



Making an Ethnic Group: Lemko-Rusyns and the Minority Question in the Second Polish Republic

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journals.sagepub.com/home/ehq**Agnieszka Pasieka** 

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Abstract

Drawing on ethnographic and archival materials, this paper examines the ethnic politics of the Second Polish Republic by taking into account the experiences of the Lemko-Rusyn population, a minority East Slavic group inhabiting the peripheral mountainous area in southern Poland. It illustrates the changing policies towards Lemko-Rusyns and discusses the different responses of the local population to these policies, demonstrating the inadequacy of categories imposed from above as well as manifold motivations behind people's political views, choices of national identification, and religious conversions. In so doing, the article has three main objectives. First, in line with recent critical scholarship on nationalism in the Second Polish Republic, it attempts to problematize the – frequently exaggerated – difference between 'federalational' and 'assimilationist' conceptions, exposing the discriminatory nature of interwar minority politics, as experienced locally. Second, moving beyond the interwar period, the article presents the long-term consequences of the interwar policies and the events of the Second World War, including a series of ethnic cleansings that took place in the aftermath of the war as well as present-day discourses on and policies towards ethnic and national minorities. And third, in discussing state actors' agency in the domain of minority policies, it calls for a more thorough recognition of the agency of the people who are the target of those policies. The article considers all these issues by presenting a history of a Lemko-Rusyn locality and its inhabitants, as recorded in school records, state reports, and oral histories.

Keywords

ethnic groups, minority policies, nationalism, Ruthenians, Second Polish Republic

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On a late afternoon, towards the end of the Second World War, a group of soldiers paid visits to several homesteads in Leśna,¹ a rural locality in the Lower Beskid² that was inhabited by a predominantly Rusyn population. After the withdrawal of the German army in 1944, the area became a site of competition between communist authorities – first Soviet, and then Polish – and Ukrainian partisans who fought against both Soviets and Poles in their effort to establish an independent state. The soldiers who entered Petro's house demanding food wore Polish uniforms and spoke impeccable Polish. The villagers who had gathered at the house heard their accents and recognized them as Ukrainians hoping to identify locals who were cooperating with the new Polish authorities. The people of Leśna therefore remained silent when soldiers questioned them about the presence of Ukrainian partisans in the area, claiming that they were simple people who had nothing to do with 'politics'. Only Petro's mother, unaware of what was happening, exclaimed, 'Of course they are here! Tonight they are coming to the Greek Catholic priest to get a butchered bull', after which one of the newcomers furiously grabbed her by the arm and forced her outside. One of the villagers, Leśna's cobbler, hastily followed them. 'Don't you see this woman is insane and doesn't know what she is saying? Don't kill her for her foolishness', he implored, adding: 'You remember, I made shoes for you when you were working here'. For the cobbler remembered well the man in uniform, who had occupied a high position in the local administration under the Nazi occupation and had gone into hiding after the arrival of Soviet troops and establishment of the Polish administration.³ One of these arguments turned out to be convincing; Petro's mother's life was spared.⁴

Ukrainian partisans, Greek Catholic clergy, Rusyn peasants, and Polish soldiers are all important protagonists in the wider story about how ethnic identities in this region are negotiated, constructed, and politicized. Most remarkable, perhaps, is the fact that this story of ethnic identities is likely to be told in a completely different manner depending on the speaker. In Lemko-Rusyns' accounts of the events and ideologies that transformed their area and shaped local imaginaries, one finds 'nationally conscious' and 'nationally indifferent' people, 'good' and 'bad' Ukrainians, 'false' and 'honest' Poles, and 'politically engaged' and 'peace-promoting' religious leaders. In the view of one of Petro's neighbours, for example, the 'Ukrainian partisans' hiding in Leśna's forests were in fact 'dressed-up Poles', while according to another, 'they must have been Russian'. Oral histories of this kind are further complicated by the contents of historical and historiographical materials, which are often written and discussed from a national (i.e., Polish, Ukrainian, or Lemko-Rusyn) perspective in order to correspond with certain views on *who Lemko-Rusyns are*: i.e. 'forgotten Poles', 'unrealized Ukrainians', or the 'Lemko nation'.

¹ Names of localities and people have been anonymized.

² Lower Beskid is a mountain range in the Outer Eastern Carpathians.

³ The Nazi German occupant initially favoured the Ukrainians (over both Poles and Rusyns). They were encouraged to join the ranks of the militia and the army. See the section below 'Lemkos into Ukrainians'.

⁴ Fieldnotes, 7 April 2009.

In this article, I use the case study of Leśna and neighbouring localities to discuss the changing relational dynamics between ‘Lemko-Rusyns’, ‘Ukrainians’, and ‘Poles’ in the context of the Polish state’s ethnic politics, mainly in the period of the Second Polish Republic (1918–1939). My aim is to show how different state and non-state actors participated in the processes of ‘making’ Lemko-Rusyns and to demonstrate various means through which Lemko-Rusyn identity was politicized. In order to accomplish this, the article highlights two aspects of these processes of identity formation. First, I discuss how policies towards Rusyns changed over time, uncovering local residents’ responses and demonstrating the multiple motivations behind their political views, choices of national identification (including national indifference⁵ or anational identification⁶), and religious conversions. The aim here is not only to state the existence of a ‘multiplicity of voices’, but to emphasize that the local population – the target of state policies – also shaped those dynamics, using labels and categories that fitted their own agendas. For this purpose, the article puts into dialogue archival material and accounts gathered during ethnographic fieldwork in 2008 and 2009.⁷ Second, I call for a more thorough focus on the Second Polish Republic’s ethnic policies, and especially their long-term implications – from ethnic cleansings that took place in the aftermath of World War II, to the present-day treatment of ethnic and national minorities.⁸ In line with recent critical scholarship on nationalism during the Second Polish Republic,⁹ I problematize the frequently exaggerated differences between ‘federational’ and ‘assimilationist’ conceptions, or between ‘state’ and ‘national’ assimilation,¹⁰ a distinction which is partly responsible for present-day idealized images of the interwar era. In other words, the article relates a ‘multivocal’ account of the micro-level developments to a broader picture of ethnic politics in Poland. In so doing, this article also

⁵ Tara Zhara, ‘Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis’, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 69 (2010), 93–119.

⁶ Agnieszka Halemba, ‘Not Looking through a National Lens? Rusyn – Transcarpathian as an anational self-identification in Contemporary Ukraine’, in Yvonne Kleinmann and Achim Rabus, eds, *Aleksander Brückner revisited. Debatten um Polen und Polentum in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Göttingen 2015), 197–220.

⁷ I conducted 14 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Leśna and neighboring localities. The primary methods used during fieldwork were: participant observation, informal conversations, and regular interviews (over a 100), as well as the production of visual materials (photos and pictures) together with school children. I have also conducted archival research in Krakow, Warsaw, and Grybow. Detailed information on my methodology can be found in: Agnieszka Pasięka, *Hierarchy and Pluralism* (New York 2015).

⁸ Contemporary Polish legislation distinguishes national and ethnic minorities. See: <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU20050170141> (last accessed: 23 Jan. 2020). For details and a critique of the legislation, see: Pasięka, *Hierarchy and Pluralism*, 228.

⁹ See, e.g., Paul Brykczyński, ‘Reconsidering Piłsudskiite Nationalism’, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 41 (2014), 771–90; Kathryn Ciancia, ‘Borderland Modernity: Poles, Jews, and Urban Spaces in Interwar Eastern Poland’, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 89 (2017), 531–61.

¹⁰ Promoted, respectively, by Józef Piłsudski and Roman Dmowski. Piłsudski was the Chief of State (1918–1922), the head of the army and the authoritarian leader since the *coup d’état* in 1926. Dmowski was a statesman and co-founder of National Democrats. See: Andrzej Chojnowski, *Koncepcje polityki narodowościowej rządów Polskich w latach 1921–1939* (Wrocław 1979).

contributes to a broader historiography on minority politics and national indifference in interwar Europe.¹¹

Given the fact that hardly any issue or term used in this article can be characterized as ‘non-contestable’, I would like, at the outset, to clarify what this article does *not* aim to achieve. First and foremost, it is not my goal to claim that ‘Lemko-Rusyns’ should be considered as either a Ukrainian minority or a subgroup of Carpatho-Rusyns (‘the fourth Rus’¹²). Nor do I provide a detailed overview of scholarly positions on this question, namely of the often uncompromising stands between those scholars who regard Lemko-Rusyns as ‘Ukrainians’ and those who ardently oppose this view.¹³ Rather, my intention is to shed light on the origins and politicization of the debates on Lemko-Rusyn identities and to emphasize the central, but seldom acknowledged, role of Polish politicians, activists, and scholars in (re)shaping them.¹⁴ The opposite is also true: it is rarely recognized that the Lemko issue was of great significance for the Second Republic, constituting one of the key topics taken up by the Committee for National Affairs.¹⁵ Therefore, my decision to use the term ‘Lemko-Rusyns’ does not preclude the fact that Lemko-Rusyns might have identified – at times, and under different circumstances – (also) as Ukrainians. It also results from the fact that I focus on developments in historical Galicia, where the ethnonym ‘Lemko’ became widespread if contested.¹⁶

Lemko-Rusyns: Socio-Historical Context

The setting of the Lemko-Rusyn story is an over 100-km-long territory north of the Carpathian Mountains, enclosed by the Poprad river in the west and the Ośława river

¹¹ For an example of works connecting an analysis of ‘micro’ histories and ‘macro’ level policies, see, e.g.: Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge, MA 2005); Alison Carol, *The Return of Alsace to France, 1918–1939* (Oxford 2018); James Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole* (Ann Arbor, MI 2008); Olga Linkiewicz, *Lokalność i nacjonalizm. Społeczności wiejskie w Galicji Wschodniej w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym* (Kraków 2018); Kathryn Ciancia, *On Civilization’s Edge: A Polish Borderland in the Interwar World* (Oxford 2020); Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* (Ithaca, NY 2011).

