

THE RUSSIAN WAR AGAINST UKRAINE AS A CHALLENGE TO WORLD CULTURAL HERITAGE

Khakhula L. I.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding cultural heritage is inextricably linked to the phenomenon of national identity. The latter has most frequently become an object of destruction during wars and military conflicts. In human history, planned and systematic destruction of cultural artifacts has been present since ancient times. However, in the 20th century, anti-democratic totalitarian systems (Third Reich, USSR) not only continued this destructive practice, but also demonstrated that “heritage is a basic tool for attacking the foundations of a cultural group’s culture and identity. Its systematic, conscious and deliberate destruction is part of the strategies of war”¹. The creation of mechanisms to protect cultural heritage from destruction only partially regulated the situation but did not break the destructive practice in world history. The war initiated by Russia against Ukraine in 2014, and especially the full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, besides its existential nature, gained all the characteristics of a struggle against the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Ukrainian people. In the first weeks of the 2022 war, the world witnessed footage of ruthless destruction of Ukrainian architectural and artistic monuments – temples, theaters, museums, palaces. Having concluded that “Russia’s love for culture and spirituality is a myth”, global intellectual, cultural-educational, and political communities consolidated to save cultural heritage and search for effective mechanisms to prevent large-scale destruction of artworks and monuments.

Russian treatment of museum institutions and artifacts in occupied territories involuntarily evoked historical parallels with the beginning of World War II. After occupying Eastern Galicia in September 1939, Soviet party functionaries began organizational measures regarding museums in Lviv, Ternopil, and Stanislaviv, which resulted in the liquidation of private, religious, national (Polish, Ukrainian, Armenian, Jewish) museums and collections, mass relocation of monuments, loss

¹ Munilla G. Destruction of cultural heritage is part of the strategies of war. *Universitat Oberta de Catalunya*. 2022. URL: <https://www.uoc.edu/en/news/2022/018-gloria-munilla>.

of museum documentation and subordination of newly created museum institutions to ideological goals. Documented in the individual, collective, and cultural memory of Ukrainians, Poles, Jews, Lithuanians Russian-Soviet crimes against museology became the motivational foundation for contemporary Polish-Ukrainian and Lithuanian-Ukrainian solidarity in protecting cultural values of Ukrainian museums from the devastating Russian threat. Scientific understanding of cultural heritage rescue mechanisms built on historical parallels will contribute to forming a comprehensive strategy for organizational and discursive integration of Ukrainian spiritual and cultural heritage into the European civilizational and cultural space.

1. Cultural Heritage and War

According to UNESCO's 2009 definition, cultural heritage is understood as "artifacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites, museums that have a diversity of values including symbolic, historic, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific and social significance"². In the classification proposed by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, museums are classified as intangible cultural heritage and are defined as "a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment"³.

The problem of protecting cultural heritage from targeted looting or destruction became particularly acute during and after World War II. Hitler's approach to art as "a realization not of individual talents or of the inspiration of a lone genius, but of the collective expression of the Volk, channeled through the souls of individual creators" led to the transformation of the Nazi ideological principle of art looting into an organized government policy⁴. Special bureaucratic departments were set up to systematically confiscate works of art in Nazi-occupied territories. In the autumn of 1939, Hermann Göring appointed the Austrian

² *The 2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics*. Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2009 P. 25. URL: https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/unesco-framework-for-cultural-statistics-2009-en_0.pdf.

³ *Ibid.* P. 89.

⁴ Rothfeld A. Nazi Looted Art. *National Archives*. 2002. Vol. 34. No. 2. URL: <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2002/summer/nazi-looted-art-1#f26>.

art historian Kajetan Mühlmann as Commissioner for the Protection of Works of Art in the Occupied Eastern Territories. In early July 1941 K. Mühlmann confiscated for Hitler's needs 24 sheets of drawings by the German artist Albrecht Dürer's from the pre-war Ossolineum collection in Lviv. The Nazis transported 226 exhibits from the Lviv Art Gallery to the Third Reich. In August 1944, the Communist writer Kuzma Pelekhatyi wrote: "The German barbarians, who invaded Lviv like bandits, began to take charge – they closed all the libraries and began to destroy valuable achievements of human culture. The collection of Dürer's original drawings, considered to be the seventh largest in the world, was immediately taken to Germany. Then came the systematic looting – the removal of the most valuable books, manuscripts, incunabula and rare engravings. 5,113 manuscripts, 3,139 incunabula and 2,346 rare engravings were taken. All the manuscripts of the great Polish writers Mickiewicz and Słowacki, all the unique books from the 16th century, rare books from the former royal libraries disappeared"⁵.

