POLAND'S WILD EAST:
IMAGINED LANDSCAPES AND EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE VOLHYNIAN BORDERLANDS, 1918-1939

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the Polish state's attempts to integrate, Polonize, and "civilize" the multiethnic eastern province of Volhynia between 1918 and 1939. While political elites promoted the province's connections to the nation's history, Volhynia's Polish population was drastically outnumbered by a combination of Ukrainians and Jews. Breaking from the traditional historiography, which explores Warsaw's policies towards Poland's ethnic minorities and analyzes interethnic relations between clearly-defined groups, the dissertation considers the "civilizing" mission carried out by a second tier of nationally-conscious political actors who represented the Polish state at the periphery. This group of men (and, more rarely, women) included border guards, teachers, policemen, national activists, military settlers, bureaucrats, scouts, and ethnographers, all of whom brought their own ideas about what Polish civilization meant in the "wild fields" of the East.

Since Volhynia was economically, socially, and culturally underdeveloped, lacking many of the basic indicators of "civilization," and since it lay in a geopolitically volatile region that bordered the Soviet Union, incoming elites attempted to shape the physical environment, material culture, and borderland people into something more Polish, European, and "civilized." Far from being an abstraction, Polishness was manifested in concrete actions, including the imposition of good governance, the maintenance of a secure border, and the creation of well-run towns and productive villages. Drawing inspiration from environmental and spatial histories, the chapters progress chronologically and thematically, each focusing on Polish efforts to regulate, transform, and promote the space of—or spaces within—Volhynia.

Although the idea of Polish civilizational superiority suggested a hierarchy of Volhynia's Ukrainian, Polish, Jewish, German, Czech, and Russian inhabitants (based on their everyday behavior and levels of material culture), Polishness could not simply be imposed from above. Indeed, physical conditions on the ground created tangible challenges to the "civilizing" mission. Elites found that local Poles were nationally indifferent and frequently put their own interests above those of the nation as a whole,

while ill-equipped and under-financed state personnel struggled to deal with the harsh realities of life and the intransigence of peasant populations. Reports and newspaper articles suggested that Volhynia was a place where Polishness might be lost and, by the late 1930s, visions of Polish civilization were replaced with more radical schemes of demographic and spatial transformation.

Studying this multiethnic borderland during the twenty years prior to the Second World War suggests how local dynamics contributed to the social and ethnic conflicts that exploded here after 1939. But the dissertation also provides an in-depth analysis of the wider tensions between national ideals and everyday realities, an exploration into the discursive use of "civilization" by East Europeans (who have traditionally been seen as less "civilized" than their Western European counterparts), and a methodological example of how spatial and environmental histories can illuminate the study of modern nationalism.

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The individual name that appears on the PhD belies the fact that the dissertation's foundations, content, form, and style—not to mention the happiness of its author—are influenced by many different people. I am grateful to have this opportunity to thank the individuals who have helped me along the way.

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The historian's experience does not begin and end with the archive, however, and I am grateful to those individuals whose company I enjoyed once the archives closed their doors. In Poland, my extended family—particularly *Wujek* Jurek and *Ciocia* Ala Sypek, and my *kuzynki*, Dominika and Olga Sypek—always made me feel at home in Częstochowa and Kraków, supplying me with copious amounts of delicious homemade *naleśniki* and *gołąbki* just when I needed them most. In Warsaw, I thank Basia Nawrot, who allowed me to practice my spoken Polish with her over

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And finally, to my husband, Drew Ciancia. Although we have not always been in the same physical spot, Drew has been at my side the entire time. He has read my work, offered constructive advice, delivered cups of tea at regular intervals, coaxed me away from my desk, followed me to Poland one freezing February and to Ukraine one sweltering July, and allowed me to indulge in my favorite pastime of exploring old cemeteries. We both know that the completion of this project is thanks—in no small part—to his endless supply of love and humor.

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In books and dissertations that deal with multiethnic spaces, it is customary to include an explanation of the names employed by the historian. Here, since I almost exclusively deal with the ways in which Poles envisaged and administered Volhynia (and since the province was part of the Polish state throughout), I use only the Polish spellings of counties (*powiaty*), districts (*gminy*), towns, and villages. Some place names—namely Warsaw (Warszawa) and Volhynia (Wołyń)—are rendered in their Anglicized form.

Greater problems are presented in naming groups of people, particularly because the terms "Ruthenian" and "Ukrainian" were not used in a neutral way during the interwar period. "Ruthenian" was favored by the Polish right, who did not conceive of Ruthenians as members of a fully-developed nation, but saw them instead as an ethnic group; the term "Ukrainian" was used by Ukrainian nationalist groups, as well as by Poles who shared Piłsudski and Józewski's belief that a separate Ukrainian nation existed. I use the terms "Pole," "Ukrainian," and "Ruthenian" as they are employed in my sources in an attempt to convey the original voices in those documents. When I write about such populations in my own voice, I tend to employ "Polish-speaking populations" or "Ukrainian-speaking populations" in order to avoid making a definitive judgment on levels of national consciousness. However, I use "Ukrainian" to refer to those people who actively identified with a Ukrainian nationalist agenda, such as politicians, agitators, and social activists. Since Jewish nationality and the Jewish religion almost always corresponded with one another in Volhynia, I use the term "Jews" throughout.

All translations from French, Polish, and Ukrainian are my own. For the transliteration of Ukrainian words, I use the Library of Congress system.

INTRODUCTION:
Imagined Landscapes and Everyday Life

In February 1918, as the First World War was officially coming to a close on the Eastern Front, German soldiers entered the region of Volhynia in the Polish-Russian borderlands. Arriving in local towns, the soldiers were struck by the poor urban conditions and low levels of material culture. Badly damaged by the war, with no regulated street plans and few public institutions, and composed almost exclusively of one-story wooden dwellings, these towns, the soldiers reported, resembled nothing more than the settlements of the American "Wild West."[1] Like many German commentaries on Eastern Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the observation was not merely descriptive, but betrayed deeper German convictions about civilization and culture (or indeed the lack thereof) in the East.

In recent years, historians of modern Europe have turned their attention to this German discourse, which portrayed the Polish-speaking lands—and their inhabitants—as "backward" and "uncivilized." The attribution of economic and social "backwardness" to these areas was partly a reflection of what Larry Wolff has labeled the "invention" of Eastern Europe—the concept that, since the Enlightenment, Eastern Europe has been viewed as Western Europe's "uncivilized" counterpart.[2] But it was also due to the realities of the nineteenth century, during which the Polish state was absent from the map of Europe and the Polish-speaking lands were depicted as the venue for "civilizing" projects carried out (or at least imagined) by other national groups. In particular, German writers, geographers, and politicians constantly described these territories as sites of poor agriculture, low living standards, and "uncivilized" conditions.[3] The imagined landscape of Poland was a barren, non-

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[1] Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, "Przemiany cywilizacyjne i socjotopograficzne miast województwa wołyńskiego 1921-1939," *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej* 1 (1995): 107-108.
[2] Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).
[3] A recent trend in historiography has pointed towards the ways in which the Polish lands and their inhabitants were imagined as socially and nationally "backward"—and administered as such—during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See Robert L. Nelson, ed., *Germans, Poland, and Colonial Expansion to the East: 1850 through the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Jeffrey K. Wilson, "Environmental Chauvinism in the Prussian East: Forestry as a Civilizing Mission on the Ethnic Frontier, 1871–1914," *Central European History* 41 (2008): 27-70; David Blackbourn, *The*

European wasteland, "devoid of human presence and agency" and inhabited by ignorant Slavs who could be lifted out of their inertia only through German governance.[4] These lands constituted Germany's "Wild East," a European equivalent to the American frontier, and a place where colonial fantasies might be explored. As such, their Polish-speaking populations became vessels to be filled with the cultural imaginings of other nations, rather than agents in their own right.

