

UDC 94(438):323.1:930.85“2015/2023”
DOI 10.24919/2519-058X.39.365006

Vitalii YAREMCHUK

PhD hab. (History), Professor at the Department of History, National University of Ostroh Academy, 2 Seminarska Street, Ostroh, Rivne Oblast, Ukraine, postal code 35800 (vitaliiaremchuk@gmail.com)

ORCID: 0000-0003-2493-7271

ResearcherID: C-1039-2019

Віталій ЯРЕМЧУК

доктор історичних наук, професор кафедри історії, Національний університет “Острозька академія”, вул. Семінарська, 2, м. Острог, Рівненська обл., Україна, індекс 35800 (vitaliiaremchuk@gmail.com)

Bibliographical Description of the Article: Yaremchuk, V. (2026). History Policy of the Polish Right-Wing (2015 – 2023) in Scholarly Interpretations. *Skhidnoievropeiskyi Istorychnyi Visnyk [East European Historical Bulletin]*, 39, 222–233. doi: 10.24919/2519-058X.39.365006

**HISTORY POLICY OF THE POLISH RIGHT-WING FORCES (2015 – 2023)
IN SCHOLARLY INTERPRETATIONS**

Abstract. *The purpose of this article is to identify the main approaches that have emerged in the professional literature regarding interpretations of the history policy pursued by Poland’s ruling “Law and Justice” Party (and supported by its political partners and ideological sympathisers in civil society) in 2015 – 2023. The research methodology is based on the methods of intellectual history, historiographical analysis, and historiographical synthesis. Scientific Novelty.* For the first time, an array of scientific literature devoted to understanding the history policies of the Polish right-wing forces during their dominance in the Polish political life has been analysed. This provides a basis for a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon as a factor in the country’s socio-political life and its international relations. **Conclusions.** A distinctive feature of professional research into the history policy of the Polish Right is the interdisciplinary nature of the studies, which provokes interest in its various aspects and manifestations. In the social sciences and humanities, its essence has generally been interpreted as a typical right-wing and conservative discourse, grounded in sentiments widespread among the Polish intellectual and cultural elite and in the Polish society at large – namely, a nostalgia for a “true Poland” allegedly lost as a result of communist and post-communist history amnesia. Professional literature convincingly argues that right-wing politicians and their supporters in various social groups actively promoted the “Polish view” of history for reasons of both social appeal and political expediency. The desire to establish the Right agenda led to the intensification of official history policy and a transfer of its main efforts to the most ‘pain’ points of Poland’s past, which was relatively successful in terms of political instrumentalisation. It has been also identified that there was a lack of serious opposition to the “right-wing” turn among the traditionally influential circle of intellectuals who advocate the establishment of a European model and practices of historical memory in Poland. Overall, the contemporary social sciences and humanities have produced analytical works on the most significant issues of the right-wing government’s history policy during its time in power in Poland from 2015 to 2023. In view of this, it is timely to conduct synthetic studies on the issue.

Key words: history policy, Poland, “Law and Justice” Party, scientific reception, historical memory.

ІСТОРИЧНА ПОЛІТИКА ПОЛЬСЬКОЇ ПРАВИЦІ (2015 – 2023) В НАУКОВИХ ІНТЕРПРЕТАЦІЯХ

Анотація. Мета статті – встановити головні підходи, які склалися в спеціальній літературі стосовно інтерпретації історичної політики, що провадилася правлячою у Польщі партією “Право і Справедливість” (її підтримувалася її політичними партнерами й ідеологічними симпатиками в громадянському суспільстві) впродовж 2015 – 2023 рр. **Методологія дослідження** базується на методах інтелектуальної історії, історіографічного аналізу, історіографічного синтезу. **Наукова новизна.** Вперше проаналізовано масив наукової літератури, присвяченої осмисленню історичної політики польських правих сил впродовж їх домінування в політичному житті Польщі. Це дає підстави для цілісного розуміння цього феномену як фактора суспільно-політичного життя країни і її міжнародних взаємин. **Висновки.** Показовою рисою професійного вивчення історичної політики польської правіці є міждисциплінарний характер студій, що зумовлює інтерес до різноманітних її аспектів та виявів. Загалом в соціогуманітаристиці розкрито її сутність як типового правого і консервативного дискурсу, який спирається на поширені в польській інтелектуальній і культурній еліті, в польському суспільстві настрої ностальгії за “справжньою Польщею”, яка нібито втрачена в ході комуністичної та посткомуністичної історичної амнезії. В спеціальній літературі переконливо обґрунтовано, що політики правого спектру та їхні симпатиками в різних соціальних групах активно просували “польський погляд” на історію з мотивів його як соціальної привабливості, так і політичної рентабельності. Прагнення утвердити праву адженду зумовило інтенсифікацію офіційної історичної політики і перенесення її головних зусиль на найбільш “больові” точки польської минувшини, які надаються до їхньої порівняно успішної політичної інструменталізації. З’ясовано також феномен відсутності серйозної протидії “правому” розвороту серед традиційно впливового кола інтелектуалів, які виступають за утвердження в Польщі європейської моделі і практик історичної пам’яті. Загалом, сучасна соціогуманітаристика диспонує аналітичними працями з найбільш важливих питань історичної політики правого табору впродовж його перебування біля керма влади у Польщі у 2015 – 2023 рр. З огляду на це цілком на часі й підготовка синтетичних студій проблеми.

