

Volhynia Massacre

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The Effects of the Volhynian Massacres

In 1944 the anti-Polish terror of the OUN-UPA shifted to Eastern Galicia (the Lvov, Stanisławów, and Tarnopol voivodeships) as well as to the Lublin region.

Polish researchers cautiously estimate the number of Polish victims of the Volhynian massacres, which started during the winter of 1942/43 and ended in mid-1945, at approx. 100,000 (40,000–60,000 victims in Volhynia, 30,000–40,000 in Eastern Galicia, and at least 4,000 in today's Polish territory, including up to 2,000 in the Chełm region— as was called the south-eastern part of the Lublin Voivodeship was called). Moreover, the Ukrainian partisan units forced at least 485,000 Poles (125,000 from Volhynia, 300,000 from the Eastern Galicia, and 60,000 from the Chełm region) to flee to central Poland to avoid death. It should also be said that in the spring of 1944 nearly 20,000 Ukrainians from the Chełm region abandoned their homes for fear of the Polish underground.

The number of Ukrainian victims of Polish retaliatory attacks until the spring of 1945 is estimated at 10,000–12,000 (approx. 2,000–3,000 in Volhynia, 1,000–2,000 in Eastern Galicia, and, until 1947, 7,000–8,000 on present-day Polish territory, including 2,500 in the Chełm region). Some Polish retaliatory attacks were war crimes. According to Polish historians, however, those attacks cannot be equated with the organized anti-Polish operation of the OUN-UPA.

The Roman Catholic Church lost approx. 200 members of the clergy (priests, monks, and nuns) on the Eastern Borderlands during 1939–1947. It is also estimated that Ukrainian nationalists killed 28 Greek Catholic clergymen and approx. 20 Orthodox clergymen in Volhynia.

The Łuck diocese in the Volhynian Voivodeship lost 50 Catholic churches (i.e., 31 % of all temples). Another 25 chapels (15 %) were burned down, vandalized, or destroyed. As a result of the UPA raids ca. 70% of all 166 parishes ceased to exist. All rural parishes (churches, chapels, and rectories) were destroyed.

It is estimated that 1,500 of the 2,500 Volhynian localities inhabited by Poles in 1939 ceased to exist due to the operations of the OUN-UPA (they were burned down or otherwise destroyed). Today in only 150 localities are there crosses commemorating the tragic death of the more than 10-thousand Polish victims of the massacres (monuments are less frequent still, and some are not even on the burial site). Thus, in ca. 1,350 Volhynian localities there are still no crosses on the graves of Polish victims of the OUN-UPA.

Photo gallery