The protection of cultural heritage became one of the priorities of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), established in November 1945. In 1954, the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict was adopted. It established legal standards to ensure effective protection of cultural heritage on a global scale. Representatives of 56 signatory states to the Convention – the first international agreement devoted exclusively to the protection of cultural heritage – affirmed that "Any damage to cultural property, irrespective of the people it belongs to, is a damage to the cultural heritage of all humanity, because every people contributes to the world's culture"⁶. The Convention participants undertook, among other obligations, the following commitments: to develop initiatives which guarantee respect for cultural property situated on their own territory or on the territory of other States Parties (involves refraining from using such property in any manner that might expose it to destruction or deterioration in the event of armed conflict, and by refraining from all acts of hostility directed against it); to establish special units within the military forces respon-

⁵ Пелехатий К. Німці – вороги української культури. Гітлерівці пограбували бібліотеки Львова. *Вільна Україна*. 1944. № 43. 25 серпня. С. 3.

⁶ 1954 Convention. *UNESCO*. URL: <https://www.unesco.org/en/heritage-armed-conflicts/convention-and-protocols/1954-convention>.

sible for the protection of cultural property; to set sanctions for breaches of the Convention⁷.

In 1996, four non-governmental organisations representing different aspects of cultural heritage – libraries, archives, museums, monuments and historic sites – formed the International Committee of the Blue Shield. Representatives of the International Council on Archives (ICA), the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) adopted as their logo the protective emblem of the 1954 Hague Convention – a shield with blue and white fields. Its objectives include: to encourage the safeguarding and respect for cultural property, especially by promoting risk preparedness; to train experts at national and regional level to prevent, control and recover from disasters; to act in an advisory capacity for the protection; raising public awareness about damage to cultural heritage; working to make decision makers and professional staff aware of the need to develop prevention preparedness, response and recovery measures⁸. While fulfilling educational and often mediatory functions, the International Committee of the Blue Shield does not have direct influence on preventing the destruction of cultural heritage due to military actions. Nevertheless, the developments of the organisation's representatives in terms of organisational measures for the preservation of cultural objects and values prove to be valuable during the immediate course of military operations⁹.

At the beginning of the 21st century, threats to the world's cultural heritage from wars and military conflicts remain relevant and sometimes inevitable. German researcher and politician Sabine von Schor-



CONVENTION FOR THE
PROTECTION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY
IN THE EVENT OF ARMED CONFLICT

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Shimmon R. The International Committee of the Blue Shield 1998–2004: an overview. *Alexandria*. 2004. № 16 (3). P. 133–141.

⁹ Евакуація колекцій культурної спадщини: інструкції з організації робіт у разі надзвичайної ситуації. *The Blue Shield*. URL: https://theblueshield.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Blue-Shield-Emergency-evacuation_UKRAINE-Copy.pdf.

lemer emphasised: “Another special feature related to armed conflicts in recent times concerns the increase of heritage attacks. Deliberate and systematic acts against cultural heritage have spread to a considerable extent since the wanton demolition of the Buddha statues in Afghanistan in March 2001. In addition to the inherent risks for cultural monuments and archaeological sites by fighting in combat zones, instability in conflict-ridden host countries is conducive for looting and illegal trafficking of movable cultural objects”¹⁰. At the same time, the nature of wars and conflicts has also changed: today, participants in many military conflicts are non-state actors who have no obligations under such international law as the 1954 Hague Convention¹¹. Russia’s war against Ukrainian and world cultural heritage has shown that even states that grossly violate their obligations under the 1954 Hague Convention can go unpunished in the short term.

2. Historical Parallels: Eastern Galicia, 1939–1941

September 1939 marked a period when museum institutions in Lviv, Ternopil, Staniyslaviv and other cities were faced with the urgent need to protect cultural artifacts from destruction. With the start of the bombing of Lviv, for example, the most valuable artifacts were moved to museum basements or packed in crates on the ground floors of institutions. Although no museum building was seriously damaged, hundreds of windows were shattered¹².

After September 22, 1939, when Lviv came under Red Army control and city authorities called (in Ukrainian, Polish, and Russian languages) for no resistance actions, the City Archive was sealed, and weapons were confiscated from all museums that had armories. Shortly after this requisition, Soviet authorities ordered the unpacking of boxes containing artifacts and demanded the museum exhibition halls be restored to their pre-war appearance within several days. On September 30, 1939, Lviv city administration sent recommendations for “im-

¹⁰ Von Schorlemer S. Cultural Heritage Protection as a Security Issue in the 21st Century: Recent Developments. *Indonesian Journal of International Law*. 2018. Vol. 16. No. 1. P. 34–35. DOI: 10.17304/ijil.vol16.1.742.

¹¹ Winchester N. Targeting culture: the destruction of cultural heritage in conflict. *UK Parliament: House of Lords Library*. 2022. URL: <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/targeting-culture-the-destruction-of-cultural-heritage-in-conflict/>.

¹² Matwijów M. Sprawozdanie “Archiwa, biblioteki i muzea lwowskie” z 1940 r. *Rocznik Lwowski*. 1997–1998. S. 7–30.

mediate opening for public use of all museums, collections, the Raclawice Panorama, and the Diorama of Lviv”¹³.