¹² Paul R. Magocsi, ‘The Fourth Rus’: A New Reality in a New Europe’, *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, Vols 35/36 (2011), 167–78.

¹³ These debates move far beyond scholarly circles. They occur among Lemko-Rusyns in Poland, Ukraine, and the diaspora in the US and Canada.

¹⁴ Ukrainian historians and activists consistently underline Polish manipulatory policies, promoting the idea of Lemko-Rusyns as distinct from Ukrainians. My view on the matter results from the reading of – often uncritical – Polish scholarly publications on the situation of Lemkos and Ukrainians in Poland. Cf. Bogdan Horbal, ‘The Rusynophile Movement among the Galician Lemkos’, in Richard D. Custer, ed., *Rusyn-American Almanac of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society* (Pittsburgh, PA 2005), 87–8.

¹⁵ J. A. Stepek, ‘Akcja polska na Łemkowszczyźnie’, *Libertas*, Vol. 1 (1986), 39.

¹⁶ For an overview of different Rusyn groups and the description of Carpathian Rus’, see: Paul Robert Magocsi, *With Their Backs to the Mountains. A History of Carpathian Rus’ and Carpatho-Rusyns* (Budapest 2015), 2–7; Paul Robert Magocsi, *The People from Nowhere* (Uzhhorod 2006), 25. Cf. Paul Robert Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe* (Seattle, WA 1993).

in the east.¹⁷ This area lies in present-day Poland, but previously constituted part of western Galicia. Before a series of ethnic cleansings in the mid-1940s, around 100,000 people inhabited 170 villages. The cause of the decline in population is a subject of debate:¹⁸ whereas Polish scholars tend to emphasize migratory origins, Ukrainian researchers advance the thesis of Lemko autochtonism, seeing them as the most western Ukrainian ethnographic group.¹⁹ Even more consequential are the debates about the group's ethnonym. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the local population was considered to be exclusively 'Ruthenian' or 'Rusyn'; following Paul Robert Magocsi, I will use the two ethnonyms interchangeably.²⁰

Rusyns differed from ethnic Poles, who inhabited the lowlands in the north,²¹ in language, material and symbolic culture, economy,²² and religion. They were Christianized in the Byzantine rite and maintained Orthodoxy for a relatively long time. The administrative structure of the Uniate Church (introduced by the Union of Brest and renamed the 'Greek Catholic Church' in the eighteenth century) was not fully developed until the middle of the nineteenth century.²³ The peripheral position of the region and the close network of parish churches made for a traditional, village-oriented life. The region had always been relatively poor and marginalized, whether under Polish (before 1772 and after 1918) or Habsburg (1772–1918) rule. In the late nineteenth century, the area's underdevelopment fostered migration, including both seasonal travel to the South and overseas journeys.

The rising tide of migration contributed in the second half of the nineteenth century to the growth of nationalist movements. The two most important were the 'Russophile' orientation, which highlighted the connection of the Rusyns with Russia, and the Ukrainian one, which promoted the idea of Rusyns as members of the Ukrainian nation.²⁴ Nationalist movements dovetailed with religious identification – Orthodox, in the case of the Russophile movement, and Greek Catholic in the case of Ukrainian-leaning Rusyns.

¹⁷ As the following discussion demonstrates, the borders of the territory were contested.

¹⁸ Scholars put forward either the so-called Vlach theory, foregrounding the influences of the Ruthenian settlers, or attribute it to the tribe of the White Croats. For more details, see: Helena Duć-Fajfer, 'Łemkowie w Polsce' *Magury '91* (Warsaw 1992), 11–31; Paul Robert Magocsi, *Galicia: A Historical Survey and Bibliographic Guide* (Toronto 1990), 48–9.

¹⁹ See, e.g., Ivan Krasows'kyi, 'Problem autochtonizmu Rusinów w Beskidzie Niskim', in Jerzy Czajkowski, ed., *Łemkowie w historii i kulturze Karpat*, vol. 1 (Sanok 2005), 381–6; Ivan Krasovskyj, *Dijaczi nauky i kultury Lemkowszczyzny* (Toronto 2000); Jurij Makar, 'Kwestia Bojków, Hucułów, Łemków, Rusinów wobec problemu jedności narodu ukraińskiego', in Stefan Dudra et al., eds, *Łemkowie, Bojkowie, Rusini. Historia, współczesność, kultura materialna i duchowa* (Legnica 2007), 71–8; Volodymyr Kubijovyc, 'Lemkos', in Danylo Husar Struk, ed., *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, vol. 3 (Toronto 1993).

²⁰ Paul Robert Magocsi, 'Rusyn', in P. Magocsi and I. Pop, eds, *Encyclopedia of Rusyn history and Culture* (Toronto 2002), 407, 412.

²¹ South of the Carpathians, Rusyn distinguished themselves from Slovakian and Hungarian population.

²² Rusyns had a mix of pastures and agriculture, in contrast to the predominantly agricultural Polish areas.

²³ Bogdan Horbal, *Lemko Studies – A Handbook* (New York 2010), 239, 244–5.

²⁴ The third orientation, called 'Old Rus', was less significant and often hard to distinguish from the 'Russophile' one. For a comprehensive analysis, see: Jarosław Moklak, *Łemkowszczyzna w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Kraków 1997).

The Habsburg rulers supported the Greek Catholic Church and the Ukrainian national movement, seeing them as counterweights to both Russian and Polish influences. The Russophile orientation was in turn supported by migrants from America, who had there converted to Orthodoxy.²⁵ These conflicts intensified in the twentieth century. During the First World War, the Austrian military imprisoned about 2000 Rusyn activists, who were accused of taking a pro-Russian stance during the war. The memory of suffering in the Talerhof camp supposedly motivated many people to embrace Orthodoxy and reinforced their anti-Ukrainian views, since pro-Ukrainian activists were accused of denouncing Russophiles to the Austrians.²⁶

After the war, local activists made several attempts to establish their own state, which went as far as sending a Rusyn delegation to the 1919 Peace Conference in Paris. These efforts revealed how war experiences heightened divisions between the two factions.²⁷ In the eastern part of the Lemko-Rusyn territory, a pro-Ukrainian Rusyn republic was established, and in the western part the Lemko Rusyn National Republic was founded; its leaders first promoting ties to Russia and then Czechoslovakia. Even though the republics are usually referred to as a sign of Rusyn national aspirations, economic factors were also influential.²⁸ Eventually, the republics were abolished by the Polish authorities, but the boundary between the two republics continued to mark the influence of Ukrainian and anti-Ukrainian orientations in the interwar period.²⁹

Rusyns into Lemkos: Ethnic Politics of the 1920s and Early 1930s

The Second Polish Republic was obliged to guarantee a series of rights to minorities by the League of Nations,³⁰ and those rights were confirmed in the constitution in 1921.³¹ Yet, everyday practice seldom accorded with legal obligations. Equal in theory, non-ethnic Poles experienced persistent discrimination in various domains. Education in minority languages was gradually limited, and eventually offered only in private

²⁵ See: Joel Brady, 'Transnational Conversions: Greek Catholic Migrants and Russky Orthodox Conversion Movements in Austria-Hungary, Russia, and the Americas (1890–1914)' (PhD Thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 2012).

²⁶ Talerhof became the symbol of Lemko martyrdom and it continues to be referred to as such in Lemko publications. For an overview of this literature, see: Horbal, *Lemko Studies*, 391–2.

²⁷ People who fought on the Russian front often denied having Russian ancestry, while those coming back from Austrian camps had their pro-Russian views reinforced (Moklak, *Lemkowszczyzna w Drugiej*, 36).

²⁸ The newly established border between Poland and Czechoslovakia became an obstacle for intensive social, cultural, and economic exchanges that were used to characterize Rusyn settlements on both sides of the Carpathians and entailed seasonal labour migrations and religious fairs, as well as the possibility of selling crops and cattle as far away as in Vienna markets (Andrzej Kwilecki, *Fragmety najnowszej historii Lemków*, *Materiały szkoleniowe SKPB* (Warszawa 1984), 38–9).

²⁹ Many more people came to identify themselves as Ukrainians in the Eastern part (see: Moklak, *Lemkowszczyzna w Drugiej*, 42–3).

³⁰ Mark Mazower, 'Minorities and the League of Nations in Interwar Europe', *Daedalus*, Vol. 126 (1997), 50.

³¹ Ustawa z dnia 17 marca 1921 r. – Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. Art. 95, 101 and 110.

schools.³² Minorities constituted one-third of the population, but there had not been a single non-ethnic Pole to serve as minister, province governor, or even as a local government officer.³³ The state made numerous efforts to transfer land ownership to ethnic Poles, whether by limiting ethnic Germans' property rights or through the politics of 'reinforcing Polishness' – i.e. intense colonization – in the eastern borderlands. This included awarding land ownership to the military, polonizing offices, and reinforcing the role of the Roman Catholic Church, which began as early as 1919.³⁴ In short, although National Democrats, who promoted the idea of (coerced) national assimilation, never obtained a majority in parliament, their political programme became popular across the broader political spectrum. While the dominant doctrine during Józef Piłsudski's authoritarian rule in 1926–1935³⁵ was that of 'state' rather than 'national' assimilation, it is questionable to what extent the difference between the two was factual versus semantic. No matter whether they were conceived of as national or state, assimilatory politics entailed ethnic/national engineering; they did so either by curtailing national aspirations, or by supporting regional movements in order to eventually assimilate them. These were violent processes, for 'even if Piłsudski's goals could be described as Romantic, his means were anything but'.³⁶

The assimilatory politics, and the local population's response to it, is apparent from the perspective of Leśna, the village-protagonist of my article, which is situated in the western part of the historical Lemko-Rusyn land and constitutes a mid-size locality (600 inhabitants, 120 households). It enjoyed relative prosperity under Habsburg rule. People travelled to Hungary for work during the harvest season, and as many as one-third of the population moved to the United States, continuing to support relatives back home. During the First World War, the village was a 'no man's land' on the front line between the Austrian and Russian armies, and 21 inhabitants were detained and four died in the Talerhof camp.³⁷

Elderly inhabitants I talked to in Leśna remember the early years of the Second Polish Republic rather nebulously; the oldest of my interlocutors were born in the early 1920s, and their first memories are confined to the family realm. Petro, featured in the opening

³² Mostly German and Jewish schools. See: Jerzy Tomaszewski, 'Mniejszości narodowe w prawie polskim 1918–1939' *Więź*, Vol. 460 (1997), 129–30.