This dissertation offers us a new way of looking at Polish history, and East European history more generally, by focusing on the eastern policies and practices of the Polish state between 1918 and 1939. It suggests that nationally-conscious Poles utilized their own civilizing and modernizing discourses to talk about what it meant to be "Polish" in the eastern borderlands (*kresy*), areas of the state in which Poles constituted but a small percentage of the population. Drawing on the idea of "nesting orientalisms" popularized by the anthropologist Milica Bakic-Hayden—whereby countries that have been designated as "backward" and not fully European label others in the same way—I argue that Poles utilized ideas about modernization, Europeanness, and civilization to justify Polish rule over the Ukrainian and Jewish populations of eastern Poland.[5] Indeed, when analyzed, Polish rhetorical strategies during the interwar years looked rather similar to those of their German counterparts: both connected "more eastern" nations with undesirable characteristics, such as underdevelopment, poor material culture, backwardness, and dirt. This dissertation argues that, like Germany, Poland had its own "Wild East," a demographically non-Polish land in which Ukrainians and Jews were placed on a lower rung of the civilizational scale. To explore these dynamics, I focus on Volhynia, one of the most

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Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006), 239-296; Lenny A. Urena Valerio, "The Stakes of Empire: Colonial Fantasies, Civilizing Agendas, and Biopolitics in the Prussian-Polish Provinces (1840-1914)" **(**PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2010); Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Michael Burleigh*, Germany Turns Eastwards: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988). On the German image of the East more generally, see Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East: 1800 to the Present* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[4] See Kristin Kopp, "Reinventing Poland as a German Colonial Territory in the Nineteenth Century: Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben* as Colonial Novel," in *Germans, Poland, and Colonial Expansion to the East*, 22.

[5] Milica Bakic-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (1995): 917-931.

"backward" provinces of the interwar state, where Ukrainian-speaking Orthodox peasants and Yiddish-speaking Jews constituted almost 80% of the population, and where underdevelopment, ethnic diversity, and geopolitical anxieties converged.

The discourse of a Polish civilizing mission in the eastern borderlands was not, of course, a twentieth-century innovation. While never constituting a political unit or clearly-defined territory, the multiethnic *kresy*, with their impressive list of Polish alumni, had long played an important role as the bastion of Polish civilization in the East.[6] The province of Volhynia certainly had strong historical connections to Poland that formed a usable past for interwar elites. A political entity called Volhynia could be traced back to the early medieval kingdom of Kievan Rus' (late ninth to mid-thirteenth century), but the precise configuration of Volhynia had changed dramatically over the centuries, as various states expanded and retreated in this perennial borderland.[7] During the fourteenth century, following the disintegration of Kievan Rus', the Grand Duchy of Lithuania moved southwards, claiming Volhynia and only ceding control to Poland in 1569 as part of the Union of Lublin, which created the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The early modern Volhynian province of Poland covered a significantly larger area than its later interwar incarnation. During the second half of the eighteenth century, as the commonwealth weakened, the neighboring states of Prussia, Russia, and Austria saw an opportunity to increase their territories, and went about dividing up the Polish-Lithuanian state through a series of three partitions. As part of the final two partitions, in 1793 and (more particularly) in 1795, Volhynia was ceded to the Russian Empire, which created a new administrative province (the Volhynian governorate [*gubernia*]) with a territory stretching further

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[6] Józef Korzeniowski (Joseph Conrad), Czesław Miłosz, Tadeusz Konwicki, Juliusz Słowacki, Adam Mickiewicz, and Józef Piłsudski all came from the *kresy*. According to Jerzy Tomaszewski, "It would be difficult to enumerate the names of all the people who permanently marked their presence in Polish culture of the twentieth century and co-created the myth of the eastern borderlands." See Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Rzeczpospolita Wielu Narodów* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1985), 43. For more on the historic myths of the *kresy*, see Jacek Kolbuszewski, *Kresy* (Wrocław: Wydawn. Dolnośląskie, 1995); Stefan Kieniewicz, "Kresy. Przemiany Terminologiczne w Perspektywie Dziejowej," *Przegląd Wschodni* 1, no. 1 (1991): 3-13; Feliks Gross, "Kresy: The Frontier of Eastern Europe," *Polish Review* 23, no. 2 (1978): 3-16.

[7] For a selection of maps depicting the region's historical borders over time, see Paul Robert Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), particularly maps 4, 5, 6, 7a, 10, 14, 18, 19a, 21, 22a, 24, 36, 37, 38, and 40b.

east than its Polish predecessor. When the Volhynian province was restored after the First World War as part of the resurgent Polish state, it encompassed only the western part of this Russian *gubernia.*

In the interwar period, the history of Volhynia—and that of the *kresy* more generally—stirred feelings of both hope and fear among Polish elites. During the years of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the eastern lands had been depicted as an outpost of Polish civilization and Western Christendom against Orthodoxy and Russian despotism, a trend that paralleled the myths of other Eastern and Central European nations.[8] Yet such confidence was twinned with a sense of anxiety. Following the division of Poland in the late eighteenth century, Polish-speaking elites feared that the partitioning powers would rid the *kresy* of their "Polishness" (*polskość*), not an unwarranted concern in the western borderlands of the Russian Empire, where authorities carried out repressive policies towards the Roman Catholic Church and the Polish language.[9] The *kresy* were therefore seen as both a bastion of Polishness in the East and a place where Polishness was under threat.[10] During the interwar years, Polish political commentators emphasized that the *kresy*—usually defined as the six provinces that lay along the Polish-Soviet border, as well as the eastern parts of Lwów and Białystok provinces (see Figure 1)—had deep historical connections to Poland; these were not virgin lands to be conquered, but rather territories to be re-claimed, re-governed, and, above all, re-Polonized. The region that made up the interwar Volhynian province was therefore seen as part of a wider strip of territory, at once civilizationally Polish and demographically non-Polish.

These older Romantic ideas about Poland's historic role in the East found echoes during the interwar period in memoranda submitted to the Paris Peace

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[8] Various countries, including Hungary, Bosnia, Germany, Ukraine, and Estonia, have cultivated self-images as the last bastions of Western civilization against an uncivilized, un-European, and Asiatic East. See Holly Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 7.

[9] Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland. Vol. II: 1795 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 60-82. Despite persecution by the Russian authorities, a fledging, intelligentsia-driven Ukrainian national movement, which sought to prove that the Ukrainians constituted a separate nation, also emerged. See Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine: The Land and Its People,* 2nd ed. (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 374-407.

[10] Jerzy Jedlicki, "Holy Ideals and Prosaic Life, or the Devil's Alternatives," in *Polish Paradoxes*, eds. Stanisław Gomułka and Antony Polonsky (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 41.