In October 1939, a government delegation led by Nikita Khrushchev visited Lviv’s museums. In the halls of Lviv Historical Museum dedicated to the Polish–Ukrainian War of 1918–1919 and the battles for Lviv in November 1918, the delegates showed little interest, merely noting: “that was your war with them”. However, they carefully searched for artifacts from the Polish–Bolshevik War, disbelieving that the “Red Army glorious campaign hadn’t reached Lviv”¹⁴.

In the cultural sphere, the Bolsheviks implemented so-called museum consolidation – reducing the number of institutions by combining those with similar collections and exhibitions. In November 1939, the Commission for Protection of Cultural Monuments was established under the Temporary Administration in Lviv Region, headed by Soviet writer from Kyiv Petro Panch¹⁵. The Commission included Ivan Krypiakievych, Mykhailo Vozniak, Volodymyr Doroshenko, Yaroslav Pasternak, Ilarion Svientsitsky, Ivan Karpynets, Mykhailo Drahan, and Volodymyr Pankiv¹⁶. Commission inspectors prepared a register of institutions – museums, libraries, and archives. The Commission proposed dividing Lviv’s museums into two groups – artistic (proposed to be subordinated to the Administration for Arts Affairs under the Council of People’s Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR) and scientific (to fall under the jurisdiction of the People’s Commissariat of Education of the Ukrainian SSR)¹⁷.

On May 8, 1940, the Council of People’s Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR adopted a Regulation “On the Organization of

¹³ Розпорядження львівського міського управління про негайне відновлення роботи та відкриття для публічного користування музеїв, архівів та бібліотек м. Львова, Львів, 30 вересня 1939 р. *Львівська національна наукова бібліотека України імені В. Стефаника: переміщення і втрати фондів*. Т. 1 (1939–1945): зб. документів і матеріалів. Львів, 2010. С. 4.

¹⁴ Matwijów M. Sprawozdanie “Archiwa, biblioteki i muzea lwowskie” z 1940 r. *Rocznik Lwowski*. 1997–1998. S. 7–30.

¹⁵ Смірнов Ю. Діяльність Комісії з охорони пам’яток культури у Львові в 1939–1940 роках. *Галицька брама*. 2009. № 7/9. С. 30.

¹⁶ Дорошенко В. Бібліотеки й архіви на Зах. Україні за большевицького панування. *Краківські вісті*. 1941. № 250. 9 листопада. URL: <https://zbruc.eu/node/58713>

¹⁷ Протокол № 2 засідання Комісії з охорони пам’яток культури при Тимчасовому управлінні у Львівській області. 26 листопада 1939, Львів. *Львівська національна наукова бібліотека України імені В. Стефаника: переміщення і втрати фондів*. Т. 1 (1939–1945): зб. документів і матеріалів. Львів, 2010. С. 7.

Museums and Libraries in Western Ukraine”. The document provided for the creation of the following museum institutions in Galician regions. In Lviv Oblast – State Regional Historical Museum in Lviv; State Regional Ethnographic Museum in Lviv; State Regional Art Gallery with branches: Sobieski Castle in Pidhirtsi village, Olesko district and Roslavytsky’s panorama in Lviv; State Regional Museum of Applied Arts in Lviv; Ivan Franko State Regional Memorial Literary Museum; State City Ethnographic Museum in Yavoriv; State City Local History Museum in Sokal¹⁸. In Drohobych Oblast, the State Regional Historical Museum in Drohobych and city historical-ethnographic museums in Przemyśl, Sambir, Truskavets, and Stryi were established. Based on the pre-war Podillia Museum in Ternopil, Soviet authorities founded the State Regional Historical-Local History Museum, and in Kremenets – the State City Historical Museum¹⁹. In Stanyslaviv Oblast, they established the State Regional Historical Museum in Stanyslaviv and state city local history museums in Kolomyia and Rohatyn²⁰.

The Soviet authorities tolerated the introduction of Ukrainian language courses in the Museum of Applied Arts, City Gallery, and Historical Museum. Newly formed museums were headed by Ukrainians: Ilarion Svientsitsky, the former derector of the pre-war National Museum in Lviv, became director of the State Regional Art Gallery, while the State Regional Historical Museum was headed by archaeologist Yaroslav Pasternak, the former director of the Shevchenko Scientific Society Museum. However, as a Ukrainian, Pasternak received no privileges in his interactions with Soviet administration, as “not being a party member, he was forced to stand for hours fruitlessly in the corridors of Soviet officials”²¹.