³³ Grzegorz Motyka, *Tak było w Bieszczadach. Walki polsko-ukraińskie 1943–1948* (Warszawa, 1999), 36. It is also important to remark on the murder of President Gabriel Narutowicz, who was labelled 'Jewish president' and 'minorities' candidate' by his opponents. See: Paul Brykczynski, *Primed for Violence: Murder, Antisemitism, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Poland* (Madison, WI 2016).

³⁴ Moklak, *Lemkowszczyzna w Drugiej*, 151; Tomaszewski, 'Mniejszości narodowe', 132.

³⁵ From his *coup d'état* in 1926 until his death in 1935.

³⁶ Paul Brykczynski, 'A Poland for the Poles? Józef Piłsudski and the Ambiguities of Polish Nationalism', *Pravo: The North American Journal for Central European Studies*, Vol. 1 (2007), 15. For the romantic roots of Piłsudski's agenda, see: Timothy Snyder, *Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven, CT 2003).

³⁷ Although people imprisoned by the Austrians were said to be so-called Russophiles, a Leśna history teacher found in his own research that 90 per cent were in fact Greek Catholics, and the reason for their arrest was that they were enlightened, literate people: 'They were the village's driving force, they spread education [...] they were arrested because they could make people follow them'.

vignette, smiled and described how, despite being a small boy, he used to rock his neighbours' daughter (who would later become his wife). Petro's friend, Gienia, talked about handsome Jewish boys who were not allowed to play with Christian girls; and Franka gesticulated while describing how big the village used to be – 'a never-ending street' filled with farms. Admitting that many villagers suffered from poverty, my interlocutors unsurprisingly drew a nostalgic picture of their childhood land. The 'ethnic question' is not prominent in their accounts and the 'state' appears rarely; if it appears at all, it is embodied by Piłsudski, whose figure serves to mark time in that they often talk about life 'under' or 'after' Piłsudski.

A more detailed account can be found in the Leśna school chronicle.³⁸ The then school headmaster and de facto school chronicler provided vivid descriptions of social life in Leśna during 1925–1933. Apart from describing everyday school life and providing school records, the author also included solemn events, such as the anniversary of Poland's independence ('Resurrection of Poland'), which was celebrated by a ceremonial performance of the Polish anthem, and Constitution Day (3 May), which was also feted despite the fact that it overlapped with Greek Catholic Easter (in 1926). Ukrainian festivities, such as concerts dedicated to Taras Shevchenko, are also mentioned. The chronicle is written in perfect Polish, and the ethnic identity of the author is unclear until the final parts of his account. In 1931, the headmaster reported that he was unjustly accused of organizing a military group and acting against the Polish Republic. In 1933, he stated that he was forced to leave the village due to the 'alleged request of the local population to move the director, because he is a Ukrainian'. As a result, the director and his wife (also a teacher) had to leave, a departure that the headmaster described in very emotional terms, expressing his attachment and dedication to the children.³⁹

This is not how the Border Guard's sub-commissioner, who supervised the headmaster, described his work in a detailed letter to the head of the school inspectorate.⁴⁰ The sub-commissioner not only considered the headmaster to be a key pro-Ukrainian activist and his wife an enemy of the Poles, but also accused them of 'false loyalty' to the Polish authorities and of plotting against Poland along with other Ukrainian teachers and Greek Catholic priests. Included in his long list of accusations was that the headmaster dared to mention the role of Ukrainians soldiers in the 1920 battle 'Miracle on the Vistula', when forces of the Polish state drove off advancing Soviets.⁴¹ The commissioner claimed that the director and his wife ignored Polish national festivities and symbols, instead substituting them with Ukrainian ones. All of

³⁸ Recognizing the need to ensure that children obtained an education, in 1892 the peasants asked the district's governor for a loan in order to construct the school. Their participation in the construction made it possible for the building to be ready within two years, in 1894. The school chronicler firmly asserted that 'the school was built without any help from the state, it was done by the people themselves'. The chronicle was shared with me during my fieldwork by a retired school director.

³⁹ Leśna school chronicle (manuscript).

⁴⁰ Archiwum Państwowe w Krakowie (APK), Kuratorium Okręgu Szkolnego Krakowskiego (hereafter: KOSK), sygn. 29/1342/0. Letter from 5 November 1930, sent to the head of the school inspectorate in Kraków.

⁴¹ The information the headmaster 'dared to include' was historically accurate. Simon Petliura's Ukrainian army took part in the battle of Warsaw in 1920.

this, the sub-commissioner explained, went against the will of the local population, which did 'not dream about Ukraine' and gladly cooperated with Poles. Therefore, he concluded, the couple had to be dismissed, as the damages caused by them and other Ukrainian teachers were 'uncountable'; in his view, 95 per cent of teachers were hostile towards Polish authorities. In a letter sent only one year later, the head of the county provided an even more detailed list of accusations against the Leśna school director, which indicates the extent of surveillance in the Lemko-Rusyn area.⁴² He listed multiple plots and secret meetings in which the director was reportedly involved, accused him of ignoring the Polish press, and claimed that the director's wife had said at the post office that her husband would prefer to host a 'rabid dog' than a Pole in her home. Having provided the list of other 'even more dangerous' Ukrainian teachers, he suggested who should be dismissed as a 'warning' for other disobedient instructors.

The removal of 'Ukrainian' teachers was a key element of Polish policies in the Lemko-Rusyn area. The abolishment of Rusyn republics did not stop the activities of the two national movements, which continued to promote their ideas through educational-cultural associations: the pro-Ukrainian 'Proswita' and the Russophile/Rusyn 'Kaczkowski's'. Polish authorities kept both associations under surveillance and levelled threats of imprisonment against any suspected anti-state activity. Suspicious of growing Ukrainian influences, authorities began encouraging the separatist aspirations of Rusyns in the mid-1920s as a counterweight to Ukrainian national strivings.⁴³

The first means of achieving this was the promotion of Lemkos as a distinctive 'ethnographic group' and 'Lemko' as an ethnonym, which entailed exaggerating its historical roots. For, while it is clear that the name 'Lemko' was given to the Rusyn population of Lower Beskid by their neighbours,⁴⁴ there is no agreement on whether and when it actually became a means of self-identification among Galician Rusyns.⁴⁵ Although the gradual reinforcement of supra-local ties, which were strengthened by the experiences of war veterans and the development of farming cooperatives, contributed to the ethnonym's growing popularity amongst the population, the fact that the notion of 'Lemko' was officially used in the interwar period cannot be separated from these newly introduced policies.⁴⁶ Chris Hann reconciles these observations by concluding that 'the

⁴² KOSK, sygn. 29/1342/0. Letter from 3 February 1931, sent to the head of the school inspectorate in Kraków

⁴³ Paweł Wroński, 'Szkolnictwo na Łemkowszczyźnie 1866–1947', *Rozprawy z dziejów oświaty*, Vol. 33 (1990), 191; Paweł Przybylski, 'Powrót do Polski wszystkiego, co polskie: Polonizacja Łemkowszczyzny w II Rzeczypospolitej', *Magury '03* (2003), 25–37.

⁴⁴ Due to their frequent use of the word *lem* ('only', 'but').

⁴⁵ Some claim that the name appeared in textbooks in the 1820s and that the Rusyn population accepted it in the early twentieth century (Helena Duć-Fajfer, 'Lemkos', in P. Magocsi and I. Pop, eds, *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture* (Toronto 2002), 280; Horbal, *Lemko Studies*, 132–3). Others argue that 'politically conscious' people called themselves either Ukrainians or Lemkos, depending on their outlook, while the rest stuck to the name 'Rusyn/Rusnak' (Roman Reinfuss, *Łemkowie jako grupa etnograficzna* (Sanok 1998 [1948]), 18–19; Still others emphasize important regional diversification, namely the fact that the ethnonym became widespread mainly to the west of the Dukla Pass where the Old Rus movement was most successful (Kwilecki, *Fragmety*, 32; Jerzy Czajkowski, *Studia nad Łemkowszczyzną* (Sanok 1999), 196).