Ключові слова: історична політика, Польща, партія “Право і Справедливість”, наукова рецепція, історична пам’ять.

Problem Statement. The history policy (hereinafter referred to as the HP) pursued in Poland during the rule of the right-wing conservative “Law and Justice” Party (“Prawo i Sprawiedliwość”, hereinafter referred to as LJP) (2015 – 2023) was a significant factor in the country’s socio-political life and international relations. It should be noted that despite the LJP losing its absolute majority in December 2023, following parliamentary elections in the country, the HP in Poland remains unchanged in its key features as of the end of 2025. The radical historical revisionism suggested by the creators of the “new history policy” stirred up intellectual circles and caused tension in inter-state relations. It is essential to recognise that the active promotion of the ‘Polish view’ of the past by government forces has been and continues to be based not only on state resources, but also on the support of a significant portion of the Polish population. This conservative wave in the spiritual and socio-political life of a modern European state, which came as a surprise to many, is a phenomenon that naturally attracted the interest of the scientific community. After all, we are talking about a country that seems to have chosen a distinctly European model of historical memory and the HP, until recently characterised by a balanced representation of diverse views on its cultural and historical heritage, fairly widespread sentiments of “critical patriotism”, including the reception of Poles’ responsibility for the unattractive pages of their national history.

Review of Recent Research and Publications. Currently, we are not aware of any research papers that address the issue of the HP in Poland from the perspective outlined in the title of this article. At the same time, certain aspects and specific manifestations of it are analysed in detail in several special publications, the content of which will be revealed in the central part of the article.

In particular, we now have a high level of understanding of the concept of HP itself. It has been introduced into the circle of legitimate concepts in the social sciences and humanities, instead of the relatively widespread reception of it as a “distortion of science” or a kind of “degenerative historiography” (Chwedoruk, 2018, p. 179). In this regard, much has been done by the Polish scholars, who in recent years have prepared a series of studies based on the European and global context of “memory studies”, as well as on the vast experience of addressing the past in public and intellectual spheres that has been accumulated in Poland over the last two centuries (Kalicka, Witek, 2014; Kačka, Piechowiak-Lamparska, Ratke-Majewska, 2015; Chwedoruk, 2018; Ruchniewicz, 2018; Witek, Mazur, 2022; Lubecka, Zakrzewski, 2022).

Special studies on the content of the HP of the Polish right-wing forces in 2015–2023 discuss its ideological foundations (Harper, 2020; Szeligowska, 2016; Kassner, 2023; Tryma, Stadnichenko, & Salnikova, 2023; Głowacka, 2024) and the image of history it advocates (Harper, 2020; Stobiecki, 2022; Stobiecki, 2023). The roles of its actors (subjects) (Łuczewski, 2017; Wojdon, 2018; Behr, 2021; Wojdon, 2022; Łuczewski, 2022; Górny, 2024) and the reception of HP by the Polish society (Stryiek, Skłokin, 2022; Jaskułowski, Majewski, 2024) are analysed. There is a critical discussion of its individual areas. The most convincing concept to date is that of “cursed soldiers” (*Żołnierze Wyklęci*), which has become a key public symbol of the right-wing politics in Poland during the LJP’s rule (Kończal, 2020; Jaskułowski, Majewski, 2024). In their book, K. Jaskułowski and P. Majewski use the example of the “cursed soldiers” to provide the first comprehensive analysis of the role played by civic activists not affiliated with the Polish right-wing forces or cultural institutions in shaping the right-wing history policy (Jaskułowski, Majewski, 2024, pp. 74–81). The first in-depth studies on the policy of radical reinterpretation of the Polish-Jewish relations during the Holocaust, launched in 2015, have been published (Hackmann, 2018; Kończal, 2022). Important are attempts of the academic statements about a drastic change in the Polish politics and society in relation to the “Volhyn issue”, the shift under the leadership of the LJP of dramatic events in the Ukrainian-Polish relations during World War II into the focus of the Polish historical memory (Kalishchuk, 2020; Morozova, 2020; Khakhula, 2021).

Thus, to date, a wealth of important research has been accumulated on individual aspects of the history policy of the Polish HP during the eight years of LJP rule. It deserves careful study and consideration of its key conclusions.