Conference and in propaganda that compared contemporary border guards to the *kresy* knights of yore. But in the twenty years between the wars, the prevailing discourse focused on a set of pan-European markers that indicated what it meant to be civilized, modern, and European. The influence of such ideas in the Polish lands was also not completely new. During the nineteenth century, as historians Jerzy Jedlicki and Brian Porter have shown, elites debated the extent to which European patterns of modernization and civilization suited Polish socioeconomic conditions, particularly in the Russian partition.[11] The positivist concept of "organic work"—which focused on the "small politics" of everyday life, such as improving literacy and farming techniques, and building railroads—became increasingly important following the failed 1863 Uprising.[12] In the interwar period, these ideas were woven into formal and informal state policies that echoed those espoused by the Western European powers, both within their borders and in imperial territories overseas. In the East, Polish elites linked modernization with Polishness, and viewed the absence of civilization as a symptom of the lack of Polish influence. As had been the case during the period of organic work, these men (and, more rarely, women) attributed Polishness to concrete developments, such as law and order, competent governance, the development of modern towns and villages, and the collection of scientific knowledge.

Polish civilizational claims only make sense within the specific contexts of interwar Poland and the administrative province of Volhynia. Three sets of interrelated problems—economic and political underdevelopment, interethnic tensions, and geopolitical volatility—plagued the Polish state from its infancy, and all three were amplified within the desperate conditions of Volhynia. First, the Polish state struggled to govern and integrate areas that had been part of three separate empires (Austrian, German, and Russian) for over a hundred years. In this predominantly rural country, where 75% of people resided in the countryside, living standards and literacy rates were low, and land hunger was rife. In Volhynia (and in the *kresy* more generally) the low levels of "civilization" that characterized the Polish state as a whole appeared in a

[11] Jerzy Jedlicki, *A Suburb of Europe: Polish Nineteenth-Century Approaches to Western Civilization* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999); Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
[12] Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*, 48.

grotesquely exaggerated form, largely as a consequence of the lack of economic and social investment made in the region by the Russian imperial authorities. Literacy rates were far lower here than they were in the formerly German provinces (standing at less than 22% in the Volhynian countryside in 1927), agricultural land and techniques were severely underdeveloped, and towns were often little more than overgrown villages. While some outsiders, most notably the American geographer Louise Boyd, viewed the *kresy* as an enchanting primordial landscape, the region constituted an economic, political, and security nightmare for the fledgling state.[13]

Problems of economic backwardness were compounded by the fact that the interwar state was a "republic of many nations," one that featured high percentages of people who did not identify as Polish. According to the 1931 census, which relied on linguistic rather than national criteria, Poles constituted only 69% of the state's total population, with Ukrainians making up 14%, Jews 9%, Belarusians 3%, Germans 2%, and the remaining 3% consisting of Russians, Czechs, Lithuanians, and "locals" (those without national identity).[14] While the cultural and political rights of the non-Polish nationalities were protected by the minorities' treaty and the 1921 constitution, these populations encountered both official and unofficial discrimination.

Throughout the interwar period, the Polish state also lacked a single set of policies towards its minorities, moving instead between two visions of the nation. The first was promoted by the former legionnaire Józef Piłsudski who became the *de facto* national leader after his 1926 coup and advocated a wide definition of the Polish nation that could include Jews and Slavic minorities; the second was espoused by the right-wing National Democrat Roman Dmowski who favored a narrower definition, promoting anti-Semitism and the forced assimilation of non-Polish Slavs. While minority problems were statewide, they were of particular importance in the *kresy*, where Poles constituted a demographic minority. In Volhynia, arguably the most ethnically and religiously diverse province in the state, only 16.6% of the total population was identified as Polish on the 1931 census, with the rest categorized as Ukrainians (68.4%), Jews (9.9%), Germans (2.3%), Czechs (1.5%), Russians (1.1%),

[13] Louise A. Boyd, *Polish Countrysides* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1937).
[14] Tomaszewski, *Rzeczpospolita Wielu Narodów*, 35.

and "others" (0.2%).[15] Although Piłsudski and Dmowski differed in their specific policies towards the Ukrainians and Jews, both agreed that the Poles constituted the more "civilized" partner in these relationships.

Figure 1: The Provinces of Interwar Poland. Source: Antony Polonsky, *Politics in Independent Poland*, 47. Note the alternative Anglicized spelling of Volhynia (Volynia).

Finally, Poland's geopolitically precarious position between Germany and the Soviet Union (both powers with irredentist designs on the interwar Polish state) caused particular problems in the eastern territories that lay along the Polish-Soviet border. Having been militarily and diplomatically contested by representatives of the Bolsheviks, Ukrainians, and Poles during the period immediately after the First World War, Volhynia's largely non-Polish population was seen as susceptible to outside agitation from both communists across the border and Ukrainian nationalists (of various stripes) from the formerly Austrian area of Eastern Galicia. The combination

[15] Grzegorz Hryciuk, *Przemiany narodowościowe i ludnościowe w Galicji Wschodniej i na Wołyniu w latach 1931-1948* (Toruń: Wydawn. Adam Marszałek, 2005), 139.

of these three factors—underdevelopment, ethnic diversity, and geopolitical anxieties—meant that interwar Volhynia constituted an important site for modernization, re-Polonization (in a variety of forms), and security operations.

Plans to modernize these lands were, however, constantly undercut by state and societal weaknesses. Indeed, the second major argument of this dissertation is that the confident pronouncements of the Polish state and its local representatives—like many of the claims of modern nationalists—were twinned with persistent anxieties about the sturdiness of state power and of Polishness itself. While Polish elites at both a central and a local level attempted to justify their rule over the non-Polish populations of the East, dreams of Polish civilization were constantly challenged by the physical environments and human material that elites sought to modernize. Poles asserted that they were superior to Ukrainian peasants and urban-dwelling Jews, but experience indicated that the binary of the "civilized" Pole and "non-civilized" Ukrainian or Jew was undercut by the actual behavior and attitudes of both local and incoming populations. Indeed, Polish elites discussed their profound anxieties about the ways in which Polishness was developing (or rather not developing) on the ground. This story, therefore, is one of two halves—of grand civilizational rhetoric and of chronic state weakness. In the pages that follow, I explore Polish claims to act as a cordon sanitaire against eastern diseases, to construct towns with sewer systems and paved streets, and to create prosperous villages. But I also illuminate the ways in which state representatives failed to project Polish civilization in the East due to the very real constraints they encountered at a local level. In this way, the problem of the interwar *kresy* can be seen within a wider motif of Polish history, whereby "holy ideals" fall short in the context of "prosaic life."[16]

Historiographical Review

In order to explore the meanings of—and challenges to—Polish policies in Volhynia, this study both builds upon and moves beyond the existing historiography. Most of the older English-language studies of interwar Eastern Europe have tended to

[16] See Jedlicki, "Holy Ideals and Prosaic Life," 40-62.

focus on two interrelated questions: Why were the successor states political and economic failures? and What characterized relations between the nation-states and their various national minorities? In answering both questions, a generation of historians explored a now well-known laundry list of political, economic, and ethno-national problems.[17] Books on interwar Poland by Joseph Rothschild, Antony Polonsky, and Norman Davies—written in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s respectively—similarly emphasized the crippling problems faced at the level of high politics, steering their readers through a labyrinth of seemingly impossible political challenges and frequent wrong turns.[18] Other works in English on interwar nationality problems also looked at the relationships between "the state," on the one hand, and "the national minorities," on the other, often seeking to show that the Polish state was either "good" or "bad" for its non-Polish populations.[19] These historians tended to view the nationality problems from the perspective of Warsaw, utilizing overtly political sources, such as the minorities' treaty, state legislation, parliamentary debates, political tracts and reports, and newspapers. These types of sources reified national identities, indicating that the minorities might best be understood as clear-cut groups, albeit with their own internal differences. While interwar society was never entirely overlooked, political questions (narrowly-defined) were prioritized.[20]

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[17] For some examples of the historiography on interwar Eastern Europe, see Antony Polonsky, *The Little Dictators: The History of Eastern Europe since 1918* (London and Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 1975); Alan Palmer, *The Lands Between: A History of East-Central Europe since the Congress of Vienna* (New York: Macmillan, 1970); E. Garrison Walters, *The Other Europe: Eastern Europe to 1945* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988).