⁴⁶ The notions 'Lemko' and 'Łemkowszczyzna' (Lemko land) were used by the new Polish authorities as early as in 1919 (see, e.g., 'Starostwo Powiatowe w Grybowie', 29/217/0/3/10).

collective identity as Lemko was new, but it could only be promoted and adopted because of differences that had evolved objectively in history'.⁴⁷

Attempts at fostering the ethnonym 'Lemko' were evident in the writings of policy-makers and bureaucrats. The newly established Voivodship Lemko Committee (*Wojewódzki Komitet Łemkowski*) promoted a reconceptualization of Lemko identity to emphasize separateness from Ukrainians/Greek Catholics,⁴⁸ carrying out the 'Polish Action in Lemkivshchyna' between 1932 and 1933. In the concluding report, historian and politician Władysław Wielhorski described Lemkos as apolitical and argued that unless Ukrainian influences grew stronger, Lemkos were ripe to become loyal Polish citizens. The means for achieving this included financial investments in the region and the careful selection of teachers and officials working in Lemko villages. Education was a central element of the Polish Action, and Wielhorski specifically called for the substitution of Ukrainians with Poles or trained Lemkos.⁴⁹

Wielhorski's report was followed up by the long-term studies of ethnographers, geographers, and linguists, all gathered at Jagiellonian University in Cracow⁵⁰ in the so-called 'Lemko Section',⁵¹ and co-financed by the Lemko Committee. The most renowned ethnographer was Roman Reinfuss, who claimed that the villagers he studied continued to call themselves 'Rusyns' or 'Rusnaks' and the ethnonym 'Lemko' was not widespread.⁵² Yet he used that term to delineate the region's eastern frontier, which supposedly separated the Lemkos from other ethnographic groups, and stressed similarities in material culture and linguistic traits that made it possible to speak about a Lemko 'ethnographic group'. His thorough study remains a classic despite scholarly arguments over inaccuracies and the (potential) political implications of his work;⁵³ notably, it was free from the explicit promotion of assimilation that characterized other works.

⁴⁷ Chris Hann, 'From Ethnographic Group to Sub-sub-ethnicity: Lemko-Rusyn-Ukrainians in Postsocialist Poland' in Elaine Rusinko, ed., *Committing Community: Carpatho-Rusyn Studies as an Emerging Scholarly Discipline* (New York 2009), 176.

⁴⁸ Known as the Committee for Lemko Affairs (Komitet do Spraw Łemkowskich), and since 1936 as the Subcommittee for Lemko Affairs (wPodkomitet do Spraw Łemkowskich). It was subordinated to the Committee for National Affairs and included representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the army, school inspectors, and heads of Lemko (anti-Ukrainian) organizations.

⁴⁹ Archiwum Akt Nowych, Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, sygn. 5219. Quoted in: Moklak, *Łemkowszczyzna w Drugiej*, 154–7.

⁵⁰ Some scholars from Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv were involved, too.

⁵¹ Similar policies were adopted towards Huculs (Chojnowski, *Koncepcje polityki*, 198).

⁵² Roman Reinfuss, *Łemkowie jako grupa etnograficzna* (Sanok 1998 [1948]).

⁵³ Bohdan Halczak claims that the border delineated by Reinfuss purposely omitted those Lemko-Rusyn areas in which Ukrainian currents were strong. J. A. Stepek observes, that, quite the contrary, the territory delineated was far too big, while Chris Hann claims that Reinfuss aimed to maintain distance from national politics. See: Bohdan Halczak, 'Łemkowskie miejsce we wszechświecie. Refleksje o położeniu Łemków na przełomie XX i XXI wieku', in Stefan Dudra, ed., *Łemkowie, Bojkowie, Rusini – historia, współczesność, kultura materialna i duchowa, vol. 4* (Słupsk and Zielona Góra 2012), 119; Stepek, 'Akcja polska', 29; Hann, 'From Ethnographic Group', 179. As in the case of the debates on Lemko-Rusyns' ethnogenesis, views on the region's eastern border differ among Polish and Ukrainian scholars. See: Patrycja Trzeszczyńska, *Łemkowszczyzna zapamiętana. Opowieści o przeszłości i przestrzeni* (Kraków 2013), 64.

An exemplary case of assimilationist historical-ethnographic work is Krystyna Pieradzka's *Na szlakach Łemkowszczyzny* (*On the trails of Lemkivschyna*).⁵⁴ The author repeatedly emphasized 'the eternal Polishness of the area', along with the fact that most local names – of both localities and people – were of Polish origin. She warned that Ukrainians aimed to falsify history, even though it was obvious that 'Lemko tracks lead to Cracow and Warsaw',⁵⁵ and therefore contended that Poland should take hold of the area: 'We need to get to know and to take possession of the soul of the Lemko people'. She described the Lemkos as simple, backward, and passive.⁵⁶ They did not know how to care for their churches, and they cherished their sense of identity, even though the only thing they should have cherished was their religious faith. The portrait she painted had romantic traits; it presented genuine rural people who were attached to the land and nature and were waiting to be discovered by Poles. She expressed particular interest in folk costumes and went so far as to suggest that reservations be created where local people dressed in clothes typical for the area.⁵⁷

In a similar vein, Aleksander Bartoszek, the author of *Lemkowie – zapomniani Polacy* (*Lemkos – forgotten Poles*) described Lemkos as a group in which 'a potential Polishness lurks'. Describing Ukrainian claims to Lemkos as both unfounded and humorous, he saw studying Lemkos as a mission because 'this forgotten tribe is, in terms of race, as Polish as Kashubians and Silesians are'.⁵⁸ This final quote is an important reminder that the scholarship on Lemkos should be seen in the context of the development of applied modern sciences, which were to provide the new state with the expertise and tools necessary for countering national inspirations of minority groups and/or fortifying Polish claims to ethnically diverse territories.⁵⁹ Reinforcing the regional identities of Kashubians or Pomeranians had similar aims to policies targeting Lemkos.

Overwhelmingly, accounts from scholars and local administrators promoted a view of Lemkos as a rural people who differed mostly in faith and were apt material for polonization; only local traditions were to be maintained. In stressing that the local population had *always* been Polish, and before partitions all who inhabited the Polish territory *were* and *felt* Polish, they presented a completely ahistorical view of the national(izing) process. Their activities reflect Francine Hirsch's understanding of 'ethnographic knowledge' both as an 'academic, but practical knowledge' that professional scholars produce and

⁵⁴ Krystyna Pieradzka, *Na szlakach Łemkowszczyzny* (Kraków 1939).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 46, 51.

⁵⁶ Similar descriptions of rural people (of the 'folk') characterized ethnographic works of other Polish regions. 'Ethnography' was in fact treated as a descriptive branch of ethnology which discussed the 'uncivilized people and archaic stages of civilized people' (Olga Linkiewicz, "'Ethnopolitics": The Making of Scientific Knowledge and Utopian Projects in Interwar Poland', Paper, American Historical Association Convention, New York 2015).

⁵⁷ Pieradzka, *Na szlakach Łemkowszczyzny*, 128.

⁵⁸ Aleksander Bartoszek, *Lemkowie – zapomniani Polacy* (Warszawa 1939), 5–10.

⁵⁹ Some scholars, exposing racism and anti-Semitism, went so far as to discuss eugenics. See: Olga Linkiewicz, 'Applied Modern Science and Self-Politicization of Racial Anthropology in Interwar Poland', *Ab Imperio*, Vol. 2 (2016), 153–81.

as ‘the local knowledge that local leaders and administrators supply’.⁶⁰ In her discussion of the Soviet Union, Hirsch demonstrates how both of these forms of ethnographic knowledge constituted a part of the ‘cultural technologies of rule’, i.e. the means of enumeration, mapping, and surveying that served to control but also transform the population into ‘the Soviet whole’.⁶¹ Polish authorities shared a belief in the potential of ‘ethnopolitics’ – a hybrid of politics and science – for mobilizing and reshaping society.⁶²

Elderly inhabitants of Leśna challenged the popularity of the ‘Lemko’ ethnonym in the interwar period, countering that it was only after the Second World War that they started to define themselves as Lemkos. They acknowledged pre-war divisions, but claimed that Ukrainians were opposed by ‘Old Rusyns’ or simply Rusyns. Similarly, the school chronicler who filled in for the dismissed ‘Ukrainian’ director, observed in 1933:

In the Ukrainian bloc, there are mainly students, members of the intelligentsia, and five open-minded farmers, who promote an awareness of this issue, while others are the farmers who are influenced by the [Greek Catholic] priest or dependent on him [...]. The second bloc consists of old-Rusyns [...]. [But] the majority of the people are simply indifferent, they call themselves ‘Rusnacy’ and they don’t belong to any camp. The ‘Kaczkowski’ faction is favourably inclined towards the state, while the Ukrainian is hostile [...]. Both parties are influential, but the Kaczkowski reading room has started to get the upper hand over the other, due to the [Polish] government’s support and rash Ukrainian action.⁶³

The headmaster is thus quite explicit in his interpretation of local feelings. He is critical towards the Ukrainian camp and perceived Rusyns as a state ally. His description of the ‘indifferent’ and ‘manipulated’ inhabitants likewise suggests that he sees the locals as relatively easy targets for new state policies. Analogous views, stressing the population’s loyalty to the Polish state and hostility towards Ukrainians, were reported by heads of neighbouring districts.⁶⁴ They too emphasized the population’s willingness to read in Polish and Lemko due to their lack of knowledge of Ukrainian (the local language is described as Rusyn, Lemko, or ‘rotten Polish’).⁶⁵ Scholars corroborate this view by stating that only a few villages were the base of the Ukrainian movement,⁶⁶ which was reflected in the results of the 1926 elections.⁶⁷ Many highlight, too, that in the census of 1931, 97 per cent of the inhabitants of Kraków province (in the western part of

⁶⁰ Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY 2005), 10.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶² Linkiewicz, ‘Ethnopolitics’.

⁶³ Leśna school chronicle. This and all the following quotes are translations by the author.

⁶⁴ KOSK, sygn. 29/1342/0. Protocol from the educational conference of teachers working in grammar schools in the Lemko region from 6 April 1932.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Jan Pisuliński, *Przesiedlenie ludności ukraińskiej z Polski do USRR w latach 1944–1947* (Rzeszów 2009), 33.

⁶⁷ UNDO – the Ukrainian National Democratic Alliance – was not popular among Lemko-Rusyns.

