from 2014 - 2021, against whom criminal proceedings were initiated (*Bonusiak* 2023.2: 48).

According to currently available information, the fallen Polish volunteers included, in alphabetical order: Maciej Bednarski, Marek Mastalerz, Michał Pawiński, Tomasz Marcin Sękala, Czarek Stankiewicz, Paweł Szadzikowski, Daniel Szytyber, Krzysztof Tyfel, Tomasz Sebastian Walentek, Janusz Szeremeta, Sebastian Zacharz, Michał Żurek. They fell in the period from the beginning of the full-scale war until August 2024 (*Ilu Polaków zginęło w wojnie na Ukrainie?* 2024; *Słowo Polskie* 2024.8: 2).

Poles served in various formations and very rarely fought in larger national groups. For this reason, it is impossible to determine where they appeared most often. However, given the known locations of their deaths and fighting, one can venture to say that they fought wherever they were directed. Volunteers fighting in the ATO obviously operated in the Luhansk and Donetsk areas. Those from 2022-2024 everywhere: in Zaporizhzhia, Luhansk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Sumy ... (*Bonusiak* 2023.2: 49; *Wypartowicz* 2024).

Polish volunteers were sent to various Ukrainian and international formations. Probably the largest number of them went through the MLO. One of the longest-serving is Piotr Mitkiewicz, who was one of the few featured in several texts (*TGd* 2024). Most, however, do not publicise (for various reasons) that they are fighting. Those such as Janusz Szeremeta or Krzysztof Tyfel who spoke about their activities were a handful (*Zimmerman* 2023). If they did reveal themselves, they appeared under pseudonyms such as the leg wounded 'Kris', who spoke to a reporter in hospital (*Bonusiak* 2023.2: 50), or those known only by their first names: Robert (*Wypartowicz* 2024), Igor, Konrad (*Kolesnychenko* 2024), or pseudonyms such as "Lipton" (*Słowo Polskie* 2013.1: 5) or the "Batman" fighting in Donbas at the very beginning of the war (*wPolityce.pl* 2022).

Sometimes some names were made public on the occasion of the presentation of awards by various institutions or organisations. This was the case with the Polish-Ukrainian Brotherhood of Arms Award, which was presented to "two heroes of the war against Russia - a Pole and a Ukrainian who take an active part in defending Europe against Muscovite aggression". In the welcoming halls of Shevchenko University in Kyiv, Adam Slomka, the Commander of the Polish Legion, presented the award to a soldier from the Ukrainian Military Intelligence (Main Intelligence Directorate) special unit, nicknamed "Paris," who had saved a Polish volunteer during a fierce battle in the Zaporizhzhia". At the same time, AFU Colonel Petro Niedzielski presented the same award to "Andrzej Delendowski, a soldier of the Polish Legion, who had been a combat medic in line units for 2 years and saved the lives of many Ukrainian and Polish soldiers" (*Nikiforuk* 2024).

In Ukraine, Poles are not only active within the Foreign Legion. They have also formed a formation subordinate to the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs [probably the Author's mistake, rather Ministry of Defence – AB] called the Polish Volunteer Corps. It was formed in February 2023 and consisted exclusively of Polish citizens. In battles it cooperated with, among others, the Russian Volunteer Corps and the "Freedom of Russia" Legion. It is known to have operated in eastern Ukraine, including in the Donbas direction (*Bruszewski* 2023; *Orlovsky* 2024.2). The corps had its own banner, which was conferred on it in Kyiv on 10 October 2023, and used the call sign 'Home' in combat (*W. D.* 2023.19: 5).

A certain group of Polish servicemen is also reportedly serving in the Belarusian Volunteer Regiment named after Konstanty Kalinowski, within which there is a subunit (company) named after General Tadeusz Kościuszko. Volunteers from NATO countries: the USA, Belgium or Poland were said to be sent to this unit (*Bruszcwski 2024.1; Orłowski 2024.1*).

Not all volunteers are constantly engaged in combat. Many operate on a shuttle basis, rotating between the front lines and home. When they are away from the front, they continue to support the fighting forces by organizing aid. Upon their return, they often bring several dozen kilograms of supplies, including medical equipment, or funds collected from various donations. As one volunteer put it, "The Ukrainians understand that any volunteer can help them, not just by sitting down" (*Zimmerman, 2023*).

The command treats these volunteers with a great deal of understanding, recognizing the significance of their presence and efforts. Volunteers are rewarded for their contributions, both financially and through honors and decorations. However, this only began in 2022. Before that, as one volunteer in the ATO noted, his involvement was essentially voluntary work: "Nobody urged him to do it, and nobody paid him for it." (*Bonusiak 2023.2: 46; Rzewińska 2023*).

Why they fought.

How did it happen that Poles went to fight in Ukraine?

The factors varied greatly. There were those who saw it as a kind of duty, something worth doing for humanitarian reasons to defend an attacked population. Others went into battle looking for the meaning of life - especially those who had been badly "scarred" by it at home or abroad. Among the latter, one can find people with complicated fates. "Some have served in Afghanistan, Iraq. They have unprocessed PTSD. They are plagued by nightmares, flashbacks. They drown them out with drugs and alcohol. They say that if they kill someone, they will feel better" (*Kolesnychenko 2024*).

It was a very diverse group, as Dr Kacper Sleeve emphasised. Different in 2014 or 2015 and different after 2022. "Let's not kid ourselves: it was then for many Europeans «a strange war». Most of us were comfortable with the illusion that the Donbas was somewhere far away and it was none of our business." During this period, radicals were leaving. "Someone said: I'm going to fight for conservative Russia, which is fighting with the liberal, spoiled West. Others: the

Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics were formed, and as a communist I should support “people’s power”. Still others were going to fight to defend Ukraine, but also Europe from the Asian hordes” (Zimmerman 2023). All these attitudes can be found among volunteers originating from Poland.