The purpose of this article is to determine the main approaches that have emerged in the professional literature regarding interpretations of HP carried out by LJP (and supported by its political partners and ideological sympathisers in the Polish civil society) from 2015 to 2023. In other words, we aim at analysing the scholarly reception of the “new historical policy”. We do not set out to present the facts and events about the implementation of this policy per se, as they are sufficiently well known to the interested reader. (At the same time, it is clear that in order to explain HP in a specific country and at a specific time, we cannot dispense with at least a brief outline of its empirical dimension). The authors of the texts under study are primarily representatives of the social sciences and humanities, particularly

history, sociology, and political science. The interest in this issue among scholars from various fields of the humanities and social sciences can be explained by the fact that the HP itself is not purely a “history” phenomenon, but is of a distinctly interdisciplinary nature. It is likely that in this case we are also talking about the political resonance of the LJP’s policy, in particular its humanitarian component, which, as is often the case, causes scholars to focus more on the issue that is not only purely “academic” but also “topical”. Let us focus on the texts whose authors demonstrate a desire for deep reflection on the Polish HP, rather than an immediate (and therefore, it seems, emotionally charged and having unjustified generalisations) response to its manifestations. Naturally, this perspective does not involve analysing the texts of HP actors themselves, delving into their statements and discussions. However, it focuses on an “outside” view, an unbiased perspective, one that resonates from a more sophisticated environment. Of course, the author of this article understands well the relativity of the concept of “objective science” when it comes to the field of social sciences and humanities, but remains a supporter of its significant expert role. Its expert functions are indisputable for us, as they are based on conventional methodology recognised by the scientific community. Secondly, the author is aware that scholars are also actors in the HP – therefore, the idea that they exist “outside” of it is, by and large, also an illusion. However, it is scholars who usually (in this specific instance, particularly) strive more than anyone else to distance themselves from the object of their research. In our opinion, this approach lays the groundwork for a holistic, comprehensive, and complete understanding of the phenomenon under consideration. At present, given the insufficient development of Poland’s “new history policy” in its entirety and its “hot” and ongoing nature, the implementation of this goal remains an assignment for the future.

Research Results. In the modern view, the HP can be defined in various ways, and the debate about its essence continues (Wojdon, 2018, p. 81; Chwedoruk, 2018, pp. 186–189). However, most researchers agree on its defining characteristics as a scientific category. Given the current state of understanding of the HP, its most general definition could be as follows: it is a conscious activity of its actors (subjects) aimed at the historical consciousness of society/historical memory (its object) through reference to the past for a specific purpose. Today, consensus omnium also means acknowledging the pluralism of the HP actors. When it comes to attempts to systematise (or classify) them, the Polish publications, for example, favour the approach of R. Traba, who believes that at least four actors are involved in the creation of HP: government forces, local authorities, mass media and civil society (Traba, 2009, p. 61). There is also a clear consensus among researchers regarding the most common goals of the HP. These include the establishment, preservation and expansion of political power, the formation of identity, compensation for victims of crimes (return of illegally seized property, reparations, political rehabilitation, restoration of good name), and the protection of a country’s interests in the international arena (Wójcik, 2016; Lubecka, & Zakrzewski, 2022, p. 44). When considering HP as a phenomenon and its ‘Polish’ segment, it is also essential to have a well-established scientific understanding of the reasons for its fundamental differences, which are characteristic of individual countries. They are primarily due to differences in political regimes: “In democratic countries, the authorities try to take into account a certain pluralism of views on the past. In totalitarian systems, the situation is simpler, as the ruling entity seeks to control all areas of public life and, de facto, obtains a monopoly on shaping the historical narrative. Somewhat more complex is the practice of authoritarian states, which may attempt to implement both monopolistic practices and

define only the limits of possible discourse, allowing for limited pluralism” (Lubecka, & Zakrzewski, 2022, p. 37). It is also worth noting a peculiar terminological chaos: in addition to the term “history politics”, specialised literature uses its close or absolute substitutes, the most common of which is “memory policy”. However, we will use the term “history policy” because it is more widely used in Polish academia and its public discourse.

The HP’s presence in Poland from 2015 to 2023 was marked by several key manifestations that are recognised as such by both its supporters and neutral observers and critics. In particular, it has become one of the important phenomena in the country’s socio-political and cultural life, in contrast to the previous situation, which was characterised by relatively limited interest, with discussions rarely extending beyond the intellectual sphere. The role of the state and its affiliated cultural institutions has grown significantly, whereas previously it was predominantly the domain of social actors. The leading specific topics covered by the HP from 2015 to 2023 included the activities of the Polish anti-communist underground in the post-war years (“cursed soldiers”), the participation of the Polish people in the rescue of the Jews during the Nazi Holocaust, and the “unjustified” and “mass” killings of peaceful civilians of Polish ethnicity by soldiers of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in 1943 – 1944 in the eastern territories of the interwar Polish state (Kresy Wschodnie), interpreted as genocide (Ludobójstwo) of the Poles by “Ukrainian nationalists”.

When discussing the academic reception of the “new history policy”, it is worth noting that the academic discourse is dominated by a critical or negative attitude towards the HP of the Polish right wing in general, including during their eight-year rule, which is the subject of this article. The common ground was the acknowledgement of its worldview anachronism. This refers to its aggressive defence of the ethno-national narrative in its extreme forms of the Polish exclusivity and megalomania, as its primary focus is on manifestations of the Polish heroism and Polish martyrdom. The Polish history in it has acquired apologetic and hagiographic content, while its shameful pages have been marginalised. Authoritarian methods employed in its implementation and attempts to monopolise the realm of historical memory are condemned. In contrast, memory, in the words of Polish historian P. Witek, “is one of the forms of freedom” (Witek, 2011, p. 94). Its destructive social consequences are noteworthy (inciting hostility, deepening the polarisation of Polish society instead of uniting it within the framework of a political nation¹). The HP of LJP is accused of provoking tensions in Poland’s relations with some of its allies and partners (in particular, Israel, the United States, and Ukraine) and damaging the country’s international reputation.