Lemkivshchyna) declared their language as ‘Ruthenian’ (*ruski*).⁶⁸ Still, it is important to note that the authorities discriminated against Ukrainian activists, and the Ukrainian movement evoked a positive response from the younger generation.⁶⁹

As indicated above, policies towards Lemko-Rusyns were also strictly connected with religious life. In the early 1920s, Polish authorities treated the Orthodox Church favourably, which became autocephalous, financially dependent on the state, and served as an instrument of Polish politics. Due to Orthodox proselytizing and overseas influences from Canada and the US, Greek Catholics who disapproved of their clergy’s pro-Ukrainian views⁷⁰ and the Latinization tendencies within the Church started to convert to Orthodoxy.⁷¹ As a result of the so-called Tylawa schism,⁷² about one-fifth of Rusyns (20,000) became Orthodox. This is to say that they became Orthodox ‘officially’, as both the local authorities and school teachers observed that even before ‘deep inside many people were Orthodox’,⁷³ and more would have converted if it were not for the fact that Church properties remained with the Greek Catholic authority.⁷⁴ As in the case of adopting the Lemko ethnonym, the process of conversions took different courses in different regions: barely significant in the eastern part, in Cracow province the conversion rate reached up to 50 per cent.

While the phenomenon of religious conversion in the late 1920s tends to be interpreted through the prism of ethno-religious clashes, Leśna’s inhabitants recall neither religious nor political reasons for conversions. Instead, they commonly explain that they switched church affiliation because they disliked a specific Greek Catholic priest; the Orthodox clergy demanded smaller payments for funerals; and Orthodox priests had wives, which contributed to Orthodox parishes playing an important socio-cultural role in village life. In a village close to Leśna, the Greek Catholic priest himself encouraged conversion amongst his parishioners, having himself joined the Orthodox Church. These various explanations of conversions are, in my view, an important reminder of the fact that the local people, now and then, reached for certain categorizations and

⁶⁸ Language served here as an indication of nationality. In the eastern part, declarations of Ukrainian nationality were more common (Kwilecki, *Fragmenty*, 43). However, the results of the 1931 census tend to be considered controversial and their results, especially when it comes to the Ukrainian population, falsified. See, e.g., Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Rzeczpospolita wielu narodów* (Warszawa 1985).

⁶⁹ KOSK, sygn. 29/1342/0. Protocol from the educational conference of teachers working in grammar schools in the Lemko region from 6 April 1932; see also: Oleksandr Zaitsev, ‘The Lemko Problem as Seen in the Activities of Ukrainian Political Parties in the 1920s and 1930s’, in Paul Best and Jarosław Moklak, eds, *The Lemkos of Poland: Articles and Essays* (Kraków 2000), 189–96.

⁷⁰ There was a tendency to send local priests to the East and bring in Ukrainian priests in their place (Kwilecki, *Fragmenty*, 47).

⁷¹ Bernadetta Wójtowicz-Huber, ‘Władze polskie wobec sytuacji wyznaniowej na Łemkowszczyźnie w okresie międzywojennym’, in Stefan Dudra et al., eds, *Łemkowie, Bojkowie, Rusini. Historia, współczesność, kultura materialna i duchowa*, vol. 1 (Legnica 2012), 433–4.

⁷² ‘Tylawa Schism’ refers principally to the conversion of Greek Catholics from Tylawa, which began on 16 November 1926. The term is also used to describe the entire process of Lemko Rusyns’ conversion to Orthodoxy, which occurred between 1926 and 1934.

⁷³ Leśna school chronicle.

⁷⁴ Pisuliński, *Przesiedlenie ludności*, 34.

rationalizations to foster specific agendas: sometimes to emphasize their apolitical stand, sometimes to distance themselves from the weight of the decisions.⁷⁵ Yet the fact that their motivations were not necessarily political does not preclude political consequences – namely an increasing emphasis on Lemkos' separateness from Ukrainians/Greek Catholics.

Ukrainian scholars responded to the Polish Action by establishing their own Lemko Committee, which aimed to defend Lemkos from denationalization and bring them into full national (i.e., Ukrainian) consciousness. They crafted their own scholarly conceptions of Lemko identity and popularized a tripartite classification of Rusyn that included 'Lemkos', 'Boikos', and 'Hutsuls': three ethnographic groups comprising Ukrainian nationality.⁷⁶ However, the Polish scholarship (or 'scholarship') discussed above was challenged not only by Ukrainians but also within Poland – for instance by scholars associated with the Institute for Nationalities Affairs and the Polish-Ukrainian Bulletin,⁷⁷ as well as by politicians linked to the Prometheism movement.⁷⁸ Recognizing the failure of state ethnic politics and overwhelming discrimination, they called for the re-establishment of schools in minority languages, calling it 'a condition of absolute justice' and charging that the forced introduction of Polish counterproductively fostered hostility toward the Polish state rather than integrating minorities.⁷⁹ The next section offers an overview of the developments that occurred in the mid- and late 1930s, which demonstrates that their counsel went unheard.

Lemkos into Poles: Assimilatory Politics of the mid- and Late 1930s

Before returning to Leśna, it is worth reflecting on the question of the multiplicity of voices that must be taken into account when attempting to understand the developments in the Lemko-Rusyn area. The differing accounts of the 'Ukrainian' headmaster and the supervising inspector do not come as a surprise if we consider the state's policies at the time, nor do their differing assessments of the local population's attitudes. What problematizes their accounts is the local population's refusal to adopt politically charged ethnic categories – a refusal that is recorded in both oral histories and the letters of complaints and petitions sent to state authorities. Asking for the removal of Ukrainian teachers, local inhabitants often stated similar reasons: they wanted to maintain their Rusyn identity and

⁷⁵ Moving from the Greek Catholic Church to the Orthodox Church is even now perceived in certain milieus as treason and betrayal. In the course of my fieldwork, I heard numerous stories on disrupted families and conflicts cutting through families and broader communities. See: Pasieka, *Hierarchy and Pluralism*.

⁷⁶ Magocsi, *The People from Nowhere*, 24.

⁷⁷ Stanisław Maurenberg, *Szkolnictwo dla mniejszości narodowych w Polsce w latach 1918–1939* (Warszawa 1969), 199–200.

⁷⁸ Prometheism refers to the political project which aimed to weaken the Soviet Union by supporting nationalities from the USSR that strove for an independent statehood.

⁷⁹ Aleksander Bocheński, Stanisław Łoś, Włodzimierz Bączkowski, *Problem polsko-ukraiński w ziemi czerwieńskiej* (Warszawa 1939), 144–5; cf. Konstanty Srokowski, *Sprawa Narodowościowa na Kresach Wschodnich* (Kraków 1924), 56.

felt discriminated against by ‘agitators’ who brought conflict and ferment.⁸⁰ Rather than interpreting such voices as the testimony of (passive, helpless) people ‘caught’ between different national options and agendas, we might instead consider them to be part of a conscious strategy to reject an imposed national identification that reflects an awareness of the consequences of its adoption.⁸¹ At the same time, this rejection of ‘Ukrainian’ or ‘Polish’ categories in the name of ‘anational’ identification could not but lead to a gradual politicization of the very category ‘Rusyn’.

As the accounts below demonstrate, the Polish state’s successive steps were met with a similar, negative response towards imposed categorizations. The successor of the dismissed ‘Ukrainian’ teacher who came to Leśna presented himself as a Polish patriot. He taught children Polish songs and paid attention to the Polish language, which had reportedly been ‘neglected’ by his predecessors. Above all, he was highly critical of people’s lack of interest in state matters. The reason behind this indifference was, in his view, ‘unawareness’ and ‘disorientation’, and he regarded the school as an institution for correcting these shortcomings.⁸² Indeed, the so-called ‘civic-state education’ was one of the key objectives of school programmes,⁸³ and ethnically Polish teachers were the ones to implement it.

However, these changes were negatively perceived by locals, who stressed that Polish teachers’ religious affiliation was the main problem. In a letter of protest sent to the school inspectorate in 1934, the inhabitants of a mid-size Rusyn village complained:

A Roman Catholic teacher has just been assigned to our school. There is no single Roman Catholic living in our village and thus we cannot understand why a Roman Catholic was assigned. Our village has always been peaceful and loyal. We are preoccupied with farming and not with politics. We aim to continue to live in peace but the examples of neighbouring localities demonstrate that peace was disturbed by the arrival of Roman Catholic teachers. Such teachers bring politics into the village; they divide the village into several nationalities – Ukrainians, Rusyns, and Lemkos – and that’s when the hatred comes, people denounce each other, and the village quarrels with the school. And it’s us who pay the price.⁸⁴

Far from being ‘uninterested’ in state matters, as the new headmaster suggested, the local population appeared to be deeply preoccupied with the socio-political developments and manipulation of their identities. Their protests included not only teachers’ religious backgrounds, but also linguistic issues. As a result of the Lemko Committee’s and Wielhorski’s suggestions, two Lemko textbooks were published, both written in Latin

⁸⁰ E.g., KOSK, sygn. 29/1342/0. Letter from 30 June 1930. The inhabitants mentioned other reasons, such as violent behaviour towards pupils.

⁸¹ Cf. Halemba, ‘Not Looking through a National Lens?’.

⁸² Leśna school chronicle.

⁸³ Wroński, ‘Szkolnictwo na Łemkowszczyźnie’, 200–1.

⁸⁴ Quoted in: Stepek, ‘Akcja polska’, 33.