[18] Joseph Rothschild, *Pilsudski's Coup d'Etat* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966); Antony Polonsky, *Politics in Independent Poland 1921-1939: The Crisis of Constitutional Government* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); Norman Davies, *God's Playground. Vol. II*, especially 291-321.

[19] Stephen Horak, *Poland and Her National Minorities, 1919-1939* (New York: Vantage Press, 1969). On relations between Poles and Ukrainians, see Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 425-452; Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, Chapter 46; Alexander J. Motyl, "Ukrainian Nationalist Political Violence in Inter-War Poland, 1921-1939," *East European Quarterly*. 19, no.1 (1985): 45-55. On the polarization of historiography on Polish-Jewish relations, see Ezra Mendelsohn, "Interwar Poland: Good for the Jews or Bad for the Jews?," in *The Jews in Poland,* eds. Chimen Abramsky et al. (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986). Perhaps the most well-known negative assessment of Polish policies toward the Jews is Celia Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews of Poland between the Two World Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).

[20] While the opening chapter of Polonsky's book is entitled "Independent Poland: The Social and Economic Background," the rest of the study focuses on political questions. See Polonsky, *Politics in Independent Poland,* 1-44.

Studies of the interwar period produced in communist Poland also covered political policies and intellectual attitudes towards the national minorities.[21] While the Second Republic (Poland's interwar state) was initially viewed as a bastion of right-wing nationalism, capitalism, landowner interests, and bourgeois politics, the relative liberalization of the 1970s and 1980s produced a wider range of historical accounts that began to stress achievement as well as failure.[22] Throughout, however, questions of social and economic relations were seen as a prime area of focus, with historians emphasizing a Marxist-inspired, class-oriented set of concerns and methodologies. In studies of national minorities, concepts of social status, economic relations, and class were of prime importance: thus the Ukrainian and Belarusian questions were inextricably linked to the peasant question, while the positions of Germans and Jews were connected to their "bourgeois" roles within the capitalist system.[23] In Ukrainian-language histories produced in the Soviet Union, the deep ideological links between nation and social class were even more pronounced. As the Ukrainian historian Mykola Kucherepa has shown, works on the Second Republic inflated the role of the Communist Party in freeing Ukrainians from the yoke of the Polish landowners.[24]

While books that focused specifically on the *kresy* were few and far between (not least because the postwar absorption of these territories into the Soviet Union constituted a potential source of anti-state opposition), those that were published

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[21] On political visions of the Ukrainians, see Teofil Piotrkiewicz, *Kwestia Ukraińska w Polsce w Koncepcjach Piłsudczyzny, 1926-1930* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1981) and Mirosława Papierzyńska-Turek, *Sprawa Ukraińska w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej, 1922-1926* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1979). For more general conceptions of interwar Poland's minorities, see Andrzej Chojnowski, *Koncepcje polityki narodowościowej rządów polskich w latach 1921-1939* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1979).

[22] Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier, "The Rise and Decline of Official Marxist Historiography in Poland, 1945-1983," *Slavic Review* 44, no. 4 (1985): 666.

[23] See the work of two prolific social historians, Janusz Żarnowski and Jerzy Tomaszewski. Żarnowski, *Społeczeństwo Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1973), particularly 372-401. Jerzy Tomaszewski demonstrates that the Jewish question in Poland was social and economic in his *Zarys dziejów Żydów w Polsce w latach 1918-1939* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1990). On the national minorities in interwar Poland more generally, see Tomaszewski, *Rzeczpospolita Wielu Narodów.*

[24] Mykoła Kuczerepa, "Stosunki ukraińsko-polskie w II Rzeczypospolitej we współczesnej historiografii ukraińskiej," in *Historycy polscy i ukraińscy wobec problemów XX wieku*, eds. Piotr Kosiewiski and Grzegorz Motyka (Kraków: Tow. Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2000), 147. Significantly, Kuczerepa has himself been accused of writing a nationalistic history of interwar Poland's "occupation" of Volhynia. See Zbigniew Zaporowski, *Wołyńskie Zjednoczenie Ukraińskie* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2000), 15.

emphasized the economic and social backwardness that the Polish state encountered in the East. A short 1963 study of the interwar province of Polesie by Jerzy Tomaszewski described social, economic, and material conditions, the structures of the various national groups, and the nature of the Polish state's policies.[25] Twenty-five years later, another social historian, Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, published a study of "civilizational, social, and political transformations" in Volhynia, which similarly focused on the importance of local conditions.[26] While such communist-era histories undoubtedly utilized ideological frameworks of analysis, they also made important contributions to a very limited literature, pointing to the significance of locality and material culture, and the links between national, social, and economic questions. However, they did not consider the political and national meanings attributed to the Polish state's modernization schemes in the non-Polish borderlands, tending instead to use ideas of "civilization" and "modernization" in order to measure the interwar Polish state's progress. As Mędrzecki himself pointed out in a more recent essay, emphasizing the interwar state's "backwardness" (or achievements) often constituted a political commentary on communist Poland; by highlighting the existence of interwar poverty, exploitation, and illiteracy, for instance, historians might emphasize the civilizational and social achievements of postwar communism.[27]

Post-1989 historiography in Poland proposed new ways of looking at the histories of the *kresy* and their multiethnic populations. Unsurprisingly perhaps, much historical (and public) attention focused on the bloody Polish-Ukrainian conflict that erupted between 1943 and 1947 and had been subject to the communist-era "politics of amnesia."[28] But histories of the interwar period, the majority of which avoided the

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[25] Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Z Dziejów Polesia, 1921-1939: Zarys stosunków społeczno-ekonomicznych* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1963).
[26] Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, *Województwo wołyńskie 1921-1939: elementy przemian cywilizacyjnych, społecznych i politycznych* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1988).
[27] Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, "Druga Rzeczpospolita w historiografii polskiej po 1989 roku," in *Historycy polscy i ukraińscy wobec problemów XX wieku*, 11.
[28] At a 1997 seminar during which prominent Polish and Ukrainian historians discussed "difficult questions" in Polish-Ukrainian history, 22 of the 23 designated themes were related to the Second World War or its immediate aftermath; the remaining theme concerned Poles and Ukrainians during the interwar years. See *Polska-Ukraina: Trudne Pytania, t. 1-2: Materiały II międzynarodowego seminarium historycznego "Stosunki polsko-ukraińskie w latach 1918-1947" Warszawa, 22-24 maja 1997* (Warsaw: Światowy Związek Żołnierzy Armii Krajowej, Związek Ukraińców w Polsce, 1998), 7-

controversies associated with the Second World War, also burgeoned.[29] Some scholars attempted to rescue positive stories from the interwar state's nationality policies. Two important publications on Volhynia—written by Jan Kęsik and Włodzimierz Mędrzecki respectively—highlighted the attempts of the hitherto "little known" governor Henryk Józewski and his intellectual circle to implement a more tolerant set of policies towards the province's minorities.[30] Other studies sought to explore the ways in which the Polish state dealt with Ukrainian populations in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia. Free from the ideological language of their predecessors, the work of historians such as Eugeniusz Mironowicz and Robert Potocki provided even-handed and in-depth accounts of the relations between the state and its minorities.[31] Another trend focused on historical actors who were marginalized in the communist historiography, such as national activists, military settlers, and border guards.[32] These studies have been augmented by an increasing number of memoirs and document collections that focus on border guards and military settlers.[33] While we should not

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8. For the comment on the "politics of amnesia," see Jerzy Jedlicki, "Historical Memory as a Source of Conflicts in Eastern Europe," *Communist and Post Communist Studies* 32, no. 3 (1999): 228.