Why did Ukrainians of Polish origin, who had a relatively easier way to avoid serving in the Ukrainian military, choose to fight? The answer is clear – patriotism was the driving force. Regardless of their background, they saw themselves as citizens of Ukraine. An additional motivation for this group was their opposition to Russia, which was widely viewed as the enemy, particularly given the pro-Western sentiments prevalent in their community. Poles, as a group, never questioned the existence of an independent Ukrainian state and were firm supporters of the country's western-oriented path. They expressed this commitment not only during the war but also in key moments like the “Orange Revolution and the” “Revolution of Dignity.” (Bonusiak 2016: 17-19).

The dimension of Polish engagement.

Poles and members of the Polish minority were involved in voluntary units within the SZU. Only Ukrainian citizens served in regular military formations, as well as in paramilitary groups like the Border Guard or police units. Polish citizens participated as volunteers, while representatives of the Polish minority fought both as volunteers and conscripts. Notably, a significant portion of this group consisted of officers and non-commissioned officers (contract soldiers) who saw their future tied to service in defense of their homeland.

Officially, it is assumed that approximately 64,000 people were involved in the ATO, of whom by 1 December 2021, according to the Book of Remembrance of the Fallen for Ukraine (*Книга Пам'яті* 2021), 4490 were killed and approximately 10,000 wounded. Therefore, it can be estimated that a total of about 300 people of Polish origin statistically participated in combat actions during the ATO period, of whom about 20 were killed and more than 50 wounded (Bonusiak 2023.2: 110).

The outbreak of a full-scale war in 2022 completely changed the situation. A conflict began in which more troops were involved at one time than during the entire period of the ATO. Following full mobilisation, Ukraine’s Armed Forces had grown to approximately 880,000 personnel by early 2024, with an estimated 1.3 million people having passed through military service. (Bruszewski 2024.2).

Of course, as before, Ukrainians of Polish origin also joined the ranks of the defenders during this period. It is very difficult to determine the size of this involvement, as we do not have data on the actual size of the Polish diaspora on the Dnieper. The last census data comes from the beginning of the 21st century and stated that Poles constituted 0.3% of the population (*BIH 2001*). Taking into account the demographic processes existing after that date, one can risk stating that this number did not exceed 0.2% in 2022. This would mean that among the defenders of Ukraine in 2024, statistically there would be about 1,800 people of Polish origin, and about 2,500 of them passed through the military service.

There is not the slightest doubt that in 2022 alone the overall effort of the Polish minority (and of course the Ukrainians themselves) was already greater than the total of 2014 - 2022. Even then, higher losses were incurred. By the end of 2024, they had become entirely incomparable.

There are no reliable figures on losses, and those that are there should be regarded as indicative, but according to President Zelensky, by the beginning of December 2024 Ukraine had lost 43,000 soldiers (killed) and 370,000 wounded. He pointed out that about 50% of the wounded had returned to the frontline. At the same time, he put Russian losses at nearly 200,000 dead... Based on these figures, we get 86 dead and 740 wounded soldiers of Polish origin. It can therefore be assumed that the death toll approaches about 100 in the Polish ethnic group (*kg, 2024*).

The involvement of Polish citizens fighting on the Dnieper River was also significantly greater than during the ATO period. In contrast to the previous period, we have data on the deaths of a number of Polish volunteers who fell in combat against Russia after 2022. The fact that Poles died is not surprising, it is simply that Polish involvement was far greater and so the likelihood of casualties was statistically higher.

Members of the International Volunteer Legion alone have been killed by some 300. "As reported by the *e-ukraina.pl* portal, 289 of its members – including 12 Poles – have died or been killed since the formation began." The Kremlin has consistently claimed that Poles are the largest group of foreigners fighting in Ukraine and estimates that out of "12,000 soldiers and mercenaries of various nationalities" there were 2,600 Poles, of whom it claimed 1,500 died. These figures are

completely unverifiable, especially as the Kremlin does not provide any sources for its revelations (*Ilu Polaków zginęło w wojnie na Ukrainie?* 2024).

Regardless of the exact losses suffered by Poles and members of the Polish diaspora along the Dnieper, it must be emphasized that their contribution to Ukraine's armed efforts is significant. While it cannot be compared to the involvement of Ukrainians themselves, it stands out when compared to other ethnic and national groups in Ukraine, as well as other nations. On the contrary, it deserves to be highly rated, especially when considering other forms of Polish involvement in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. However, these areas — such as military and humanitarian aid, as well as support for hundreds of thousands of refugees — warrant a separate study of their own.

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Бонусяк А.

ПОЛЯКИ ТА ПРЕДСТАВНИКИ ПОЛЬСЬКОЇ МЕНШИНИ В УКРАЇНІ В РОСІЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКІЙ ВІЙНІ (2014 – 2024)

Мета роботи – представити результати діяльності на російсько-українському фронті між 2014 і 2024 роками крізь призму залучення осіб польського походження. До розгляду представлені представники польської меншини в Україні та поляки. В результаті дослідження було виявлено десятки представників вищезгаданих груп, які брали активну участь у бойових діях і заплатили за це високу ціну, іноді навіть власним життям.

Дослідження ґрунтувалося, головним чином, на аналізі польськомовних засобів масової інформації, що видаються як у Польщі, так і в Україні. Також були використані доступні звіти та наукові опрацювання. Дослідження ґрунтувалося на методах на межі гуманітарних і соціальних наук.

Ключові слова: поляки, поляки в Україні, волонтери, російсько-Українська війна 2014 – 2024 рр.