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THE FACE OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE WAR DEVASTATION AND RECONSTRUCTION CONCEPTS*

Summary. Every war brings losses not only on the economic level but also on the social level. Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022, made this clear once again. A country that had already experienced many starts in historical times also found itself in the heat of battle this time. The military conflict led to a significant migration of the Ukrainian population. As a result of bombing and shelling by the Russian army, many buildings of various purposes were destroyed – not only those classified as military infrastructure or those under state administration, schools, hospitals, residential buildings, businesses but also places of worship – orthodox churches. Although the war is still ongoing, gradual reconstruction is already taking place in the liberated territories and revitalization programs are being developed. Many ideas related to reconstruction are borrowed from the experience of Poland and its reconstruction after the devastation of World War II.

The article aims, among other things, to draw the attention of the world public to the war drama unfolding in Ukraine and to show the destruction from the first phase of the war as documented by a military photographer from the 28th Brigade of the Knights of the First Winter Campaign (Armed Forces of Ukraine) – Serhii Belinskyi.

Keywords: war, Ukraine, destruction, reconstruction, monuments

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1. Devastation

Historical experience shows that not only people, but also architectural objects suffer from wars. Since the time of Kievan Rus, Ukraine has repeatedly experienced brutal destruction, which led to the fact that most of the monuments have not been preserved to the present day in their original form, as the destroyed buildings were repeatedly rebuilt without due care for the restoration of their historical appearance. No less tragic was the fate of Ukrainian architectural monuments in the 20th century, when they suffered first from the effects of World War I, then the struggle against religion in the 1930s and 1940s, and then during World War II.¹ Destruction of shrines also continued in the post-war years.² The decades that have passed since the end of World War II have erased the horrors that wars always bring from memory. The generation remembering that time has passed away, and new generations have been born, who heard about the war only from their parents or grandparents or knew the conflicts only from literature and film. Destroyed cities were gradually rebuilt, the standard of living of their inhabitants improved; architectural monuments were painstakingly restored.

European societies have forgotten the consequences that wars always bring with them. Therefore, Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, came as a real shock to Europeans and the rest of the world.

Every war brings losses not only on the economic level but also on the social level. The conflict in Ukraine has made this clear once again. The fighting has led to internal and external migration of the population. Many buildings of various purposes – not only those classified as military infrastructure or subordinate to the state administration, schools, hospitals, residential buildings, and businesses

¹ *З історії української реставрації. Додаток до щорічника, „Архітектурна спадщина України”*, ред. В.І. Тимофійенка, Київ 1996, с. 276 and *Консервація і реставрація пам'яток архітектури. Методичний посібник Під*, ред. М.І. Орленка, Київ–Львів 1996.

² O. SLEPTSOV, Y. IVASHKO, A. DMYTRENKO, M. KRUPA, *The contemporary churches in the natural environment: modernization of landscape traditions*, „Landscape architecture and Art. Scientific Journal of Latvia University of Agriculture” 2021, vol. 19, no. 19, pp. 121–130; D. CHERNY-SHEV, Y. IVASHKO, D. KUŚNIERZ-KRUPA, A. DMYTRENKO, *Role of natural landscape in perception of Ukrainian sacral architecture monuments*, „Landscape architecture and Art. Scientific Journal of Latvia University of Agriculture” 2020, vol. 17, no. 17, pp. 13–21.

but also places of worship – Orthodox churches – were destroyed, mainly as a result of bombing and shelling by the Russian army (Fig. 1, 2). It is clear that for the Russians, every object they shoot at takes on the character of a military facility, with no respect for international law and the rights of civilians. The loss of material monuments and cultural property is particularly severe. Russia acting in this way violates a number of international agreements, including the provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention,³ 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage,⁴ Convention on Measures to Prohibit and Prevent the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, as well as Provisions Relating to the Protection of Documentary Heritage.⁵

The Ukrainian Ministry of Culture and Information Policy maintains a registry, documenting the scale of losses incurred. The registry is created through an interactive platform. In the first months of the war, destruction included:

- The former site of the Vasyl Tarnovsky Chernihiv Historical Museum,
- Dnepropetrovsk House of Organ and Chamber Music,
- The Cathedral of the Dormition of the Mother of God,
- Kharkiv State Scientific Library of Vladimir Korolenko.⁶

The world recognizes the intentionality of the Russian war machine when it comes to the loss – often irreversible – of tangible cultural monuments in Ukraine. UNESCO has confirmed (as of July 4, 2022) the destruction

³ *Convention for the protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention, The Hague, 14 May 1954*, https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/1954_Convention_EN_2020.pdf (access: 11 XII 2022).