[29] For an example of more nationalistic history that highlights the "crimes" committed by Ukrainians, see Bogumił Grott, ed., *Działalność nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Kresach Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw: Muzeum Historii Polskiego Ruchu Ludowego, 2010).

[30] Jan Kęsik, *Zaufany Komendanta: Biografia Polityczna Jana Henryka Józewskiego 1892-1981* (Wrocław: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1995); Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, *Inteligencja polska na Wołyniu w okresie międzywojennym* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Neriton Instytut Historii PAN, 2005).

[31] Eugeniusz Mironowicz, *Białorusini i Ukraińcy w polityce obozu piłsudczykowskiego* (Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie Trans Humana, 2007); Robert Potocki, *Polityka państwa polskiego wobec zagadnienia ukraińskiego w latach 1930-1939* (Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2003).

[32] Nina Zielińska, *Towarzystwo Straży Kresowej 1918-1927* (Lublin: Verba, 2006); Janina Stobniak-Smogorzewska, *Kresowe Osadnictwo Wojskowe 1920-1945* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Oficyna Wydawn. "Rytm," 2003); Michał Kacprzak, *Towarzystwo Rozwoju Ziem Wschodnich 1933-39* (Łódź: Wydawn. Naukowe "Ibidem," 2005); Marek Jabłonowski, *Formacja Specjalna: Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza 1924-1939* (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR, 2002).

[33] Mirosław Jan Rubas, ed., *Oni Strzegli Granic II Rzeczypospolitej: Relacje i wspomnienia* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Weteranów Polskich Formacji Granicznych Wydawnictwo "Barwa i Broń," 2002); Henryka Łappo et al, eds., *Z Kresów Wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej: wspomnienia z osad wojskowych 1921-1940* (London: Ognisko Rodzin Osadników Kresowych, 1998); Beata Czekaj-Wiśniewska et al., eds., *Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza: jednodniówki w zbiorach Centralnej Biblioteki Wojskowej* (Warsaw: Wydawn. Polonia Militaris, 2006); Marek Jabłonowski and Adam Koseski, eds., *O Niepodległą i Granice: T4: Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza 1924-1939: Wybór Dokumentów* (Warsaw: Wydział Dziennikarstwa i Nauk Politycznych Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego); Paweł Skubisz, ed., *Instrukcja służby Korpusu Ochrony Pogranicza* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2010); Barbara Tarkowska, *Brygada KOP "Podole" w relacjach i wspomnieniach 1924-1939* (Warsaw: Dom

expect such sources to reveal "hidden truths" about the interwar years, they certainly enhance our perspectives with new voices, histories, and experiences.

Despite these developments, however, there are still subjects and approaches with which Polish historiography has failed to engage. First, as suggested above, there has been virtually no scholarship on the ways in which concepts of Polishness were tied to broader notions of civilization and modernization. While historians have investigated state policies towards the Ukrainians or (less frequently) the Jews in the *kresy*, rarely have they linked such policies with overarching justifications or claims. In contrast, this dissertation moves beyond the high politics of Warsaw and debates about how "good" or "bad" the Polish state was for its non-Polish populations, attempting instead to understand how the Poles viewed, described, and treated the people and lands of the East. By showing that modernization was not something that inevitably happened, but that it was a set of processes to which contemporaries ascribed particular significance, this work speaks to wider historiography on European nationalizing and imperial projects. Being able to construct a civilized set of conditions in the East said something about what it meant to be Polish, just as nineteenth-century German imperial policies towards the Polish-speaking lands, French policies in the overseas empire, and Soviet "civilizing" policies in frontier territories were connected to claims about the state's political legitimacy.[34] Such links allow us to look beyond the traditional East European historiographical framework, and to connect the Polish experience with broader pan-European trends.

Polish historiography—and indeed much of the English-language historiography—has also been less concerned with debates about what Polishness meant at a local level. As I show in this dissertation, we need to explore how Polishness was understood vis-à-vis Volhynia's multiethnic populations, and not

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Wydawniczy "Bellona," 2007). Archives have also been opened up, meaning that historians now have access to new files on the interwar border guards (KOP Archive in Szczecin) and local memoirs (KARTA Archive in Warsaw).

[34] On France, see J.P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). On the Soviet Union, see Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Paula A. Michaels, *Curative Powers: Medicine and Empire in Stalin's Central Asia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003).

merely in Warsaw's corridors of power. After all, bringing Polishness through modernization was not only an elite political project; it was also a set of ideas espoused by a diverse group of actors who lived and worked in Volhynia. As Katherine Jolluck has shown in her study of Polish women's constructions of national identity in exile, Polishness did not "simply exist," but was "constantly in the making in response to external influences and both individual and collective needs."[35] In light of such ideas, this dissertation focuses on a second tier of actors who were instrumental in bringing visions of Polishness to Volhynia. This amorphous group—the majority of whom came from beyond the province—included state bureaucrats, military settlers, teachers, national activists, border guards, town planners, clergymen, ethnographers, local intelligentsia, and policemen. Since the state lacked the finances and manpower to directly implement a coherent political project in the East, these people acted as the imperfect instruments of state power. Studying these groups opens up a unique window into the tensions and fractures within nationalizing projects. Not only did these men and women hold contrasting conceptions of what Polishness should be, but they were also forced to deal with the miserable conditions they found on the ground. While scholars have often looked at the theoretical underpinnings of modern nationalism, I explore the gap between nationalist rhetoric and everyday life through the eyes of people who were connected to both.

This focus on how nationalist visions fell short on the ground prompts questions about national indifference, both as a political concept held by the Polish state and as a reality. While Polish historians have long acknowledged the problems with interwar nationality statistics and the presence of proto-national groups, such as the Polesians, Hutsuls, Boikos, and Lemkos, they have not studied national indifference as a "category of analysis."[36] In contrast, recent English-language studies of nationalism in Eastern and Central Europe have sought to understand the internal

[35] Katherine R. Jolluck, *Exile and Identity: Polish Women in the Soviet Union during World War II* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002), xxii.
[36] Tomaszewski, *Rzeczpospolita Wielu Narodów*, 25-37. For a more recent attempt to make sense of the national statistics in Volhynia, see Hryciuk, *Przemiany narodowościowe*, 135-161. On national indifference as a category of analysis, see Tara Zahra, "Imagined Non-Communities: National Indifference as a Category of Historical Analysis," *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (2010): 93-119.

dynamics within nationalizing projects, rather than merely the dynamics between clearly-defined national groups. Scholars working on modern nationalism have shown how, in the words of the sociologist Rogers Brubaker, ethnic groups should not be viewed as "substantial, objectively definable entities."[37] Recent work on the Habsburg lands has explored the conflicts between nationalists and the nationally indifferent populations they encountered on the ground. In Pieter Judson's work on the "language frontiers" of the Austrian Empire, for example, German- and Czech-speaking populations in borderland regions—the supposed "foot soldiers of the nation"—revealed that they were not the hardy material that nationalists desired, but were instead nationally ambiguous, bilingual, and guilty of intermarriage.[38] Other studies of the Czech-German borderlands (by Tara Zahra, Nancy Wingfield, Jeremy King, Eagle Glassheim, and Caitlin Murdock), the German-Polish area of Upper Silesia (by James Bjork and Brendan Karch), and the German minority in interwar Poland (by Winson Chu) have also shown that national identities were fluid, situational, and poorly developed, much to the chagrin of national activists.[39]