The Soviet ideological approach left no place for museum institutions named after their founders, who were considered as “bourgeois enemies of the people”. The Museum of the Lubomirski Princes, the Dzieduszycki Museum, Collection of Bolesław Orzechowicz, Leon

¹⁸ Постанова Раднаркому УРСР «Про організацію музеїв і бібліотек у західних областях України. 8 травня 1940 р. *Культурне життя в Україні. Західні землі: документи і матеріали*. Т.1. 1939–1953 / упор. Т. Галайчак та ін. Київ: Наукова думка, 1995. С. 94.

¹⁹ Там само. С. 95.

²⁰ Там само. С. 97.

²¹ Matwijów M. Sprawozdanie “Archiwa, biblioteki i muzea lwowskie” z 1940 r.

Piniński's painting collection, and Baron Adolf Branicki's collection disappeared from the city museum space²². The National Museum in Lviv became a department of the Lviv Art Gallery. The Museum of the Lubomirski Princes, as a structural part of the pre-war Ossolineum National Institute, was transformed into the Lviv Branch of the Academy of Sciences Library of the Ukrainian SSR. The Ossolineum lost about 19,000 museum items between September 22, 1939, and June 30, 1941. Almost 4,000 of these were pre-war deposits and nationalized private collections. These artifacts were divided among 4 newly established museums²³.

Soviet functionaries decided to relocate the rich museum collections of the Shevchenko Scientific Society to state museums. They proposed to "close entirely, as nationalistic" the Society's Museum of Military-Historical Monuments and transfer its items to the Central Archival Administration of the The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD)²⁴. A similar liquidation plan was prepared for the Jewish Community Museum. In 1939, the Commission for Protection of Cultural Monuments approved the appointment of collector Maksymilian Goldstein as head of the Jewish Community Museum. However, after the institution was merged with the Museum of Applied Arts, Goldstein received only a staff position. He managed to protect his private collection of Jewish art from Soviet nationalization. In the first weeks of German occupation, the collector decided to deposit his monuments with the State Regional Museum of Applied Arts²⁵.

Among museum institutions, the concept of the Raclawice Panorama remained practically unchanged, as its subject matter (the rebellion of the oppressed against the tsar) fit perfectly into the Bolshevik historical concept. For Soviet functionaries: "Normal functioning of Lviv's

²² Маньковська Р. Деформаційні процеси в музейництві: західноукраїнські області в 1939–1950-х рр. *Краєзнавство*. 2017. № 3–4. С. 246.

²³ Matwijów M. *Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich w latach 1939–1946*. Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum, 2003.

²⁴ Доповідна записка представників ЦК КП(б)У секретарю ЦК КП(б)У М. О. Бурмистенкові про реорганізацію музеїв західних областей України. *Культурне життя в Україні. Західні землі: документи і матеріали*. Т. 1. 1939–1953 / упор. Т. Галайчак та ін. Київ: Наукова думка, 1995. С. 61.

²⁵ Чмелик Р. Юдаїка у львівському Музеї етнографії та художнього промислу: історія, колекції та сучасний стан. *Євреї та слов'яни. Українсько-єврейська зустріч: культурні виміри*. / за ред. В. Московича та А. Рода. Київ: Дух і Літера, 2017. Т. 25. С. 248–260.

cultural institutions was needed to advertise their successes in reviving spheres of life that had declined due to the “second imperialist war”. Newspapers wrote about this with special emphasis, widely commenting on the fact that during “noble” Poland’s period, museum entrance was paid, while they, the creators of proletarian culture, abolished all fees. Very soon, actually within a few weeks, a special decree introduced fees for museum entrance. Even Red Army men had to pay”²⁶. While dedicating considerable attention and financial resources to maintaining museums, the Bolsheviks pursued purely propaganda-ideological goals: “Like literature and theater, the Bolshevik authorities viewed museums only as a means of agitation”²⁷. Therefore, Lviv Museum of Hygiene was adapted to demonstrate “the materialist worldview of the Bolsheviks”, while the Dzieduszycki Museum, lacking political context in its exhibition, didn’t generate particular interest. Its archaeological collection was transferred to the State Regional Historical Museum in Lviv, and the ethnographic collection to the State Regional Ethnographic Museum in Lviv.

The end of nearly two years of Bolshevik cultural-museum policy in Eastern Galicia was “the subordination of museum and private collections to the state, their nationalization, closure of many or renaming, re-distribution, and dispersal of collections”²⁸. As Lviv researcher Roman Dziuban noted, “endless transfers of collections without proper documentation and in improper conditions inevitably led to destruction or looting. Some collections during this time completely or partially lost their catalogs. The destruction (partial or complete) of catalogs of many private and public libraries, archives, and museum collections makes it practically impossible to fully reconstruct these collections and to ascertain their losses”²⁹.

3. Contemporary Polish-Lithuanian-Ukrainian Solidarity

The ideologeme of the “russian world” (“ruskiy mir”) involves appropriation of the history and culture of neighboring peoples, as well

²⁶ Matwijów M. Sprawozdanie “Archiwa, biblioteki i muzea lwowskie” z 1940 r.