(instead of Cyrillic). The following letter, signed by several thousand Lemko-Rusyns, reflected the negative popular opinion of the book:

Lemkiwskyj bukwar is not written in literary Ukrainian, but in an arbitrarily selected Lemko dialect, in a mixture of words unintelligible to anyone and unused by anybody. The Polish language also has many dialects but none of them is being used in the textbooks. The use of the *Lemkiwskyj bukwar* may only lead children to further analphabetism and cultural backwardness, as it does not allow them to study and to enjoy the literary output of the Ukrainian nation.⁸⁵

The opinions of Polish teachers, as expressed in reports sent to the school inspectorate, varied. Some reported positive experiences, while others wrote about Lemko students bursting into laughter while using the textbooks because they were hard to understand and the words that were used had different meanings across localities.⁸⁶

The introduction of the artificial Lemko language was a prelude to polonization. Although it did not facilitate the learning of Polish, it did prevent the teaching of Ukrainian and prevented Lemko children from continuing their education in Ukrainian high schools in eastern Poland.⁸⁷ As Bogdan Horbal notes,

[B]y the mid-1930s most of the schools in the Lemko region had classes in Polish and Lemko running in parallel, but with the arrival of new Polish teachers, the process of polonization increased. In fact, during the 1937/1938 school year, the role of Lemko changed from being the language used in lessons to being one of the subjects.⁸⁸

According to the plans developed by the Cracow governor, particular attention was to be paid to the younger generation: separated from both Ukrainian and Rusyn influences, they were to be educated in Polish boarding schools and spread Polishness when they went back home to visit.⁸⁹ Through these educational policies, the Polish Action in Lemkivshchyna moved from supporting Lemko separatism towards explicit assimilation.⁹⁰

Campaigns targeted at the Lemko-Rusyn population paralleled new policies towards Ukrainians, initiated in 1935 when military representatives factually took over Polish

⁸⁵ Quoted in: Stepek, 'Akcja polska', 30.

⁸⁶ Due to the mountainous areas that separated villages, the Lemko region was characterized by many local dialects. The opponents of the textbooks called for using the Polish or Ukrainian language instead. KOSK, sygn.29/1342/0. Protocol from the educational conference of teachers working in grammar schools in the Lemko region from 6 April 1932.

⁸⁷ Wroński, 'Szkolnictwo na Łemkowszczyźnie', 196.

⁸⁸ Horbal, *Lemko Studies*, 273.

⁸⁹ AAN, MSW, Protokół z posiedzenia Komitetu Wojewódzkiego dla spraw Łemkowszczyzny odbytego w dniu 27.05.1938 r. w Krakowie, sygn. 1058, s. 42.

⁹⁰ Even economic investments in the region depended on the results of polonization and social assistance excluding the Lemkos while supporting Poles Paweł Przybylski, *Rola duchowieństwa grekokatolickiego w kształtowaniu się opcji narodowych wśród Łemków w latach 1918–1947* (Toruń 2006), 19, 131.

rule. Striving to weaken Ukrainian influences and ‘reinforce Polishness’, these policies anticipated the further polonization and militarization of predominantly Ukrainian regions, with subsequent plans to ‘encourage’ Ukrainians to emigrate to North America.⁹¹ In the Lemko-Rusyn region, administrators expelled the remaining Ukrainian activists, closed down Ukrainian reading rooms, and limited access to Ukrainian press and books. The state stopped supporting the Orthodox Church and established the so-called Lemko Apostolic Administration, which included nine deaneries of the Greek Catholic Church in the Lemko region and aimed to weaken Ukrainian influences in Greek Catholicism. Not only did the Administration pursue anti-Ukrainian policies, but in the last years of the Second Republic, it promoted assimilation by claiming that ‘Rusyn’ referred exclusively to the confession and Lemko-Rusyns were in fact Greek Catholic Poles. The Orthodox Church, in turn, was supposed to become the *Polish* Orthodox Church.⁹² The 1939 report of the Lemko Committee envisioned the further subordination of the Greek Catholic Church by means of educating future priests as ‘loyal Uniate Poles’, as well as by building Roman Catholic Churches on Lemko land to counter the Lemko cultural landscape.⁹³

In the late 1930s, the head of the Lemko Subcommittee prepared yet another report, which declared:

- The work of Polish organizations and authorities in the Lemko land should lead to Lemkos’ gradual assimilation and polonization.
- The journal should include more articles in Polish and Lemko textbooks should be replaced with the Polish ones.
- Due to the attempt to polonize Lemkos, we do not aim to create Lemko intelligentsia [...]
- All teaching has to be done in Polish [...]
- More Polish centres need to be established in Lemkivshchyna [...].⁹⁴

The author continued, emphasizing the importance of the Polish language and red-and-white flag in all institutional and educational contexts, concluding: ‘The name “Lemko” should not to be used too much’.

Lemkos into Ukrainians: Enduring Effects of the Interwar Policies

The ethnic politics of the Second Polish Republic escapes easy classifications. As the case of Lemko-Rusyns demonstrates, politics meant much more than a switch from ‘state’ to ‘national’ assimilation, as the ‘federational’ concept had already lost its impact by 1921,

⁹¹ Chojnowski, *Koncepcje polityki*, 238; Motyka, *Tak było w Bieszczadach*, 37.

⁹² AAN, MSW, sygn. 1058, ‘Protokół z posiedzenia Komitetu Wojewódzkiego dla Spraw Łemkowszczyzny odbytego w 27.05.1938 roku w Krakowie’, quoted in: Wójtowicz-Huber, ‘Władze polskie wobec’, 437.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Quoted in Stepek, ‘Akcja polska’, 38.

and state assimilation was never consistently realized.⁹⁵ As far back as 1924, a critic of state policies wrote that even if the state's main policy towards minorities was clear – i.e. polonization by means of school education – it was carried out in a chaotic manner.⁹⁶ While a discriminatory turn in the late 1930s illustrates the overall evolution within Piłsudski's camp, some scholars contend that Piłsudski's attachment to the idea of federalism and state assimilation is a legend not reflected in his correspondence or statements.⁹⁷ It is also not sufficient to say that the state discriminated first against Ukrainians and then, having promoted anti-Ukrainian sentiment among Lemko-Rusyns, against Lemko-Rusyns. Rather, the authorities skilfully exploited internal conflicts amongst Rusyns in order to promote assimilation. Shifting policies towards the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches are the best example of these divide and rule tactics. Archival materials show that Polish authorities had detailed information on local conditions and were able to manipulate local conflicts, particularly due to the army's increasing engagement in politics towards ethnic minorities.

Still, pre-war discrimination was a far cry from the events that occurred in Lemkivshchyna during and in the aftermath of the Second World War. During the war, German occupiers used Ukrainian aspirations for an independent state to pit Ukrainians against Poles. Although it was safer to identify as a Ukrainian, many Lemko-Rusyns continued to opt for Polish *Kennkarten*.⁹⁸ Numerous people were repressed and sent to the work and concentration camps.⁹⁹ The local population established their own underground organization, which fought against the Germans and assisted Polish partisans in smuggling people and messages to Slovakia.¹⁰⁰ Locals who identified as Ukrainians and the Ukrainians brought to the area became policemen and heads of local administration. They served until the arrival of the Soviet army, which, as mentioned in the introductory story, began punishing people with pro-Ukrainian attitudes or who supported the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA).

In the period 1944–1946, around 60–70 per cent of the pre-war population was moved to the Soviet Union.¹⁰¹ Trying to avoid resettlement, the Lemko-Rusyn population adopted different strategies, such as obtaining Roman Catholic birth certificates, getting 'certificates of loyalty' from Polish neighbours and local authorities, or writing petitions to the state authorities. An overview of local authorities' reports from the time demonstrate that Polish authorities were generally favourable towards

⁹⁵ Chojnowski, *Koncepcje polityki*, 196.

⁹⁶ See Srokowski, *Sprawa Narodowościowa*.

⁹⁷ Stanisław Maurenborg, *Szkolnictwo dla mniejszości narodowych w Polsce w latach 1918–1939* (Warszawa: 1969), 191–2; Bryczyński, 'A Poland for the Poles?', 14–15.

⁹⁸ I.e., identity cards used under German occupation.

⁹⁹ Kwilecki, *Fragmenty*, 61; Horbal, *Lemko Studies*, 410–11.

¹⁰⁰ Motyka, *Tak było w Bieszczadach*, 77; Horbal, *Lemko Studies*, 413–16.

¹⁰¹ This was a consequence of the implementation of Soviet policies that aimed to make the conquered states 'nationally pure'. In theory voluntary, but in practice often coerced, these initial resettlements led to the depopulation of entire villages. Lemko-Rusyns who found themselves in Soviet Ukraine and saw extremely tough conditions in the promised 'paradise', attempted to smuggle messages to relatives and friends warning them against moving there. Some attempted to escape from kolkhoz and go back.

Lemko-Rusyns. They emphasized that Lemkos' cooperation was instrumental during the war, that the UPA forced Lemkos to support them, and that it was crucial that they remain in the area for the local economy.¹⁰² This does not mean that the Lemkos who stayed in the area were to remain Lemkos. Other local administrators would state that, deprived of Eastern Christian churches, Lemkos would 'dissolve/melt into Polishness' and thus only Lemkos suspected of supporting the UPA should be deported, while the rest were to be assimilated.¹⁰³ Despite such reports and petitions, the resettlement activities continued. In Leśna, 45 Greek Catholics and Orthodox joined the Roman Catholic Church; yet even this did not mean they could stay.

After the war, the Polish communist government decided to resettle the remaining Lemko and Ukrainian population in the so-called 'Recovered Territories', which were formerly German. The official argument – i.e., that resettlement was necessary to destroy Ukrainian partisans who were supposedly supported by locals – is today refuted by most historians, who emphasize that the official aim was to assimilate Lemkos and Ukrainians into Polish society.¹⁰⁴ The Lemkos' virtual lack of support for the UPA is shown not only by scholars,¹⁰⁵ but also by reports from UPA members.¹⁰⁶ Others note that having joined the Communist Party, many Lemkos fought the UPA as militiamen or point out that the level of support varied in different parts of Lemkivshchyna.¹⁰⁷

In order to 'justify' the resettlement of Lemkos – after all, shortly before the war they were described by scholars as a 'loyal citizens' and 'apolitical people' – a representative of the Polish government sent a letter to the Polish Academy of Sciences requesting a statement on Lemko origins. The obtained expertise stated that the Lemkos were a disloyal, opportunistic, and passive population who were not relevant to the Polish nation, and they were a population who never voted for Poles and did not risk their

¹⁰² Pisuliński, *Przesiedlenie ludności*, 125, 129–30. Original letters of local authorities were reprinted in: Eugeniusz Miśiło, *Repatriacja czy deportacja: przesiedlenie Ukraińców z Polski do USRR 1944–1946*, vol. 2 (Warszawa 1999), 156–62.