This dissertation reveals how Polish-speaking populations in Volhynia were a similar disappointment for nationalist elites. On the one hand, ideas about the nation became an important way in which elites sought to explain the behavior of borderland inhabitants. But, on the other, national identity was not the only factor influencing people's behavior. As such, questions about the interactions between "Poles" and

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[37] Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 64.
[38] Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 2.
[39] Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Nancy Wingfield, *Flag Wars and Stone Saints: How the Bohemian Lands Became Czech* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Eagle Glassheim, *Noble Nationalists: The Transformation of the Bohemian Aristocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Caitlin E. Murdock, *Changing Places: Society, Culture, and Territory in the Saxon-Bohemian Borderlands, 1870-1946* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010); James E. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008); Brendan Karch, "Nationalism on the Margins: Silesians between Germany and Poland, 1848-1945" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2010); Winson W. Chu, "German Political Organizations and Regional Particularisms in Interwar Poland (1918-1939)" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2006). For a summary of the scholarship that deals with "national indifference," see Zahra, "Imagined Non-Communities."

"Ukrainians" or "Poles" and "Jews" are less important here than those focusing on the ways in which Polish elites described, categorized, and developed policies toward the Ukrainian-speaking, Polish-speaking, and Jewish populations. Readers hoping to discover the "Ukrainian" or "Jewish" perspectives will be similarly disappointed, since the idea that there were single perspectives created by clearly-defined national groups is one of the fallacies that I argue against.

Environments of Volhynia

Before going any further, it is worth taking a brief tour around the province of Volhynia. After its official creation in 1921, Volhynia constituted one of the largest administrative provinces in the Polish state, covering just over 30,000 square kilometers in 1921, and expanding to almost 36,000 in 1930. The new province was divided into ten (and from 1930 onwards, eleven) smaller administrative units called *powiaty* (counties), each named after its county town, while the *powiaty* were themselves split into smaller local units named *gminy* (districts). The province and counties of Volhynia—marked on Figure 2—constituted the basic political and administrative units for Volhynia's one-and-a-half million residents.[40]

At the heart of this project, however, lies the idea that Volhynia should be understood as more than just a political unit. Rather, we should see it as a physical and geographical entity, one in which ordinary people lived and worked. What characterized the physical landscape? What did Volhynia look and feel like? And how did its topography, climate, and soils—not to mention human attempts to alter the environment—influence the lifestyles of its inhabitants?

Significantly, Volhynia was sandwiched between two very different types of landscape. To its north were the swamplands of Polesie (better known as the Pripet Marshes); to the south, the hillier lands of Podolia. Numerous rivers—including the Styr, Stochód, Słucz, Ikwa, and Horyń—flowed from their southern sources towards the lower-lying marshlands further north. In light of its geographical position, the

[40] The map shows the administrative divisions of Volhynia after 1930. Note that in 1925, Zdołbunów county replaced Ostróg county. Volhynia's official population according to the 1921 census was 1,437,907. See Mędrzecki, *Inteligencja polska*, 40.

territory that made up the Volhynian province was itself split between two different geographical regions. Indeed, virtually every account of Volhynia's geography produced during the interwar years began with a description of this fundamental division. The line between these "two Volhynias" was said to run along the train line between Luboml (or Włodzimierz, depending on the opinion of the particular scholar), Kowel, and Równe, and then along the road between Równe and Korzec, the latter of which lay right on the Polish-Soviet border.[41]

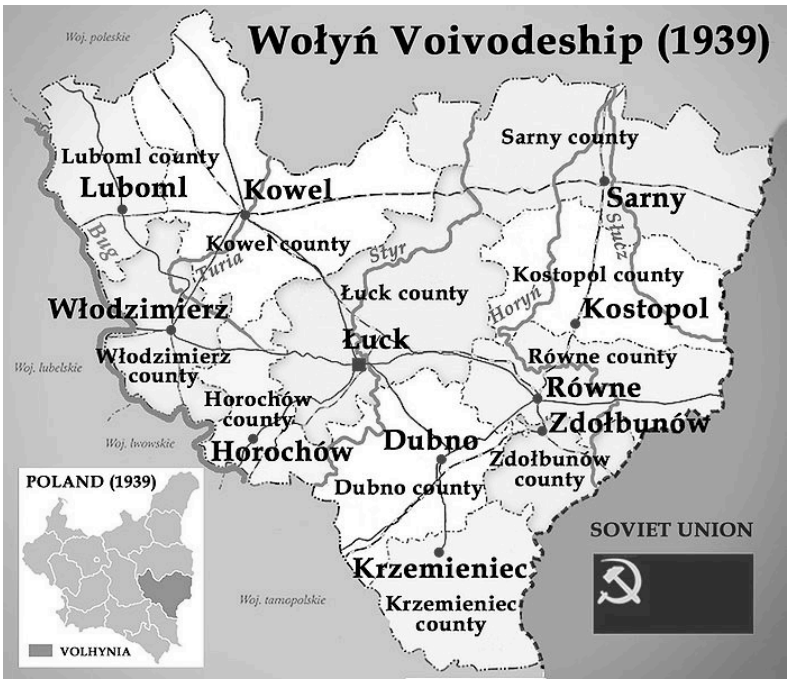

Figure 2: The Counties of Interwar Volhynia. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

The southern part of the province—referred to as "Volhynia proper" (*Wołyń właściwy*) in the interwar literature—was a country of gentle hills and fertile soils, positioned on the so-called Volhynian-Podolian plateau at around 200 meters above

[41] Mieczysław Orłowicz's guidebook to Volhynia uses Luboml as the dividing line between northern and southern Volhynia. See Mieczysław Orłowicz, *Ilustrowany Przewodnik po Wołyniu* (Łuck: Nakładem Wołyńskiego Tow. Krajoznawczego i Opieki Nad Zabytkami Przeszłości w Łucku, 1929), 7. In contrast, the geographer Stanisław Dworakowski and the regionalist Joachim Wołoszynowski describe the geographical line further south, beginning in the town of Włodzimierz. See Stanisław Dworakowski, "Rubież Polesko-Wołyńska," *Sprawy Narodowościowe* 3 (1938): 223; Joachim Wołoszynowski, *Województwo Wołyńskie w świetle liczb i faktów* (Łuck: Wydawnictwo Wołyńskiego Komitetu Regionalnego w Łucku, 1929), 14.

sea level. In the words of one British Foreign Office worker, writing in 1930, "the southern half [of Volhynia] is, for the most part, magnificently fertile."[42] The soils favored the cultivation of crops, most notably barley, wheat, rye, oats, hops, and potatoes, while southern Volhynia also featured almost all of the province's larger, historic towns, including Łuck (the provincial capital), Dubno, and Krzemieniec. In contrast, the northern region shared many of its characteristics with the southern part of Polesie, leading to the unofficial name "Volhynian Polesie" (*Polesie Wołyńskie*). Here the land was marshy and low-lying, and conditions unfavorable for the kind of agriculture that developed further south. Heavy spring rains, which began in early to mid-March, created flooding that lasted until the middle of April, while the clay-based soils were less conducive to growing crops. Much more of the land was classified as pine forests and meadows, meaning that people engaged more frequently in animal husbandry and the timber trade. Settlements were sparser here than they were in the south; indeed, although the population density for the province as a whole stood at 57 people per square kilometer (compared with a statewide average of 74), in northern Volhynia it languished at 26.[43]