²⁷ *Західня Україна під більшевиками: IX. 1939–VI. 1941* / ред. М. Рудницька. Нью-Йорк: Наукове товариство ім. Шевченка в Америці, 1958. С. 246.

²⁸ Маньковська Р. Деформаційні процеси в музейництві: західноукраїнські області в 1939–1950-х рр. С. 239–255.

²⁹ Дзюбан Р. *Культурні цінності установ Львова у 1939–1953-х рр.: переміщення і втрати*. Львів, 2020. С. 107.

as destroying spiritual and material artifacts that do not fit into the Russian historical canon³⁰. Ukrainian culture and historical memory became a field for deploying Russian propaganda campaigns that preceded armed aggression against a sovereign neighboring state³¹. In the first weeks of the full-scale invasion in 2022, the destructive nature of the Russian regime towards Ukrainian cultural institutions – museums – was revealed. Its characteristics included the destruction/damage of hundreds of monuments and cultural infrastructure objects, as well as the illegal removal of cultural values (paintings, Scythian gold, manuscripts) from occupied territories to Crimea and Russia itself.

On February 26, a Russian missile destroyed the Ivankiv Local History Museum in Kyiv Oblast, where paintings by the famous Ukrainian artist Mariia Prymachenko were housed (fortunately, the canvases were saved)³². In March 2022, a Russian air strike damaged the Arkhyp Kuindzhi Art Museum in Mariupol; the invader took A. Kuindzhi's works "Red Sunset", "Autumn" and "Elbrus" Ivan Aivazovs-ky's "Near the Caucasian Shores", a posthumous portrait of Kuindzhi by his student Hryhorii Kalmykov, a bust of Kuindzhi by sculptor V. Beklemishev, ancient icons, and books³³.

The occupation of Kherson resulted in the removal of almost all artworks from the Oleksiy Shovkunenko Kherson Regional Art Museum: thousands of paintings, icons, sculptures, and decorative ceramics³⁴. From the Kherson Local History Museum, the occupants stole over 28,000 museum artifacts (ancient coins, weapons, icons, furniture, paintings, archaeological collection). Overall, after the full-scale invasion, Russians with the complicity of local collaborators,

³⁰ Хахула Л., Литвин М. Путінська Росія: початок краху шовіністичних комплексів та імперських амбіцій. *Росія–Україна: зради, союзи, війни* / відп. ред. М. Литвин. Львів: «Астон», 2022. С. 785–793.

³¹ Ільницький В., Старка В., Галів М. Російська пропаганда як елемент підготовки до збройної агресії проти України. *Український історичний журнал*. 2022. Ч. 5. С. 43–55.

³² Сорока А., Атанесян Г. Культурні чистки. Як Росія руйнує музеї й вивозить мистецтво з України. *BBC News Україна*. 2022. 19 травня. URL: <https://www.bbc.-com/ukrainian/features-61472927>.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ «Я особисто виносив експонати». Учасники пограбування херсонських музеїв зізналися в злочині. *Українська правда. YouTube*. 2025. 23 січня. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Nm4TibYkdM>.

looted on occupied Ukrainian territories over 40 museums, taking approximately half a million cultural artifacts³⁵.

The Russians also caused harm to the V. V. Tarnovsky Chernihiv Historical Museum, the Hryhorii Skovoroda Literary Memorial Museum in Kharkiv Oblast, the Kupyansk Local Lore Museum, the Mariupol Local Lore Museum, the Odesa National Art Museum and the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Arts. On the night of January 1, 2024, a Russian “Shahed” drone destroyed the Museum of General-Chorunzhyi of the UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) Roman Shukhevych (a branch of the Lviv Historical Museum) – an important site of memory for Ukrainian national identity. It was here on March 5, 1950, that the UPA Commander-in-Chief Roman Shukhovych confronted a Soviet Ministry of State Security unit in his last battle³⁶.

As of October 2022, the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine recorded damages to 40 Ukrainian museums. After almost a year and a half of war, by the end of 2023, the Ministry had documented damage to 1,907 cultural infrastructure objects, including 106 museums and galleries in Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Kyiv, Mykolaiv, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia regions, and Kyiv³⁷.

In September 2022, during the annual European Cultural Heritage Days, the European Parliament stated in a special briefing: “Since this cultural cleansing began in Crimea in 2014, the Russian army has damaged or destroyed hundreds of cultural, artistic, scientific, educational and religious institutions, sites and works. Artists, and cultural and heritage professionals are unable to pursue their occupations. The Russian aggressors have looted artefacts from public and private collections, added them to Russian collections and declared them part of Russian history and culture”³⁸. In European scientific, educational, and

³⁵ Бурдига І. Де шукати зниклі під час російської окупації колекції музеїв. *Deutsche Welle*. 2024. 15 березня. URL: <https://www.dw.com/uk/kartini-zlocinu-de-sukati-znikli-pid-cas-rosijskoi-okupacii-muzejni-kolekcii/a-68515057>.