¹⁰³ Pisuliński, *Przesiedlenie ludności*, 398–9.

¹⁰⁴ Timothy Snyder, 'Akcja Wisła a homogeniczność społeczeństwa polskiego', in Jan Pisuliński, ed., *Akcja 'Wisła'* (Warszawa 2003), 49–54; Grzegorz Motyka, *Od rzezi wołyńskiej do Akcji 'Wisła'. Konflikt polsko-ukraiński 1943–1947* (Kraków 2011). Magocsi notes the lack of comparative analyses of Lemko support (Paul Robert Magocsi, 'Nation-Building or Nation Destroying? Lemkos, Poles, and Ukrainians in Contemporary Poland', *The Polish Review*, Vol. 35 (1990), 206).

¹⁰⁵ Grzegorz Motyka, 'The UPA in the Lemko Region', in Paul Best, ed., *The Lemko Region, 1939–1947* (New Haven, CT 2002), 131–6; Bogdan Horbal, 'The Ukrainian Insurgent Army in the Lemko Region', in Paul Best, ed., *The Lemko Region, 1939–1947* (New Haven, CT 2002), 171–82.

¹⁰⁶ Motyka, *Tak było w Bieszczadach*, 297–9; Julian Kwiek, *Żydzi, Lemkowie, Słowacy w województwie krakowskim w latach 1945–1949/50* (Kraków 1998), 93.

¹⁰⁷ Alternative views, which debate Lemkos' support for the UPA, are present both in Lemko autobiographies and scholarly works, which are often intended to prove Lemkos' belonging to the Ukrainian nation. There are also Polish works that did not move beyond the rhetoric of communist propaganda and purposely overstated the gravity of UPA, thereby defending the 'necessity' of Operation Vistula and ethnic cleansing. See, e.g., Bogdan Huk, 'Podziemie ukraińskie na Łemkowszczyźnie w latach 1945–1947 na tle tożsamości narodowej jej mieszkańców. Z powodu artykułu Bogdana Horbala "Ukraińska Powstańcza Armia na Łemkowszczyźnie"', *Magury*'10 (2010), 46–57. This article is a response to: Horbal, 'The Ukrainian Insurgent Army'.

lives under Nazi occupation.¹⁰⁸ The report was followed by brutal expulsions, including the so-called ‘Operation Vistula’ which took place between April and August 1947 and led to the resettlement of around 140,000–150,000 people, including 40,000–60,000 from the Lemko region.¹⁰⁹

The dispersion of Lemkos was supposed to facilitate their assimilation. Yet those who were settled in the new territory faced many difficulties, both from the authorities who discriminated against them and from Poles, themselves deportees from Ukraine and Belarus.¹¹⁰ Meanwhile, Polish settlers were taken to the abandoned Lemko villages. Although the resettled Lemkos could officially come back to their lands after 1956, both the authorities and Polish settlers continued to create obstacles. Overall, in the period 1956–58, about 2000 Lemkos came back, and in the following decades another 3000 returned.¹¹¹ In Leśna, only six families were able to remain in the village in 1947. In the late 1950s, around forty families returned, and today the village is inhabited by both ethnic Poles and Lemkos.

A series of resettlements – from and back to ‘Lemko land’ – once again altered people’s means of identification as Ukrainians and Lemko-Rusyns. Lemko memoirs and oral histories clearly demonstrate that life in western Poland could foster both orientations.¹¹² For some, distinguishing oneself from ‘Ukrainians’ was a means of being accepted by Polish co-inhabitants and gaining distance from the view promoted by communist propaganda, in which being Ukrainian was tantamount to being a member of ‘UPA bands’. Others, in turn, saw Ukrainian identity and Ukrainian organizations as the only means for preserving their Lemko-Rusyn traditions. As before, the means of identifying oneself was highly contextual and influenced by clergy, elites, and activists.¹¹³

Among the Lemkos who returned to Leśna in the 1950s and 1960s and strove to build relations with Polish settlers – many of whom had taken possession of their old dwellings and fields – more straightforward attitudes dominated. In hindsight, they described relations with Poles as ‘improving with time’ and recognized ‘ups and downs’. But while they stressed that some conflicts and squabbles did not necessarily have an ethnic or religious background, Petro’s opinion that ‘when Poles liked us, they called us “Lemkos”, when they didn’t, they called us “Ukrainians”’ is widely shared. Such comments

¹⁰⁸ It was written by Professor Tadeusz Kowalski from the Jagiellonian University (dated: 16.04.1946). Quoted in: Misiło, *Repatriacja czy deportacja*, 102–3.

¹⁰⁹ There exists a large body of literature on Operation Vistula. An important collection of materials and documents available in Polish and Ukrainian can be found in: Eugeniusz Misiło, *Akcja ‘Wisła’ 1947: Dokumenty* (Warszawa 1993); Eugeniusz Misiło, *Akcja ‘Wisła’: dokumenty*, Ivan Svarnik, trans. (L’viv 1997).

¹¹⁰ Not only were the Poles the first to settle there, but they also brought with them stories of crimes in Volhynia, the ethnic cleansing of the Polish civil population by Ukrainian nationalists in the period 1943–45, followed by similar events in Galicia. The communist propaganda invested a lot of energy in connecting the events in Volhynia with ‘Operation Vistula’.

¹¹¹ The decision to stay in western Poland resulted not only from the difficulties created by the authorities, but also from the better conditions for agriculture in the ‘recovered lands’.

¹¹² See, e.g.: Wojciech Sitek, *Mniejszość w warunkach zagrożenia: pamiętniki Lemków* (Wrocław 1996).

¹¹³ The Greek Catholic Church was proscribed under communism and many Greek Catholic Lemko-Rusyns began attending Orthodox Church. See: Stanisław Stępień, ‘Poland’, in S. Mahieu and V. Naumescu, eds, *Churches In-Between: Greek Catholic Churches in Postsocialist Europe* (Berlin 2008), 85–98.

reveal the particular weight and persistence of anti-Ukrainian prejudices. Worth quoting are the words of Andrzej Sulima-Kamiński, who asked in 1985: why do Polish people continue to view Ukrainians as ‘Cossacks’ and ‘UPA members’ and contrast them with ‘quiet Rusyns, Lemkos, Hutsuls, and other “ethnographic curiosities”?’¹¹⁴

The complex matrix of ethno-national identities changed again as a result of the 1989 transformation, which brought a promise of recognition for minority rights and compensation for the years of discrimination under communism. In 2005, after several years of heated debates, new legislation was introduced in Poland to regulate minority rights,¹¹⁵ defining ‘Ukrainians’ as a national minority and ‘Lemkos’ as an ethnic minority. Unsurprisingly, both Ukrainians and Lemkos questioned the distinction. Ukrainians stated that the Lemko identity was an invention and they were in fact Ukrainians. Lemkos, by contrast, protested their designation only as an ethnic group, which seemed to accord them lower status compared to the Ukrainians. Besides, according to recent national censuses (from 2002 and 2011), the number of people identifying as Ukrainians and Lemkos was much smaller than earlier studies assumed – a product of both assimilationist tendencies and a persistent fear of claiming non-Polish identity.¹¹⁶

Recent decades have also seen the re-emergence of a Carpatho-Rusyn movement in Poland,¹¹⁷ and there is increased contact among Lemko-Rusyns living both in Poland and abroad.¹¹⁸ New associations have appeared, pursuing a range of cultural and educational activities, the resonance of which might have been bigger if not for divisions within the Lemko-Rusyn community.¹¹⁹ ‘Lemko-Rusyn’ identity continues to be a site of competition between people who claim that accepting Ukrainian identity is the only way of preserving Lemko traditions and those who promote closer cooperation within the transnational Carpatho-Rusyn community.¹²⁰ As earlier, they continue to be influenced by Polish state policies, the Polish scholarly literature, and, increasingly, by Polish society’s interest in ‘ethnographic curiosities’.

¹¹⁴ Andrzej Sulima-Kamiński, ‘W kręgu moralnej i politycznej ślepoty: Ukraińcy i Ukraina w oczach Polaków’, in Włodzimierz Mokry, ed., *Problemy Ukraińców w Polsce po wysiedleńczej akcji ‘Wisła’ 1947 roku* (Kraków 1997), 338.

¹¹⁵ See footnote 9.

¹¹⁶ Time will show how the recent wave of migration from Ukraine will affect both the attitudes of Poles towards Ukrainians and Ukrainians’ self-identification.

¹¹⁷ This fact, of course, ought to be seen as a result not only of political changes in Poland but of the developments within the Carpatho-Rusyns movement more broadly, in other Central Eastern countries and in North America.

¹¹⁸ Among them the people resettled to the Soviet Union between 1944 and 1946, whose identification constitutes a yet different issue. See: Kabaczaj, ‘Zmiany świadomości Łemków’, available at <http://www.beskid-niski.pl/index.php?pos=/lemkowie/historia/zmiany> (last accessed: 29 May 2021).

¹¹⁹ It is not only a division between a Ukrainian-oriented fraction and its opponents but also between members of the Greek Catholic and Orthodox Church, as well as their authorities, which, especially at the local level, compete over the faithful. Although the Greek Catholic Church was traditionally associated with the Ukrainian option, the opposition Greek Catholic = Ukrainian and Orthodox = Lemko belies the complex map of Lemko-Rusyns’ ways of identification.