According to R. Stobiecki, the version of Polish history that prevails in the minds of the creators of the “new history policy” resembles a kind of historical utopia, because it offers an “ideal” vision of the Polish nation’s past. By this vision, the scholar means, first, an image of the national past that gives Poles a sense of pride; second, one that heals various complexes derived from history; and third, reinterprets the history of Poland in the history of Europe not as a peripheral, backward state or nation, but as one that has been an integral part of Western civilisation for centuries (Stobiecki, 2022, p. 34; Stobiecki, 2023, p. 160). This largely fictionalised past perfectly suits the needs of right-wing forces, as it depicts the Poles as always heroic and noble, never doing evil, defending national dignity and “true” (rather than “false”) European values. The modern ideological platform of the LJP (whose basic

¹ According to T. Stryiek and V. Sklokin, the political and ideological division of Polish society (unlike Ukrainian society) is currently deepening, which gives grounds for implementing the metaphor of “two Polands” – similar to M. Riabchuk’s well-known thesis about “two Ukraines” (Stryiek & Sklokin, 2022, p. 44).

ideas are Polish-centrism and moderate Euroscepticism) is transferred to the past (which in the “new history policy” appears to be equally Polish-centric and sceptical of the West, which ostensibly constantly “betrayed” Poland – “an innocent victim of the powerful of this world”) and is used to legitimise it as the only correct one for Poland (Stobiecki, 2022; Stobiecki, 2023; Jaskułowski, & Majewski, 2024).

If we try to identify the most controversial aspects of the historical past, the reflection of which in the HP of the right-wing forces since 2015 has been sharply criticised by scholars, then, in our opinion, this is a large-scale campaign to glorify the “cursed soldiers”, which has become a “new fashion” or even a “cult”, and an unprecedented official rewriting of the history of Polish complicity in the Holocaust in order to downplay it and exaggerate the role of the Poles in saving the Jews. It is easy to notice that these two trends clearly demonstrate the two main mechanisms of the HP implementation – an emphasis on “remembering” (“cursed soldiers”) and an emphasis on “forgetting” (Polish-Jewish relations). At the same time, it is equally telling that the two most popular themes of the “new history policy” demonstrate two basic methods of manipulating the past that are characteristic of any HP, as analysed by the Polish historian J. Tokarska-Bakir: *suggestio falsi* (suggestion of falsehood) and *suppressio veri* (suppression of the truth) (Wojdon, 2018, p. 83). K. Kończal, K. Jaskułowski, and P. Majewski have convincingly substantiated the classification of the construction of the concept of the “cursed soldiers” as an instance of the “invention of tradition”, first comprehensively described in the seminal 1983 volume edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Kończal, 2020; Majewski, 2024).

The general premise of the HP, which has been implemented since 2015, is considered to be the crisis of the project of a democratic European Poland, which is defended by liberal and left-wing forces on the country’s political spectrum, and, conversely, the rise in authority and political influence of right-wing, traditionalist, and populist forces (after all, this trend is now almost universal). These shifts in the Poles’ political preferences were triggered by the Smolensk catastrophe of 2010. The processes referred to as the “illiberal revolution” (Harper, 2020) were also clearly evident in the field of HP.

According to observers, the double victory in 2015 was not simply a victory of the “conservatives” over the “liberals”, but rather a clash between two patriotic forces and two concepts of patriotism, which differ primarily in their attitude toward the past. Thus, 2015 saw the defeat of supporters of “critical patriotism” and the victory of those supporting “forward-looking patriotism”. It should be emphasised that the debate about what kind of patriotism the Poles need played an important role in the Polish political discourse during the first 25 years of the modern Polish state’s existence. Critical patriots believe that the state HP should promote a sober, responsible, and balanced understanding of the past as a prerequisite for building a pluralistic and tolerant state. In their opinion, the discussion should not only focus on heroic moments, but also on exposing the uncomfortable truths about Polish history. Thus, the Poles should pave the way toward the European model of historical memory. “Critical patriotism” gained particular prominence during the debate on the Polish collaboration in the Holocaust (‘the Jedwabne debate’) (Szeligowska, 2016; Korycki, 2019; Kończal, 2024). In fact, this approach assigns the past a subordinate role in the pursuit of the future, because it is not so much about Polish history as it is about Poland acquiring an authentic Western civilisational identity.

In contrast, “traditionalists” oppose this forward-looking paradigm with their own – “the selection of the past” (Łuczewski, 2022, p. 737). They have criticised the Polish elite and

left-liberal politicians for neglecting national education. It gives an important role to the ‘true history’ of Poles and Poland, which is believed to have been suppressed and half-forgotten during the reign of these forces in the country throughout almost the entire post-communist period (and in this, according to representatives of the right wing, in fact, followed the example of the communist leadership of the Polish People’s Republic, a loyal satellite of imperial Moscow). It refers to the “revival of the Polish view” of history and to the HP, which aims to give independent significance to historical heritage as an important argument in enhancing national dignity, in extreme forms, the greatness and uniqueness of Poland and the Poles. Naturally, such HP leads to the construction of a “monumental” (to use F. Nietzsche’s well-known classification) version of history, and tends to silence crimes and transgressions. This view of the role of the past is linked to the political ideology of the right wing, in particular the idea of increasing political autonomy and Poland’s influence in the European Union (as opposed to the “Westernisation of Poland” – “Polonisation of the West”).