³⁶ Музей генерал-хорунжого УПА Романа Шухевича. URL: <https://www.lhm.lviv.ua/location/shuhevych.html>.

³⁷ 1907 об'єктів культурної інфраструктури зазнали пошкоджень чи руйнувань через російську агресію. *Урядовий портал*. 2024. 10 січня. URL: <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/1907-objektiv-kulturnoi-infrastruktury-zaznaly-posh-kodzhen-chy-ruinuvan-cherez-rosiisku-ahresiuii>.

³⁸ European Cultural Heritage Days: Russia's cultural war against Ukraine. *European Parliament*. 2022. September 16. URL: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2022\)733650](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2022)733650).

cultural environments, it was asserted that the Russian army “has targeted cultural assets, with the destruction of libraries and educational institutions “part of a deliberate campaign of cultural cleansing” aimed at erasing culture”³⁹.

On February 16, 2022, art historian Konstantin Akinsha wrote in a “Wall Street Journal” column about the need to save Ukrainian cultural monuments from the barbaric invasion of the northern neighbor: “In a full-scale Russian invasion, practically all significant museum collections would be in danger”⁴⁰. Then, Ukrainian museum management made decisions about undisclosed relocation of monuments to safe places (for example, Odesa and Kyiv museums transferred exhibits to colleagues from western regions), preparation of “red lists” of exhibits for evacuation etc. According to Bloomberg agency, the non-public campaign to preventively save Ukrainian museum, archive, gallery, and library artifacts became “one of the largest in the present century, reminding a similar campaign in Europe during World War II”⁴¹.

From the first days of the war, international organizations, institutions, and non-governmental structures became involved in organizational and financial support for Ukrainian museums and cultural institutions. Their efforts were directed at protecting and preserving cultural values, cataloging them and forming reports on destruction and potential restoration of damaged monuments. Another area of activity for international institutions was the preparation of recommendation materials for preserving artifacts in critical war conditions⁴².

Special solidarity was expressed by the spiritual heirs of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth – the Poles and the Lithuanians. Their

³⁹ Winchester N. Targeting culture: the destruction of cultural heritage in conflict.

⁴⁰ Akinsha K. Ukraine’s Museums in the Crosshairs of a Russian invasion. *Wall Street Journal*. 2022. 16 February. URL: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraines-museums-in-the-crosshairs-russia-invasion-kyiv-odessa-vasily-kandinsky-ilya-repin-golden-pector-scythian-gold-11645038773>.

⁴¹ Зруйнована культурна спадщина України. Міністерство внутрішніх справ України. 2022. URL: <https://mvs.gov.ua/news/zruinovana-kultuma-spadshhina-ukrayini#:~:text=%D0%A3%20%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%80%D1%96%D0%BE%D0%B4%20%D0%B7%2024%20%D0%BB%D1%8E%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%BE,682%2C%20%D1%89%D0%BE%D0%B9%D0%BD%D0%BE%20%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%8F%D0%B2%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%85%20%D0%B2%80%93%2070>.

⁴² Тандон А. *Спадщина у небезпеці. Екстрена евакуація культурних цінностей*. Київ: Національний музей Революції Гідності, 2022.

support in saving monuments from the Russian threat was motivated not only by historical memory of Russia's imperial nature that destroys foreign national symbols, but also by the need to preserve their own "places of memory" – material evidence of centuries-old Ukrainian–Polish–Lithuanian culture.

Polish institutions immediately engaged in supporting their Ukrainian colleagues. In the first weeks of the war, the most necessary equipment (fire protection, mechanical damage protection, moisture protection, packaging materials) was provided, and later, institutional initiatives and strategic projects emerged. At the beginning of March 2022, Polish museum professionals established the Committee for Ukrainian Museums (Komitet Pomocy Muzeom Ukrainy), which included 55 members from such Polish museums as the Royal Castle in Warsaw, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, the National Ossolinski Institute in Wrocław, the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, the Royal Łazienki Museum in Warsaw, the National Museum of Ethnography in Warsaw, the Emigration Museum in Gdynia⁴³. In the opinion of the initiative's founders, "Russia's aggression against Ukraine leads to countless crimes, suffering, and casualties. Under such circumstances, the most important are the people – the civilian population suffering from barbaric shelling, the soldiers fighting against the aggressor. Today, Ukrainians are dying defending their homeland. However, every war also causes irreparable damage to national heritage and culture"⁴⁴. The Committee for Ukrainian Museums provided assistance to over 40 Ukrainian institutions in the protection of collections, documentation, digitization, and inventory of museum items. In mid-2022, another platform for supporting Ukrainian museums emerged, later organizationally formalized as the "OBMIN" Foundation, which integrated 117 Ukrainian museums from Kyiv, Lviv, Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Chyhyryn, Donetsk, Ivano-Frankivsk, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Poltava, Zaporizhzhia, and others. In the short-term perspective, the Foundation provides "targeting support and survival aid for Ukrainian museums and their employees". In the medium and long term,

⁴³ Крамар Р. Польські музейники допомагають музеям в Україні. *Culture.pl*. 2022. 8 червня. URL: <https://culture.pl/ua/stattia/polski-muzeinyky-dopomaha%D1%96ut-muzeiam-v-ukraini>.