While the more fertile soils of the south gave that part of the province a distinct advantage over the north, life was tough throughout Volhynia. The climate alone—with its hot summers, severe winter frosts, and spring downpours—created extreme and testing conditions in an area where most people made their living from the land. In 1927-28, one interwar memoirist recalled, winter temperatures plummeted to below minus 40 degrees Celsius, frosts lasted from November to April (irreparably damaging walnut, cherry, and pear trees), and pools of water in the spring made travel to the neighboring town impossible.[44] Volhynia also lacked many of the hallmarks of European civilization and industrialization, and populations remained largely untouched by the forces of modernization.[45] While the types of buildings varied from

[42] "Report on the Eastern Marches of Poland" (Mr Savery, 1930), FO 417/73.
[43] Wołoszynowski, *Województwo Wołyńskie w świetle liczb i faktów*, 21; Orłowicz, *Ilustrowany Przewodnik*, 8.
[44] Antoni Gutkowski, *Wołyń, moje wspomnienia z lat 1916-1943* (Łódź: "Proxima," 2004), 25.
[45] The lack of modernization did not mean that humans had left the region's natural environment unaltered. The rivers that crisscrossed the province, for example, were impossible to navigate by boat due to numerous mills, watergates, and bridges. See Orłowicz, *Ilustrowany Przewodnik*, 8.

area to area, depending on which raw materials were accessible, both rural and urban constructions were generally made of wood. In Kowel county, for instance, brick was used only to construct chimneys, stoves, and the foundations of houses.[46] The "backwardness" of rural settlements was also exacerbated by the lack of contact between villages and the outside world. In Volhynia, there was only one postal-telegraph office or postal agency for every 870 square kilometers or every 15,420 people.[47]

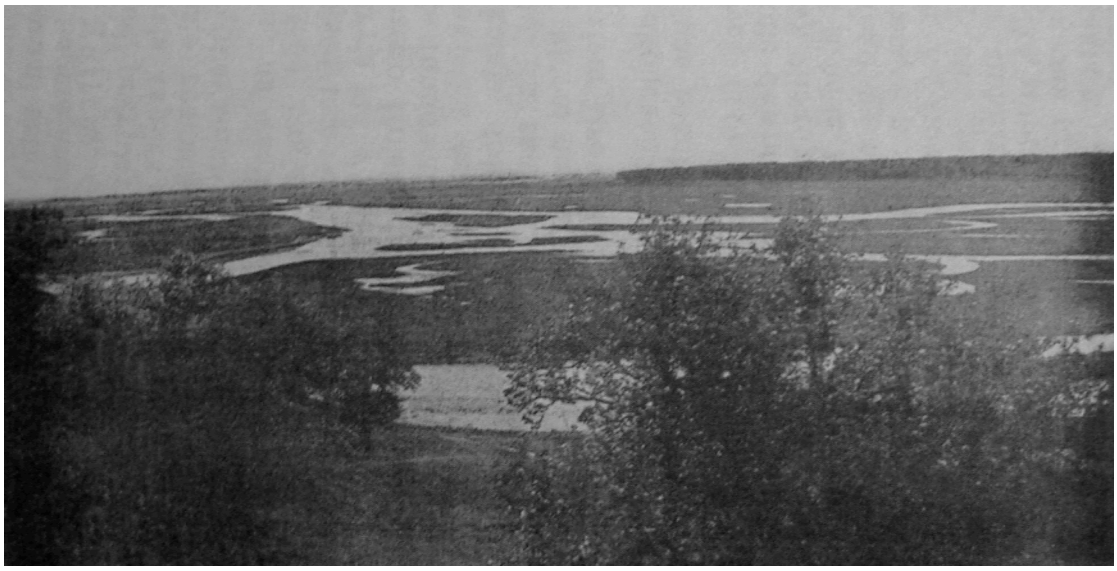

Figure 3: The River Styr near Czartorysk in Volhynian Polesie. Source: Mieczysław Orłowicz, *Ilustrowany Przewodnik po Wołyniu*, 230 (original photo by Edward Augustowicz).

Railroad lines were scarce in post-1918 Volhynia, since the Russian imperial authorities had failed to construct a comprehensive rail network beyond the main line running from Warsaw. For every one hundred square kilometers of territory in the interwar province, there were only 2.8 km of iron rail track, as compared to a statewide average of 4.5 km and much higher national averages in the states of Western Europe, such as Belgium (28.6 km), Switzerland (12.8 km), Germany (12.2

[46] Edward Rühle, "Studium powiatu kowelskiego," *Rocznik Wołyński* (1936-7): 361.
[47] Wołoszynowski, *Województwo Wołyńskie w świetle liczb i faktów*, 33.

km), and France (9.7 km).[48] Interwar Polish commentators frequently accused the Russian imperial authorities of prioritizing military and strategic needs over civilian ones, citing the fact that railroad stations were often located far away from the towns themselves, as was the case in Dubno, Ostróg, and Łuck. The state of the road network was just as bad. In tables detailing the amount of paved roads in relation to total surface area, Volhynia stood in thirteenth place out of the state's sixteen provinces; it had only 27 meters of paved road for every square kilometer, while the provinces of Pomerania and Silesia in western Poland had 363 and 350 meters respectively.[49] Although such conditions were partly caused by the neglect of Russian imperial authorities, they could also be linked to the land itself, whose heavy soils made transportation next to impossible during inclement weather.

Scale, Space, and Region: Towards a Spatial History of Volhynia

The present dissertation takes a multiethnic borderland, rather than a nation-state, as its focus, following the lead of many recent works on nationalism and national indifference.[50] On one level, borderlands like Volhynia, particularly those that consist of administrative units, present historians with a finite geographical space—one that is normally much smaller than the nation-state—in which to carry out a detailed analysis of social, political, and economic relationships. As an administrative unit, Volhynia can thus be studied by delving into archives that house provincial records or by reading local newspapers.

Focusing on a borderland also corresponds with wider political trends in Eastern Europe. Recent Polish historiography, popular publications, social movements, and museum exhibits suggest a growing interest in regions (most notably borderlands such as the *kresy*, Galicia, and Silesia), as well as a more general post-

[48] Ibid., 29.
[49] To highlight the extent to which Poland (and Volhynia especially) was lagging behind, the author compared Polish statistics with those from Western Europe: England: 1,174 meters, France: 1,122, Czechoslovakia: 626, Germany: 552. Wołoszynowski, *Województwo Wołyńskie w świetle liczb i faktów*, 29.
[50] For examples of studies that focus on borderlands, see Alison Fleig Frank, *Oil Empire: Visions of Prosperity in Austrian Galicia*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Brown, *A Biography of No Place*; Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). See also footnote 39.

1989 reconfiguration of European space.[51] While the nation-state still rules supreme, regional politics, agendas, and identities have become increasingly significant. My intention here is not to romanticize Volhynia as an appealing alternative to the nation-state. Nor am I arguing that local society in interwar Volhynia somehow constituted a meaningful whole that resisted state power. What I am arguing is that studying this borderland allows us to think about what regional space meant to contemporaries, and how borderlands (like Judson's "language frontiers" or Kate Brown's "no place") were constructed as particular kinds of imagined spaces.[52] As the scholar Alexander Murphy has reminded us, the problem with some regional studies is that they use the region as the backdrop, "with little consideration given to why the region came to be a socially significant spatial unit in the first place, how the region is understood and viewed by its inhabitants, or how and why that understanding has changed over time."[53] I show that Volhynia was not merely a regional stage upon which historical action occurred, but instead constituted both a nationally significant place and a region with its own rules, rituals, and ways of life.