The two antagonistic concepts of patriotism (and, accordingly, the concepts of Poland’s past) described above have given rise to mutual accusations by intellectuals from both camps that their positions on history are detrimental to Polish society and the state’s future. If for “traditional patriots” Jedwabne became the quintessence of anti-Polish sentiment, and the HP of liberal forces in the context of Polish-Jewish relations was ironically called the “pedagogy of shame” back in the 2000s, then the minimisation of Polish complicity in the Holocaust in the government’s HP after 2015 is no less sarcastically described as “the politics of innocence” (Kończal, 2024).

Professional literature also suggests that the concept of “critical patriotism” has been endorsed by the Polish central government throughout the history of modern Poland, including periods of right-wing rule. However, this statement is poorly substantiated. For example, K. Hlovatska asserts the presence of a discourse of “critical patriotism” in the HP in general and in most resolutions of the Polish parliament related to commemorating events and figures in the Polish history between 1990 and 2019. However, in her study, when it comes to the Volyn tragedy of 1943 – 1944, she did not mention the unreservedly one-dimensional decisions of the Polish parliament on these events, adopted in 2016 and 2018, in which it is difficult to see even a shred of a balanced view of the Ukrainian-Polish confrontation, let alone the presence of the discourse of “critical patriotism” (Głowacka, 2024).

What is the nature of the historical views of “traditional patriots”? According to many analysts, they are deeply rooted in Polish culture and mass consciousness, where the romantic logic of the 19th century still prevails, based on a “mixture of peripheral complexes and megalomania” (Harper, 2020, p. 132). In the collective self-reception of Poles, their homeland has long been regarded as a bastion of freedom and democracy on the European map. On the other hand, the historical imagination of the Poles clearly displays a “martyr complex”: Poland is seen as an eternally oppressed victim of foreign subjugation, exploitation and persecution, including the partitions of the country at the end of the 18th century and their culmination during World War II. In fact, the Polish conservative politicians and intellectuals who are the HP actors should be accepted as a product of the same romantic code (Harper, 2020, pp. 132–133; Kończal, 2022, p. 261). Incidentally, its enduring component is the myth of the Eastern Borderlands (Kresy Wschodnie). According to it, these territories, which are now Ukrainian, Belarusian and Lithuanian, are viewed through the prism of the messianism of the Poles, who brought high culture and civilisation there (including through military activity). The widespread “kresomania” (according to D. Beauvois) (or,

according to the Polish publicist A. Balcer, “kresimentalism”) in the mass consciousness and views of many representatives of the Polish elite gives rise to the temptation to treat the Ukrainians, Belarusians and Lithuanians with contempt/arrogance (Kalishchuk, 2020, p. 202; Harper, 2020, p. 132).

Scholars additionally highlight the cynical, instrumental character of the right-wing history policy. The instrumentalisation of the past for political gain (to win the favour of voters and mobilise them to vote) is considered in special studies to be an almost trivial practice, which, in particular, the Polish right-wing politicians have willingly and frequently used (and continue to use). As the Polish researcher J. Szrednicka aptly notes, “politicians have mastered the art of selectively drawing from the romantic reservoir, cynically plucking the most delicate social strings of romantic sensitivity over and over again to achieve their current political goals” (Harper, 2020, p. 133). When it comes to the historical memory of the Polish society and its political instrumentalisation, we are talking about related processes. On the one hand, the historical imagination of a significant portion of the Polish citizens is infused with the conservative ideas described above, so these modern Poles are inclined towards right-wing politicians and exhibit corresponding electoral behaviour. On the other hand, it is precisely politicians of this kind, who come to power owing to an electorate steeped in history, who persistently exploit the past and stir up passions around historical topics that appeal to voters, leading to even greater entrenchment of the corresponding ideas and sentiments. Therefore, it is hardly worth questioning the thesis that the historical consciousness of contemporary Polish society is “mainly” formulated by representatives of the Polish right wing (Harper, 2020, p. 145). The first important step in shaping this type of mass history perception is considered to be the modern Polish school system, which is dominated by an affirmative vision of national history (Stobiecki, 2016; Stobiecki, 2023, p. 177), and where the teaching process is primarily focused on imposing a narrow national (ethnolinguistic) view of the past on students (Jaskulowski, Majewski, Surmiak, 2022). Moreover, this appears to be a vicious circle, unfortunately. However, as K. Jaskulowski and P. Majewski show using the example of the rejection by a significant part of Poles of the official glorification of the “cursed soldiers”, there is little reason to speak of Polish society being entirely under the influence of the right-wing historical agenda (Jaskulowski & Majewski, 2024, pp. 82–96).