⁴⁴ Ossolineum w Komitecie Pomocy Muzeom Ukrainy. *Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich*. URL: <https://www.ossolineum.pl/ossolineum-w-komitecie-pomocy-muzeom-ukrainy/>.

“OBMIN” aims at “organizing exchange between museums on shared topics and providing offers on how to further professionalize their work, e.g. via digitalizing their art objects; promoting the knowledge and understanding of Ukrainian art and culture outside of Ukraine as part of the common European cultural heritage”⁴⁵.

Important aid initiatives have emerged among Polish, Lithuanian and Latvian cultural institutions. For example, the Royal Castle in Warsaw has taken in 38 of the most valuable works from the Khanenko National Museum’s collection (including one of the last portraits of King Stanisław August Poniatowski). Ukrainian museum professionals also received support from their colleagues at the Lithuanian National Museum of Art, the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania in Vilnius, the Rundāle Palace Museum in Latvia, the the Wawel Royal Castle in Krakow, the National Museum in Poznań, the Depot (Zajezdnia) History Center in Wrocław, and the Malbork Castle Museum. In the format of long-term art exhibitions, Polish and Lithuanian partners took Ukrainian museum artifacts for display and storage. For example, since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the Borys Voznytskyi Lviv National Art Gallery has presented 16 exhibitions in the Baltic countries, Poland, and Italy as part of museum art diplomacy⁴⁶. The collection of baroque works by the sculptor Johann Georg Pinsel was exhibited in Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. From October 2023 to February 2024, the exhibition “The Genius of Lviv. Lviv as an Art Centre and its Art Collections”, which featured paintings and sculptures from the Lviv Historical Museum and the Borys Voznytskyi Lviv National Art Gallery, was showing at the Royal Castle in Warsaw. Lviv as an Artistic Center and Its Art Collections⁴⁷. In 2023, the Lviv Historical Museum deposited the diorama “Battle of Grunwald” to the the Malbork Castle Museum for a period of 2 years. The battalion painting, created in 1910 by artists Zygmunt Rozwadowski and Tadeusz Popiel, became the highlight of

⁴⁵ About OBMIN. URL: <https://obmin.eu/index.php>.

⁴⁶ Шведя О. Готувались ще за місяць до вторгнення. Як Львівська галерея мистецтв зберігає експонати під час війни. *Суспільне. Львів*. 2024. 18 травня. URL: <https://suspilne.media/lviv/748125-gotuvalis-se-za-misac-do-vtorgnenna-ak-lvivska-galerea-mistectv-zberigae-ekspوناتi-pid-cas-vijni/>.

⁴⁷ *Geniusz Lwowa. Lwów jako ośrodek sztuki i jego kolekcje artystyczne. Katalog wystawy* / pod red. nauk. P. Mrozowskiego. Warszawa: Zamek Królewski w Warszawie, 2023.

the thematic exhibition “Nigra crux mala crux. The black and white legend of the Teutonic Order”⁴⁸.

The Russia’s war against Ukraine has shifted the focus of museum and cultural cooperation between the Ukrainians and the Poles: “If previously projects of a cultural, educational, and informative nature were created, now the emphasis is on the preservation of collections”⁴⁹. The active displaying of Ukrainian museums’ treasures abroad had two dimensions – cultural-diplomatic and security: “It is impossible to preserve cultural heritage during a terrible, ruthless war by simply packing it in wooden boxes. Preserving heritage during war means showing it. Sometimes it means transporting it to show it to an international audience and say: “Look, we are just like you. We grew up on the same art, on the same Dürer and Rembrandt, we share the same values, we have much more in common with you than you think”⁵⁰.

CONCLUSIONS

On March 26, 1999, the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict was adopted, which supplemented the Convention in terms of protecting cultural property, particularly its protection in occupied territories: “A Party in occupation of the whole or part of the territory of another Party shall prohibit and prevent in relation to the occupied territory: any illegal export, other removal or transfer of ownership of cultural property; any archaeological excavation, save where this is strictly required to safeguard, record or preserve cultural property; any alteration to, or change of use of, cultural property which is intended to conceal or destroy cultural, historical or scientific evidence”⁵¹. By ratifying the Second Protocol in 2020, Ukraine created prerequisites for

⁴⁸ Дослідницьке інтерв’ю з доктором історичних наук Романом Чмеликом, Львів, 18 жовтня 2023 р. *Архів Любомира Хахули*.

⁴⁹ Там само.