⁴ *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Adopted by the General Conference at its seventeenth session, Paris, 16 november 1972*, <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf> (access: 11 XII 2022).

⁵ *The 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, adopted by the General Conference at its sixteenth session, Paris, 14 November 1970*, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000133378> (access: 11 XII 2022).

⁶ *Зруйнована культурна спадщина України*, <https://culturecrimes.mkp.gov.ua/>; *Зафіксовані воєнні злочини*, <https://mkp.notion.site/7be52d2803994651a23a220a8ed85f1c?v=49c5b44ce6c64534a719bab610474c6f> (access: 2 XII 2022).

of 157 objects, of which 71 are religious sites, 12 museums, 30 monuments, 21 buildings intended for cultural activities, 16 monuments and 7 libraries.⁷ United Nations agencies assessing the situation, may be guided by the provisions of Security Council Resolution 2347 of 2017, according to which the plunder or destruction of tangible cultural property under certain circumstances may be treated as a war crime.⁸

Sacred buildings

The war has directly affected the religious sphere, dividing both clergy and believers into three groups: those defending Ukraine (Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Greek Catholic and Catholic Churches, Protestant Churches, and other denominations); those who want the destruction of Ukraine as such (Russian Orthodox Church); and those who seek to secretly maintain relations with the Russian Orthodox Church (Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate). Regardless of this division, all of these churches and religious associations are struggling with the effects of aggression. Without making a choice, Russians are destroying religious buildings, including churches of the Moscow Patriarchate. An example is the attack on the Sviatohirsk Lavra in the Donetsk region, which has always advocated close ties with Russia, has not condemned the aggression, and since 2014 has given shelter to pro-Russian Cossacks and other supporters of the „Russian world”.

The destruction of religious buildings also has a certain symbolic dimension. The surviving icons of the Mother of God and the Savior on the walls of a completely destroyed village church can be seen as proof of the inevitability of the victory of light over darkness and good over evil.

⁷ M. KOZUBAL, *UNESCO: Niszczenie zabytków celem Rosjan*, <https://www.rp.pl/konflikty-zbrojne/art36712491-unesco-niszczenie-zabytkow-celem-rosjan> (access: 11 XII 2022).

⁸ *United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2347 (2017)*, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2347.pdf (access: 11 XII 2022).



Fig. 1. Ruins of an Orthodox church in the Mykolaiv region (photo: Serhii Belinskyi)



Fig. 2. Ruins of an Orthodox church in the Mykolaiv region (photo: Serhii Belinskyi)

Civil infrastructure

The conflict affected Ukraine's civilian population from its earliest days. An important aspect that made life difficult during the war was the loss of residential buildings. As an example of how Ukrainian society functioned under difficult conditions, one can cite the conditions in which the residents of Luch (Луч)⁹ These people lost their homes and were forced to live in shelters with no access to daylight. They were only allowed to take the essentials with them – a table, chairs and beds with blankets (Fig. 3, 4). This war forced everyone to look at material things in a different way, in the course of it many people lost their lives or health, thousands of others in an instant were deprived of their homes – property acquired over the years. In this connection, it is important to note that the Russian aggression completely changed the concept of comfort: at one pole were exquisite pre-war properties with interiors that retained all the evidence of former comforts, at the other were dark shelters with dim light bulbs, jagged walls and minimal conditions for survival.



Fig. 3. A resident of Luch village in the shelter (photo: Serhii Belinskyi)

⁹ District of the Mykolaiv in Mykolaiv region.



Fig. 4. Shelter where the inhabitants of Luch village are sheltered (photo: Serhii Belinskyi)

Other civilian buildings, such as rural farm buildings, should not be forgotten. Like much of Ukraine's built environment, they too were destroyed, with consequences for both people and animals. It is no coincidence that photos of Ukrainian soldiers with rescued cats and dogs appeared in the media. One such animal – a dog named „Hatiko” – was taken in by the 28th Knights of Winter Campaign Brigade¹⁰ (Fig. 5). The photographs also show herds of cows, abandoned chickens, turkeys and many other animals that lost their homes during the conflict.

A vivid example of sensitivity to the plight of animals in wartime was the Ukrainian army's remarkable operation called „Horseshoe” to rescue abandoned ponies from a destroyed farm (Fig. 6). As a result, three baby ponies were successfully transported to the zoo in Mykolaiv.