In professional literature, there is a widespread view that the success of the “new history policy” were also made possible by the significant support it received from the conservative section of the country’s cultural elite. Cultural figures (museum curators, educators, archivists, members of public organisations concerned with the historical memory of the Poles, etc.) share the “nostalgic” sentiments of the general public and, therefore, despite the considerable autonomy of cultural institutions in Poland, do not resist and often support the “right” HP. This is the paradox of the key institution in terms of implementing official HP, which is the Institute of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej). Although this institution has always been sensitive to the government line at the HP, in terms of its legal status it is not a state authority, and until the mid-2010s it managed to maintain high standards of scientific rigour and avoid becoming a purely official “ministry of memory” (Wojdon, 2018, pp. 97–98; Behr, 2021, p. 370; Górny, 2024). However, since 2015, the Institute of National Remembrance has become the mouthpiece of the LJP and has “transformed into an agency that implements state memory policy” (Kończal, 2022, p. 257). The main reason for this transformation lies not so much in the administrative and financial levers that have always

existed and facilitated the institution's partnership with the authorities, but in the fact that a significant proportion of its staff share the paradigm of the "new history policy".

Chief focus is on the positions of professional historians who defended the official HP and those who actively opposed it. It is believed that the LJP camp's often harsh and impeccably reasoned criticism by its opponents did not prove truly effective, as it failed to halt the government's success after 2015 in imposing its own vision of history on society. According to K. Kończal, this situation demonstrated the weakness of the academic community in terms of its inability to communicate with society in a language it understands, and generally exposed the inability of professional historians to be influential in the public sphere (which reflects, in a broader sense, the traditional scepticism of academic science towards public history) (Kończal, 2020, p. 83).

When it comes to the involvement of historians in official history policy, the professional conduct of those working at the Institute of National Remembrance and other state-affiliated institutions is interpreted as somewhat forced, since, being both scholars and civil servants, they are obliged to limit their research autonomy (Behr, 2021, pp. 379–382). At the same time, it is believed that a significant portion of historians, including representatives of purely academic science, sincerely share the ideas of the right wing, and that the public activity in the field of "new history politics" of its "gurus" (such as Andrzej Nowak) and "mnemonic warriors" (such as Wojciech Roszkowski) is based on ideological, ethical and intellectual intentions. In particular, the Polish sociologist M. Łuczewski provides a detailed justification of the role of moral incentives ("moral capital") as the driving force behind HP (using the examples of modern Russia, Germany and Poland) (Łuczewski, 2017). One of his studies analyses the career of the contemporary Polish historian W. Roszkowski, mentioned above. This leading figure of the Polish conservative intelligentsia initially held apolitical/pluralistic views on Poland's past. However, over time, he consciously joined the conservative camp, aiming to be beneficial to the Polish society and to realise his considerable "cultural capital" (which includes moral authority ("moral capital") and influence as an academic historian and public intellectual ("reflective capital")) (Łuczewski, 2022). W. Roszkowski is shown as a typical representative of that part of the Polish elite that seeks "cultural capital" not in the "centres" (before 1989 – the "East", after 1989 – the centre of gravity shifted to the "West"), but at home, where it finds "local capital" represented by the nation (Łuczewski, 2022, p. 737).

According to researchers, the implementation of the HP by the LJP would not have been possible without the tacit consent and actual political support (primarily through voting for relevant decisions in the Polish parliament) of the Polish political class as a whole, including those parties that were in opposition and are considered to be entirely pro-European and liberal-oriented. The nature of this position (or rather, its absence) is apparent. As K. Kończal notes, for most of the opposition, it was too great a risk to be accused of not defending "Poland's good name" (Kończal, 2022, p. 262).²

An indisputable feature of HP by the LJP is the use of questionable/authoritarian practices, which enabled the achievement of specific and visible results (or, to be less politically correct, to push them through). This refers to attempts to introduce legal liability for disagreement with the established (in fact, official) interpretation of events in Polish history, government policy of persecuting Polish scholars who continued (and continue) to

² The unanimity of the newly elected Polish parliament in 2023, in which a pro-European majority opposed to the right wing has been formed, in supporting the "genocidal" interpretation of the Volyn tragedy and the loud silence of Polish politicians on the rapid spread of anti-Ukrainian sentiments in Poland in the fifth year of the full-scale Russia-Ukraine War, clearly confirm the validity of such observations by independent analysts.

take a critical view of the Polish-Jewish relations during the war, the opening and generous state funding of new cultural institutions that support the official historical narrative, etc. One of the most telling examples of the authoritarian nature of the history policy by the LJP is the political and media attack carried out against the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk (Muzeum II Wojny Światowej w Gdańsku) between 2015 and 2017. The museum's administration, headed by the well-known figure of the "critical" camp of the Polish intellectuals, historian P. Machcewicz, was accused of "insufficient Polishness", "cosmopolitanism", failure to highlight adequately "Polish heroism", and paying excessive attention to the everyday life of civilians during the war (Etges, Zündorf, Machcewicz, 2018; Stobiecki, 2023, p. 166). Ultimately, under political coercion, the museum's management was replaced by supporters of the official HP (and K. Nawrocki, later the Head of the Institute of National Remembrance (2021 – 2025) and the winner of the 2025 presidential election in Poland, became its director).