⁵⁰ Платонова А. Час назвати речі своїми іменами. Інтерв’ю з директоркою Національного музею ім. Ханенків Юлією Вагановою. *Журнал про сучасну культуру Korydor*. 2024. 19 червня. URL: <https://korydor.in.ua/ua/bez-rubriki/chas-nazvaty-rechi-svoimy-imenamy.html>.

⁵¹ Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. *UNESCO*. URL: <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/second-protocol-hague-convention-1954-protection-cultural-property-event-armed-conflict>.

introducing effective instruments for preserving cultural heritage within the state, including in territories temporarily occupied by Russia.

Subsequently, by the end of 2024, a specialized unit for protecting cultural heritage was established within the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Its tasks and competencies will include coordination and creation of an effective network within civil-military cooperation, whose specialists will be engaged in documenting damaged objects in areas inaccessible to civilians, monitoring compliance with international humanitarian law regarding the non-use of cultural heritage for military purposes⁵². However, rapid response to cases of vandalism or looting of cultural objects should not remain solely an internal Ukrainian problem. As Glòria Munilla, professor at the Open University of Catalonia, rightly noted, “it’s important to increase the capacity for an immediate and flexible response by the institutions involved to safeguard this heritage. The initiatives by the UN and UNESCO have proven to be ineffective due to the broad definition of what historical-archaeological heritage means in many countries, where the leaders consider their destruction to be a minor problem compared to the political, social and economic tensions that affect them”⁵³.

ABSTRACT

The text highlights the humanitarian challenges for world cultural heritage in Ukraine (museums, libraries, archives etc) caused by the recent Russian aggression. Attention is focused on the global regulatory framework for the preservation of sites of historical memory during wars and military conflicts of the XXth and XXIth. A comparative analysis of the criminal policies of the USSR/Russia at the beginning of the World War II and in the context of the Russian–Ukrainian war of 2014–2025 is given. It is argued that the anti-civilisational nature of Russian crimes against monuments of history, culture and art consisted in the destruction of museums in the Kharkiv, Kherson, Kyiv and Lviv regions, the looting of valuable historical and artistic artefacts and the discursive appropriation of Ukraine’s ancient history. The author reveals European solidarity with Ukrainian cultural institutions through the assistance of scientific, educational and

⁵² Проблема нищення і збереження культурної спадщини під час війни. Яким був для нас 2024 рік? *Радіо Культура*. 2024. 26 грудня. URL: <https://ukr.radio/news.-html?newsID=106174>.

⁵³ Munilla G. Destruction of cultural heritage is part of the strategies of war.

cultural institutions of Poland and the Baltic states, aimed at the rescue, long-term preservation and popularisation of Ukrainian and world art monuments. The research summarises the phenomenon of “Ukrainian museum diplomacy”, which consisted of long-term exhibition activities of Lviv and Kyiv cultural institutions in museums and galleries in Italy, Poland, Latvia and Lithuania.

АНОТАЦІЯ

У статті висвітлюються гуманітарні виклики для світової культурної спадщини в Україні (музеїв, бібліотек, архівів), спричинені останньою російською агресією. Увагу зосереджено на глобальній нормативно-правовій базі збереження місць історичної пам'яті під час воєн і військових конфліктів XX і XXI століть. Здійснено порівняльний аналіз кримінальної політики СРСР/Росії на початку Другої світової війни та в контексті російсько-української війни 2014–2025 років. Аргументовано, що антицивілізацій-ний характер російських злочинів проти пам'яток історії, культури та мистецтва полягав у знищенні музеїв Харківської, Херсонської, Київської та Львівської областей, вивезенні цінних історичних та мистецьких артефактів, дискурсивному привласненні давньої історії України. Автор розкриває європейську солідарність з українськими культурними інституціями через допомогу наукових, освітніх і культурних установ Польщі та країн Балтії, спрямовану на порятунок, довготривале збереження та популяризацію пам'яток українського та світового мистецтва. У статті узагальнено феномен «української музейної дипломатії», який полягав у довготривалій виставковій діяльності львівських та київських музеїв у музеях і галереях Італії, Польщі, Латвії та Литви.

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Information about the author:

Khakhula L. I.

PhD (History), Senior Researcher Fellow
Associate Professor at the Department of International Information
Lviv Polytechnic National University;

Senior Researcher Fellow of the
Department “Center for Ukrainian-Polish Relations Research”
Ivan Krypiakevych Institute of Ukrainian Studies of NAS of Ukraine
(l.khakhula@gmail.com)

Інформація про автора:

Хахула Л. І.

кандидат історичних наук, старший науковий співробітник
Доцент кафедри міжнародної інформації
НУ «Львівська політехніка»;
старший науковий співробітник відділу «Центр дослідження
українсько-польських відносин»,
Інститут українознавства імені Івана Крип'якевича НАН України
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9954-9962>
(l.khakhula@gmail.com)