¹⁰ The name refers to Hachikō, a dog that waited uninterruptedly (from 1925 to 1935) at the railway station in Tokyo's Shibuya district for its owner, who had not returned from work due to a sudden death.



Fig. 5. Dog „Hatiko” at the front with the Knights of Winter Campaign 28th Separate Mechanized Brigade of Armed Forces of Ukraine (photo: Serhii Belinskyi)



Fig. 6. Operation named „Horseshoe”. Soldiers of the Knights of Winter Campaign 28th Separate Mechanized Brigade of Armed Forces of Ukraine, rescue ponies abandoned by their owners (photo: Serhii Belinskyi)



Fig. 7. Position on the beach in Odesa (photo: Serhii Belinskyi)

The army's approach to animals is one aspect of warfare that is not talked about enough, but nevertheless exists and is very important. War is looked at primarily through the human dimension, and it is often this dimension that becomes the most understandable for its perception in other countries, as it is an indicator of a society's humanity. According to one of the authors of this study, Serhii Belinskyi, the concern of soldiers for animals during a brutal war also has another meaning – psychological: „When friends die in war, we have no right to cry, so all our emotions are transferred to these animals. They are like an outlet, like saviors of our hardened souls, and only over their joy can we secretly weep and tell the whole world that the only thing we feel most sorry for is these unfortunate animals”. Thus, the humane treatment of abandoned animals is becoming a way for Ukrainian soldiers to maintain their human qualities – even in the face of an aggressor (Fig. 7).

2. Reconstruction

The war is still going on, but gradual reconstruction is already underway in the liberated territories and revitalization programs are being developed. One element of these programs is the reconstruction of architectural monuments.¹¹ The nature of the destruction and the amount of it testified to the fact that both public, civil and sacred buildings are difficult to secure against military aggression. The scale of destruction, forced to lean on the development of comprehensive solutions in the form of reconstruction and restoration programs – both partially and completely destroyed architectural monuments and objects of modern architecture (Fig. 8–12).

Unlike modern architecture objects, the conservation of architectural monuments has its own specificity. Its priority is to maximize the preservation of the authentic appearance or reconstruction with maximum conformity to the original appearance. That is why certified specialists-conservators are engaged in such work. Ukrainians benefit during this work from the experience gained after World War II. And here the key event was the establishment of the „Budmonument” enterprise in 1946. Its activities are considered the beginning of the Ukrainian conservation school, which eventually formed the powerful Ukrainian special research and conservation project and construction company „Ukrrestavratsiya”.¹² This comprehensive approach has successfully rebuilt a significant number of valuable monuments across Ukraine after the war.

Analyzing the current situation in Ukraine, it should be noted that some of the objects will have to be rebuilt to a significant extent, some – completely „from scratch”. And here we come to a very problematic issue – reconstruction

¹¹ Reconstruction processes are regulated by relevant legal acts. *Vide: Державні будівельні норми України. Реставраційні, консерваційні та ремонтні роботи на пам'ятках культурної спадщини ДБН В.3.2-1-2004*, Держбуд України: Київ 2005, с. 121; *Закон України „Про охорону культурної спадщини”*. *Правова охорона культурної спадщини: Зб. Документів*, Харків 2006, с. 130–132; *Закон України „Про затвердження Загальнодержавної програми збереження та використання об'єктів культурної спадщини на 2004–2010 рр.”*, від 20 квітня 2004 р., № 1692. IV; *Інструкція про порядок обліку, реєстрації, утримання і реставрації пам'ятників архітектури, що перебувають під державною охороною. Законодавство про пам'ятки історії та культури*, Київ 1970, с. 335–373; *Міжнародні засади охорони нерухокої культурної спадщини*, упоряд. І. КАСЯНЕНКО, Київ 2008, с. 176.

¹² *Довідка про кількість пам'яток археології, історії, монументального мистецтва, архітектури і містобудування України станом на 1 січня 2002 року*, „Культура і життя” 2002, № 31, с. 3.