It should be noted that the authoritarian style of the "new history policy" is unprecedented in the history of the modern democratic Polish state. Therefore, according to French historian V. Behr, it "may have more in common with the practices of the Polish People's Republic than with the post-communist period" (Behr, 2021, p. 382).

Conclusions. The HP in Poland during the LJP era not only caused political and social resonance but also became the subject of scientific research. A distinctive feature of professional research into the HP of the Polish right wing is its interdisciplinary nature, which leads to an interest in various aspects and manifestations of the phenomenon. In general, the social sciences and the humanities have conceptualised it as a typical right-wing and conservative discourse, grounded in the sentiments of nostalgia for a "true Poland" prevalent among the Polish elite and broader society – one that is allegedly perceived as having been lost through communist and post-communist historical amnesia. Professional literature convincingly argues that right-wing politicians and their supporters in various social groups actively promoted the "Polish view" of history for reasons of both social appeal and political expediency. The desire to establish the right agenda generally led to the intensification of the official HP and the transfer of its main efforts to the most "painful" points of Poland's past, which was relatively successful in terms of political instrumentalisation. The phenomenon of the absence of serious opposition to the 'right-wing' turn among the traditionally influential circle of intellectuals who advocate the establishment of the European model and practices of historical memory in Poland has also been clarified. Overall, contemporary social sciences and humanities have produced analytical works on the most significant issues of the right-wing government during its time in power in Poland from 2015 to 2023. In view of this, it is timely to conduct synthetic studies on the problem.

Acknowledgement. I would like to express sincere gratitude to all members of the editorial board for the valuable advice they provided during the preparation of this article for publishing.

Funding. The author did not receive any financial support for the publication of this article.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Behr, V. (2021). *Powojenna historiografia polska jako pole walki: studium z socjologii wiedzy i polityki* [Post-war Polish Historiography as a Battlefield: A Study in the Sociology of Knowledge and Politics]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego. [in Polish].

Chwedoruk, R. (2018). *Polityka historyczna* [History policy]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN. [in Polish].

Etges, A., Zündorf, I., & Machcewicz, P. (2018). History and Politics and the Politics of History: Poland and Its Museums of Contemporary History. *International Public History, 1* (1), 1–11. DOI: 10.1515/iph-2018-0006 [in English].

Głowacka, K. (2024). Koncepcja patriotyzmu krytycznego jako punkt odniesienia polskiej polityki historycznej: Przypadek parlamentarnego dyskursu o zbrodni katyńskiej i ludobójstwie na Wołyniu [The Concept of Critical Patriotism as a Benchmark for Polish Politics of Memory. Parliamentary Discourse on the Katyn Massacres and the Genocide in Volhynia]. *Politeja, 3* (90), 279–297. DOI: 10.12797/Politeja.21.2024.90.14 [in Polish].

Górny, D. (2024). Polityka historyczna prowadzona przez Instytut Pamięci Narodowej – szanse i zagrożenia [History policy conducted by the Institute of National Remembrance – opportunities and threats], [w:] *Intelektualne podróże w czasie – nowe spojrzenia na znane. Perspektywy humanistyczno-społeczne*. Kraków. (pp. 22 – 36). [in Polish].

Hackmann, J. (2018). Defending the “Good Name” of the Polish Nation: Politics of History as a Battlefield in Poland, 2015–18. *Journal of Genocide Research, 20* (4), 587–606. DOI: 10.1080/14623528.2018.1528742 [in English].

Harper, J. (Ed.). (2020). *Nieliberalna rewolucja w Polsce* [Illiberal revolution in Poland]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar. [in Polish].

Jaskulowski, K., Majewski, P., & Surmiak, A. (2022). *Teaching history, celebrating nationalism: School history education in Poland*. London–New York: Routledge. [in English].

Jaskulowski, K., & Majewski, P. (2024). *The memory politics of the cursed soldiers in Poland: authoritarian nationalism, hegemony and emotions*. Abingdon–New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. [in English].

Kącka, K., Piechowiak-Lamparska, J., & Ratke-Majewska, A. (Eds.). (2015). *Narracje pamięci. Między polityką a historią* [Narratives of Memory: Between Politics and History]. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK. [in Polish].

Kalicka, J., & Witek, P. (2014). Polityka historyczna [History policy]. *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, (pp. 378–387). Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar. [in Polish].

Kalishchuk, O. (2020). *Volyn '43: Istoriohraficzne piznannia i krywe dzerkalo pam'iaty* [Volyn'43: Historiographical knowledge and the crooked mirror of memory]. Lviv: Prostrir “M”. [in Ukrainian].

Kassner, M. (2023). Kryzys polskiego liberalizmu. Krok w kierunku diagnozy [The Crisis of Polish Liberalism: A Step Toward Diagnosis]. *Mysł Polityczna, 2*(18), 105–156. DOI: 10.31268/MPPT.2023.16 [in Polish].