¹²⁰ For two contrasting views see: Halczak, ‘Łemkowskie miejsce we wszechświecie’; and Bogdan Horbal, ‘The Rusyn Movement among the Galician Lemkos’, in Elaine Rusinko, ed., *Committing Community: Carpatho-Rusyn Studies as an Emerging Scholarly Discipline* (New York 2009), 142–59.

Conclusions

Over seven decades after World War II, Petro's house hosts an elegant agrotourism cottage, eagerly visited by Polish urban dwellers who come to Leśna to discover 'Lemko culture' and spend time in a 'multicultural village'. Some of them fell in love with the area and decided to build a wooden house in 'Lemko style', decrying natives' preference for modern stone buildings. Lemko-Rusyns may wink when reading the names of 'traditional Lemko dishes' in local restaurants, but the economic aspects of this peculiar identity politics are critical. The local government also uses 'Lemko culture' as means of attracting funds, as promoting minority languages and increasing schools' bilingual profile is economically beneficial in European Union policies. All of this seems to be further, albeit ironic, proof of Hann's observation that 'the case of the Lemkos highlights the malleability and ultimate contingency of all forms of collective identity'.¹²¹

Numerous studies of nationalism and nation-making stress the process of 'inventing' or 'imagining' national communities, approaching ethnic communities as a base for national projects and thereby essentializing ethnic group characteristics and assuming their primordial character. The case of Lemko-Rusyns reminds us that ethnic groups are no less 'imagined' or 'invented' than nations.¹²² In this article, following other scholars who have discussed the 'Lemko question', I have emphasized the process of 'making' and not 'inventing' an ethnic group.¹²³ The Lemko-Rusyns' case invites us to scrutinize a set of factors that influence collective identities, including the geographical position of the area they used to inhabit. It has been frequently observed that Rusyn villages' isolation impeded (or at least decelerated) the development of a collective identity and simultaneously made them subject to the expansion of different national ideas. Letters, official documents, and oral histories reflect a variety of responses to these ideas. If we want to adequately account for those responses, we need to consider them not in relation to the 'pre-national(ist) past', but, as Agnieszka Halemba convincingly demonstrates, as consciously chosen forms of *anational* identification. Preferring this term over that of national indifference,¹²⁴ I concur with Halemba's observation that such identifications 'are *anational* in the sense that they both take on the nation in its various implications as a fact of the social world but refuse to follow at least some of those implications and to play along with the national rules'.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Ibid., 175.

¹²² Cf. Anastasia Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870–1990* (Chicago, IL 1997).

¹²³ Hann, 'From Ethnographic Group'; Paul Magocsi, 'Made or Re-made in America', in Paul Magocsi, *The Persistence of Regional Cultures: Rusyns and Ukrainians in their Carpathian Homeland and Abroad* (New York 1993).

¹²⁴ Tara Zahra admits that the term 'indifference' is problematic, as it suggests apathy and lack of agency, and she recognizes the need to see indifference as a form of political agency (Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*, 98, 113). This preference notwithstanding, there is no doubt that Zahra's concept remains helpful, for instance because it points to the fact the nationalist/nationalizing actors often need to change agenda when faced with the target group's 'indifference'.

¹²⁵ Halemba, 'Not Looking through a National Lens?', 124.

While providing a broader reflection on the ‘making of ethnic groups’, this research also contributes to the scholarship on minority policies in Poland. I have thus highlighted the importance of a more thorough focus on the Polish regime’s policies and ideologies, which challenges a popular, idealized view of the Second Republic.¹²⁶ The case in question provides an important illustration of Polish ‘colonizing’ or ‘civilizing’ policies – a subject that is more prominent in Polish literary studies than in social scientific and historical reflections.¹²⁷ Mirroring Hirsch’s observations on the process of ‘double assimilation’, it illustrates processes of assimilation into nationality categories (‘Lemkos’, ‘Hutsuls’) and the subsequent assimilation of such nationally categorized groups into a broader whole (the Polish state), which served to control and discipline the population.¹²⁸ It is thus unsurprising that scholars’ and state administrators’ accounts of Lemko-Rusyns include both an admiration for local culture and talk of reservations – a recognition of ‘potential Polishness’ along with the recognition of what needs to be eradicated if the people in question are to become Poles. The evidence presented suggests, too, that critical observers at the time *did* speak of the Polish state as ‘colonizing’ minorities, ‘oppressing’ their national identities, and ‘exterminating’ them economically.¹²⁹ An engagement with this scholarship is, I suggest, a promising way of tackling the subject of Polish colonialism and societal hierarchies, allowing for a more thorough reflection that moves beyond appropriating the vocabulary of postcolonial studies and psychoanalytical theories.¹³⁰

A more complex look at the Second Republic is also necessary due to peculiar, and often overlooked, references to the interwar era. A good example is the 2005 decision to define Lemkos as an ‘ethnic group’,¹³¹ in that it led to an odd perpetuation of interwar politics, with its search for forgotten wild mountaineers. Polish mass media tend to present Lemkos as ‘exotic aboriginals with a mysteriously romantic and tragic past’, to

¹²⁶ While historians have done a lot to counter such images, a view of ‘multicultural and tolerant’ interwar Poland continues to feature in school textbooks, various outlets popularizing history, and very prominently in contemporary political discourses (which, by framing post-World-War-II history in terms of ‘occupation’, aims at restoring the connection between the Second and the Third Republics). Present-day state authorities discuss the interwar Polish-Jewish ‘happy coexistence’ in official speeches and sponsor initiatives emphasizing Polish (past) friendliness towards minorities, while simultaneously withdrawing funds from minority organizations (among them Lemko and Ukrainian) and backing out from acknowledging Polish crimes against them. Poland is of course but one example of this trend (cf., e.g., the discussion on Hungary in Virag Molnar, ‘Civil Society, Radicalism and the Rediscovery of Mythic Nationalism’, *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 22 (2016), 165–85).

¹²⁷ For the discussion on the category of colonialism in contemporary literary scholarship, see, e.g.: Grażyna Borkowska, ‘Polskie doświadczenie kolonialne’, *Teksty drugie*, Vol. 4 (2007), 15–24; Aleksander Fiut, ‘Polonizacja? Kolonizacja?’, *Teksty drugie*, Vol. 6 (2003), 151–6.

¹²⁸ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 14; see also: Ciancia, ‘Borderland Modernity’.

¹²⁹ See, e.g., Srokowski, *Sprawa Narodowościowa*, 51–6.

¹³⁰ Cf. two widely quoted Polish monographs: Jan Sowa, *Fantomowe ciało króla. Peryferyjne zmagania z nowoczesną formą* (Kraków 2011); and Andrzej Leder, *Prześlona rewolucja. Ćwiczenia z logiki historycznej* (Warszawa 2015).

¹³¹ Chris Hann aptly observes that ‘[w]hat Reinfuss and others took pains to delineate as an “ethnographic group” shortly before its physical disintegration is now regularly reified in the social science literature as an “ethnic group”’ (Chris Hann, ‘Intellectuals, Ethnic Groups and Nations: Two Late-twentieth-century Cases’, in Sukumar Perival, ed., *Notions of Nationalism* (Budapest 1995), 112).

use Horbal's apt expression.¹³² A few randomly selected press titles – 'Lemkos' mountains of misfortunes', 'Lemko in search of tombs', 'Lemko can't live without forest', 'Young Lemko cries for mountains', 'We've lost it all', 'Rusyns, wake up!', 'What plays in Lemko soul ...', 'And the broken bell began to cry ...', 'Sound of sadness'¹³³ – well illustrate this tendency. Scholarly publications are also couched in terms not far from such romantic-nostalgic language; they stress Lemkos' peculiar tendency to remember the lost land and their 'primordial' attachment to the forest and land. All of this supports the growing importance of Lemko land as part of multicultural tourism, namely the tendency to use the construct of 'Lemko culture' – represented by folk musicians, ethnic clothing and 'peasant' food – as a regional attraction which exemplifies Poland's ethnic diversity.¹³⁴ Altogether, these scholarly, journalistic, and marketing representations reproduce the image of Lemkos' otherness and, at same time, their belonging to Poland: they are images of the Lemko minority living in a 'tolerant', 'minority-friendly' Poland, and the 'Lemko culture' which was 'nurtured' for centuries on Polish soil. Although in theory very different from interwar nationalizing policies, the new Polish multiculturalism bears some peculiar resemblances.

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¹³² Bogdan Horbal, 'Contested by Whom? Lemko Rusyns in the Post-Communist World', *Europa Ethnica*, Vol. 65 (2008), 45–58.


¹³³ Quotes come from: 'Wszystko my stratyły', *Gazeta Wyborcza* (11.12.1990); 'Czekają na swą godzinę', *Tygodnik Solidarność* (10.08.1990); 'Łemko nie może żyć bez lasu', *Gazeta Wyborcza* (19.10.2000); 'Rusini, przebudźcie się', *Dziennik Polski* (25.03.1991); 'Co w łemkowskiej duszy gra ...', *Gazeta Krakowska* (3.04.1991); 'I zapłakał pęknięty dzwon ...', *Czas Krakowski* (6–7.04.1991); 'A hory plakały, jak nas wyganiały', *Słowo ludu* (30.08.1991); 'W łemkowskiej zagrodzie', *Rzeczpospolita* (15–16.02.1992); 'Dźwięk smutku', *National Geographic* (April 2017).

¹³⁴ Agnieszka Pasieka, 'Wielokulturowość po polsku. O polityce wielokulturowości jako mechanizmie umacniania polskości', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, Vol. 57 (2013), 129–55.

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