„from scratch” is not controversial if we take into account objects that are not architectural monuments, but doubts arise when it is necessary to reconstruct a completely or significantly damaged historic object. In Ukraine, the decision on whether to rebuild a given site can be influenced by the experience of other countries, including Poland. An example of this is the reconstruction of the Old Town in Warsaw after World War II, which legitimized the practice of rebuilding destroyed buildings since their loss was considered a loss on a national scale. The destruction of the Old Town was extensive; the Old Town’s main church, St. John’s Cathedral, was almost completely destroyed, as were many residential buildings.¹³

Jan Zachwatowicz – head of the Capital Reconstruction Bureau and General Conservator of Antiquities since 1945 – had a particularly great contribution to the field of Warsaw reconstruction. His professionalism, perseverance and enthusiasm overcame the principles of traditional conservation and proved the possibility of new solutions related to the preservation of historical memory in historical buildings. The solutions applied were in some ways close to, but not identical to, pre-war conservation principles.¹⁴ Appreciation for the skill of the Old Town restorers was the inclusion of its entire complex, rebuilt from the ruins, on the World Heritage List. The work of restoring Warsaw continued with the reconstruction of the Royal Castle in Warsaw in 1971–1981.

Reconstruction was officially recognized in 1972 in the UNESCO Recommendations on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage at the National Level as an area for the protection of monuments at the international regulatory level,¹⁵ and the later Dresden Declaration of 1982¹⁶ indicated comprehensive rules for the reconstruction of World War II-era objects, according to which monuments may be restored, on the basis of sufficient documentation, in their original form as an exception.

¹³ *Pamięć miasta. Architektura Warszawy i jej projektanci. Bazylika archikatedralna św. Jana Chrzciciela w Warszawie. SARP*, http://www.beta.architektura.warszawa.sarp.org.pl/obiekt/bazylika_archikatedralna_sw._jana_chrzyciciela_w_warszawie,2188 (access: 17 VI 2022).

¹⁴ J. ZACHWATOWICZ, *O polskiej szkole konserwacji i rekonstrukcji zabytków*, „Ochrona Zabytków” 1981, nr 34, s. 8.

¹⁵ *Vide: Convention Concerning the Protection...*

¹⁶ *Declaration of Dresden on the „Reconstruction of Monuments Destroyed by War”* (1982), <https://www.icomos.org/en/charters-and-texts/179-articles-en-francais/ressources/charters-and-standards/184-the-declaration-of-dresden> (access: 11 XII 2022).



Fig. 8. A house at Kyiv (116a Zhylianska Street) destroyed by a drone hit on October 17, 2022 (photo: Yulia Ivashko)



Fig. 9. Destroyed residential buildings in Borodianka (photo: Yulia Ivashko)



Fig. 10. Destroyed residential buildings in Borodianka (photo: Yulia Ivashko)



Fig. 11. Destroyed home in Mykolaiv region (photo: Serhii Belinskyi)



Fig. 12. Lesson of „Russian world”. A bombed school in Mykolaiv region (photo: Serhii Belinskyi)



Fig. 13. The monument to Princess Olga, St. Andrew the Apostle and Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Kyiv shielded from bullets (photo: Yulia Ivashko)



Fig. 14. Exhibition of burnt Russian equipment on Mykhailivska Square in Kyiv (photo: Yulia Ivashko)



Fig. 15. Defense of Odesa. Monument of Armand Emmanuel du Plessis, duke of Richelieu covered with sandbags (photo: Serhii Belinskyi)

In Ukraine, these recommendations were introduced by the Decree of the President of Ukraine „On Measures for the Restoration of Outstanding Historical and Cultural Monuments”¹⁷ and the Decree of January 27, 1999. „On Priority Actions for the Restoration of the Complex of the Monastery of St. Michael the Archangel under the Golden Dome in Kiev and the Church of the Ascension of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra” which allowed for the restoration of such outstanding sites as the Church of the Dormition of the Mother of God Pyrohoshchia in Kiev’s Padoł district,¹⁸ the monument to Princess Olga, St. Andrew the Apostle and Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Kiev, St. Vladimir’s Cathedral in Chersonese Taurida (Fig. 13, 14).

In the modern conditions of Ukraine, the experience of restoration and revitalization of historic buildings in Lodz is also useful. This Ukrainian and Polish experience accumulated during joint research¹⁹ can be successfully used in restoring Ukrainian cities after the war with Russia.

¹⁷ Указ Президента України „Про заходи щодо відтворення видатних пам’яток історії та культури” (12/1995).

¹⁸ Указ Президента України „Про Положення про Комісію з питань відтворення видатних пам’яток історії та культури” (27 I 1999).