Khakhula, L. (2021). Ukraina – Polshcha: vyklyky ta perspektyvy istorychnoi polityky pislia 2019 roku [Ukraine – Poland: challenges and prospects of historical politics after 2019]. *Ukraina – Polshcha: istorychna spadshchyna i suspilna svidomist – Ukraine – Poland: historical heritage and public consciousness, 14*, 248–259. [in Ukrainian].

Kończal, K. (2020). The Invention of the “Cursed Soldiers” and Its Opponents: Post-war Partisan Struggle in Contemporary Poland. *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures, 34* (1), 67–95. DOI: 10.1177/0888325419865332 [in English].

Kończal, K. (2022). Politics of Innocence: Holocaust Memory in Poland. *Journal of Genocide Research, 24* (2), 250–263. DOI: 10.1080/14623528.2021.1968147 [in English].

Korycki, K. (2019). Politicized memory in Poland: anti-communism and the Holocaust. *Holocaust Studies, 25* (3), 1–26. DOI: 10.1080/17504902.2019.1567669 [in English].

Lubecka, J., & Zakrzewski, M. (Eds.). (2022). *Polityka historyczna* [History policy]. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ignatianum w Krakowie. [in Polish].

Łuczewski, M. (2017). *Kapitał moralny: polityki historyczne w późnej nowoczesności* [Moral Capital: Historical Politics in Late Modernity]. Kraków: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej. [in Polish].

Łuczewski, M. (2022). Walka o kapitał moralny w polu polskiej inteligencji. Wojciech Roszkowski jako aktor historii i terażniejszości [The Struggle for Moral Capital in the Field of the Polish

Intelligentsia: Wojciech Roszkowski as an Actor in History and the Present]. *Przegląd Historyczny*, CXIII, 4, 731–752. [in Polish].

Morozova, O. (2020). *Doslidzhennia istorii Ukrainy pershoi polovyny XX st. v suchasni polskii istoriografii: napriamky, kontseptsii, dyskusii: monohrafiia* [Research into the history of Ukraine in the first half of the 20th century in modern Polish historiography: directions, concepts, discussions: monograph]. Mykolaiv: ChNU im. Petra Mohyly. [in Ukrainian].

Ruchniewicz, K. (2018). Polityka historyczna [History policy]. *Historia w przestrzeni publicznej*, (pp. 75–81). Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN. [in Polish].

Stobiecki, R. (2016). Polityka historyczna a edukacja szkolna we współczesnej Polsce. Kilka uwag do dyskusji [History Policy and School Education in Contemporary Poland: Some Comments for Discussion]. *Historia i pamięć. Studia i szkice historiograficzne*, (pp. 179–190). Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego. DOI: 10.18778/8088-412-0.11 [in Polish].

Stobiecki, R. (2022). Towards the Ideal Vision of the Twentieth-Century Polish History. On the Post-2015 Polish Politics of History. *Public History in Poland*, (pp. 30–49). New York–London: Routledge. [in English].

Stobiecki, R. (2023). W stronę idealnej wizji dziejów Polski w XX wieku. Polska polityka historyczna po 2015 roku [Towards the Ideal Vision of the Twentieth-Century Polish History. On the Post-2015 Polish Politics of History]. *Dzieje Najnowsze*, 4, 153–182. DOI: 10.12775/DN.2023.4.08 [in Polish].

Stryiek, T., & Sklokin, V. (Eds.). (2022). *Istorychni kultury Polshchi ta Ukrainy. Pro dzherela neporozuminnia mizh susidamy* [Historical cultures of Poland and Ukraine. On the sources of misunderstanding between neighbors]. Varshava. [in Ukrainian].

Szeligowska, D. (2016). *Polish Patriotism after 1989: Concepts, Debates, Identities*. Oxford–New York: Peter Lang. [in English].

Traba, R. (2009). *Przeszłość w teraźniejszości. Polskie spory o historię na początku XXI wieku* [The Past in the Present: Polish Disputes over History at the Beginning of the 21st Century]. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie. [in Polish].

Tryma, K. A., Stadnichenko, O. I., & Salnikova, N. V. (2023). Euroscepticism and the politics of memory: the case of Czech Republic, Poland and Germany. *Rehionalni studii – Regional studios*, 32, 30–36. DOI: 10.32782/2663-6170/2023.32.4 [in English].

Witek, P. (2011). Doktryna polityki historycznej, czyli “dramat” w kilku aktach [The Doctrine of Historical Politics, or a “Drama” in Several Acts]. *Historyka*, XLI, 83–108. [in Polish].

Witek, P., & Mazur, M. (2022). Polityka historyczna [History policy]. *Wprowadzenie do metodologii historii*, (pp. 406–416). Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN. [in Polish].

Wójcik, A. (2016). Polityka historyczna jako forma budowy wizerunku Polski na arenie międzynarodowej [History policy as a form of building Poland’s image on the international stage]. *Świat Idei i Polityki*, 15, 438–451. [in Polish].

Wojdon, J. (Ed.). (2018). *Historia w przestrzeni publicznej* [History in public space]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN. [in Polish].

Wojdon, J. (Ed.). (2022). *Public History in Poland*. New York–London: Routledge. [in English].

The article was received October 22, 2025.

Article recommended for publishing 30/05/2026.

This article is available under the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license