¹⁹ M. ORLENKO, Y. IVASHKO, J. KOBYLARCZYK, D. KUŚNIERZ-KRUPA, *The influence of ideology on the preservation, restoration and reconstruction of temples in the urban structure of post-totalitarian*

Modern times have proven that the tragedy of war can also become a source of creativity – literary, artistic, photographic. Even under fire, there is a desire to make artistic photos and films, to write down one's own reflections on the meaning of life, which the military mostly do not have time for. According to Serhii Belinskyi: „of course, it is a pity that the thoughts that appear on the front lines are not recorded, because they disappear”. Given the simultaneous appearance of artworks, photographic exhibitions about the war, it can be predicted that after the end of the war struggle, this process will intensify, as it did after the end of World War II, when generations emerged who had not seen the war with their own eyes and wanted to learn more about it.

At the same time, according to the authors, it is not necessary to wait for the victory of Ukraine to start creating, because the most vivid, tragic emotions, impressions, memories are born precisely during the war. Later, the best directors in the world will shoot heroic action films, in which every scene will be thought out and directed, all the lines of the characters will be written to make the strongest possible impression on the audience, poems and monumental paintings will be created. But what is being born right now, under fire – this very play, is and will be the truest, ornament-free picture of war without unnecessary pathos.

The uniqueness of this study lies in the scientific and creative collaboration of an international team of scholars – art historians and architects, as well as military officers who are directly on the front line, in the South and defending Ukraine. This led to a rather unconventional design and content of the article, which determined the photographs from the war zone.

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OBLICZA WOJNY W UKRAINIE ZNISZCZENIA I KONCEPCJE ODBUDOWY

Streszczenie. Każda wojna niesie ze sobą straty nie tylko w sferze ekonomicznej, ale także społecznej. Agresja Rosji na Ukrainę, która rozpoczęła się 24 lutego 2022 r., uświadomiła to po raz kolejny. Kraj, który miał za sobą już wiele start, jakich doświadczał w czasach historycznych, tym razem także znalazł się w ogniu walki. Konflikt militarny doprowadził do znacznej migracji ludności ukraińskiej. Zniszczeniu w wyniku bombardowań i ostrzału prowadzonego przez rosyjską armię uległo wiele budynków o różnym przeznaczeniu – nie tylko tych zaliczanych do infrastruktury wojskowej czy podległych administracji państwowej, szkoły, szpitale, budynki mieszkalne, przedsiębiorstwa, ale także miejsca kultu – cerkwie. Chociaż wojna wciąż trwa, jednak na wyzwolonych terytoriach jest już realizowana stopniowa odbudowa oraz opracowywane są programy rewitalizacji. Wiele pomysłów związanych z odbudową jest zapożyczonych z doświadczeń Polski i jej odbudowy po zniszczeniach II wojny światowej.

Artykuł ma na celu m.in. zwrócenie uwagi światowej opinii publicznej na rozgrywający się w Ukrainie dramat wojenny oraz pokazanie zniszczeń z pierwszej fazy wojny dokumentowanych przez Serhija Belinskiego, wojskowego fotografa z 28 Brygady Rycerzy Zimowego Pochodu (Siły Zbrojne Ukrainy).

Słowa kluczowe: wojna, Ukraina, zniszczenia, odbudowa, zabytki

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ОБЛИЧЧЯ ВІЙНИ В УКРАЇНІ РУЙНУВАННЯ І КОНЦЕПЦІЇ ВІДБУДОВИ

Анотація. Кожна війна несе з собою збитки не тільки на економічному рівні, але й на соціальному. Агресія Росії проти України, яка розпочалася 24 лютого 2022 р., знову це підтвердила. Країна, яка вже пережила багато страхіття в минулому, цього разу також опинилася у вогні бойових дій. Військовий конфлікт призвів до значної міграції українського населення. Багато будівель різного призначення – не тільки ті, що належать до військової інфраструктури чи державної адміністрації, школи, лікарні, житлові будинки, підприємства, але й місця культу – церкви – зазнали руйнувань в результаті бомбардування та обстрілу, здійснених російською армією. Хоча війна триває, на звільнених територіях вже починається поступове відновлення і розробка програм ревіталізації. Багато ідей, пов'язаних з відновленням, запозичені з досвіду Польщі та її відбудови після руйнувань Другої світової війни.

Стаття спрямована, зокрема, на привернення уваги світової громадськості до трагедії війни на Україні та показу знищень, задокументованих Сергієм Белінським, військовим фотографом 28-ої Бригади Військових Зимових Похідників (Збройні Сили України).

Ключові слова: війна, Україна, знищення, відновлення, пам'ятки