This is not the first piece of work to show that Volhynia was a space to be shaped. Building upon his study of the formation and reformation of the Polish, Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Lithuanian nations over the longue durée, Timothy Snyder has explored how interwar Volhynia's governor Henryk Józewski promoted a state-sponsored Ukrainian nationalism that would appeal to Ukrainians on both sides of the Polish-Soviet border.[54] While Snyder's work is a political history, his focus on

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[51] On regional identities in Poland today, see Luiza Bialasiewicz, "Back to *Galicia Felix*?" in *Galicia: A Multicultured Land*, eds. Christopher Hann and Paul Robert Magocsi (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 160-184. See also the work of the *Fundacja Pogranicze* (Borderland Foundation) in Sejny (http://pogranicze.sejny.pl/). On the exhibitions about the *kresy*, see Helena Wiórkiewicz, "Kresy Wschodnie Rzeczypospolitej. Ziemia i ludzie: Wystawa w Muzeum Niepodległości w Warszawie," in *Kresy wschodnie Rzeczypospolitej w obronie polskości* (Warsaw: Muzeum Niepodległości, 1999), 247-264; Tomasz Kuba Kozłowski and Danuta Błahut-Biegańska, *Świat Kresów* (Warsaw: Dom Spotkań z Historią, 2011). Interwar publications on the *kresy*, such as Mieczysław Orłowicz's Volhynian guidebook and Louise Boyd's collection of photographs from 1934, have been reissued since 1989. See Louise Arner Boyd, *Kresy: Fotografie z 1934 roku* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1991).

[52] Brown, *A Biography of No Place*; Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*.

[53] Cited in Celia Applegate, "A Europe of Regions: Reflections on the Historiography of Sub-National Places in Modern Times," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 4 (1999): 1181.

[54] Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations*; Snyder, *Sketches from a Secret War: A Polish Artist's Mission to Liberate Soviet Ukraine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

Volhynia demonstrates how an intellectual vision took shape within a particular social, economic, and geopolitical context. The present dissertation draws inspiration from Snyder's approach, emphasizing that Polish nationalism and policies toward the non-Polish minorities are best understood within a specific place. However, while Snyder focuses on Józewski's intellectual, political, and military project towards the Ukrainians (and its consequences in the Soviet Union), his study, like the other works on Eastern and Central European borderlands discussed above, does not concentrate on the interactions between specific physical places and their civilizational significance, nor does it take us down to the level of the town, village, or border to consider how the challenges of daily life shaped political visions.

In contrast, this dissertation looks to the space of, and the spaces within, Volhynia. On one level, these spaces should be understood as a series of imagined landscapes—as destroyed, unruly, ordered, and re-ordered spaces. This approach draws on a growing body of scholarship on spatial and environmental history that offers a suitable—and hitherto underexplored—set of methodologies for reframing East European history. In recent years, historians, particularly those who work on Germany and Russia, have shown that space has been discursively constructed and reconstructed, and that the physical configurations of landscapes or cities speak to wider national visions.[55] While there have been fewer studies of space in the field of East European history, several works have analyzed how cities were imagined as national constructions, not least among which is Nathaniel Wood's recent monograph on the links between Kraków's material culture, Polish identity, and European ideals in the early twentieth century.[56] This perspective is certainly relevant for the present study, which seeks to understand the discursive practices through which Polish commentators described and made sense of the East: attempts to rebuild war-torn

[55] See, for example, Murdock, *Changing Places*; Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature*; David Blackbourn and James Retallack, eds., *Localism, Landscape, and the Ambiguities of Place: German-Speaking Central Europe, 1860-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), particularly 149-192; Mark Bassin et al., eds., *Space, Place, and Power in Modern Russia: Essays in the New Spatial History* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010); Mark Bassin, *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840-1865* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[56] Nathaniel D. Wood, *Becoming Metropolitan: Urban Selfhood and the Making of Modern Cracow* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).

spaces, construct civilized towns, and drain marshy agricultural land were all linked to ideas about what it meant to be Polish, modern, and European.

Yet somehow in our attempts to show that historical borderlands (and landscapes more generally) were constructed and imagined, we have lost site of the geographical locations and material conditions in which events occurred. This is not to return to the older idea of historical geography that stressed environmental determinism, but rather to look at the interactions between conceptions of particular territories and the impact that territorial configurations had on historical change and continuity.[57] In taking this position, I draw upon a recent trend in history—and in the humanities generally—that has reminded scholars about the importance of place. As David Blackbourn put it in his study of the history of Germany's water politics, we should not only consider "imagined landscapes" but should also pay attention to the "physical reality of rock, soil, vegetation, and water."[58] In Volhynia, I trace how the difficult environmental, social, and political conditions limited the efficacy of the state's attempts to modernize the region. Most importantly, physical conditions contributed to anxieties about Polish influence. In this analysis, it mattered that towns were often located on marshy land, roads were scarce and villages isolated, and soils in the north were poor. These factors were not incidental, but were bound up with both discursive and quotidian practices.

As such, spatial and environmental histories offer historians of Eastern Europe an opportunity to approach issues of nationalism from new and original angles, moving beyond what Theodore Weeks has described as "'pure' political and national history," and towards methodologies that have been more readily applied to the histories of Western Europe and its colonies.[59] Not only are historians of Eastern Europe beginning to see that natural and human environments shaped and were shaped

[57] Nick Baron, "New Spatial Histories of Twentieth Century Russia and the Soviet Union: Surveying the Landscape," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 55, no. 3 (2007): 377.
[58] Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature*, 14.
[59] Theodore R. Weeks, "Urban History in Eastern Europe," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 10, no. 4 (2009): 918; Caroline Ford, "Nature's Fortunes: New Directions in the Writing of European Environmental History," *Journal of Modern History* 79 (2007): 112–133. In Ford's article, Western Europe (particularly France and Germany) and Russia constitute the main focuses of attention, with the lands of Eastern Europe conspicuous by their absence.

by nationalizing agendas, but they have also demonstrated that an appreciation of local environments indicates that the nation was not always the most important factor governing attitudes and behavior.[60] Such approaches help us to avoid the trap of assuming that all areas of people's lives were somehow infused with nationalism, one of the pitfalls of recent social histories.[61]

Sources, Methods, and Chapter Structure

Attempting to write a history of how Poles conceived of the spaces of interwar Volhynia poses a peculiar set of challenges for the historian. At the outset, therefore, it is worth stating the practical problems involved with a project that aims to confront questions of nationalism from the side, rather than head-on. The first challenge concerns locating materials that allow us to explore Polish nationalism (and its failures) without reinforcing national categories. For instance, political reports detailing the behavior of Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews might lead us to believe that these groups existed as coherent entities and should be studied as such. Documents showing that nationalism was less important are trickier to locate, since, as Tara Zahra put it, "national indifference has not left much of a paper trail."[62] I therefore chose not only to look for documents that were directly about nationalism, but also to read files in which nationalism was not the main focus: reports on the day-to-day behavior of borderland peasants, correspondence between local leaders about the expansion of towns into the rural hinterland, and documents on peasant responses to land reform. Locating these types of documents is often not easy, since it requires one to look beyond the rigid categorizations of the archival catalogue and to imagine how seemingly obscure documents might, in fact, be useful. Once selected, these documents also require a certain approach. For instance, settler memoirs that were compiled long after the events they describe often tell us more about the ways in

[60] For an innovative investigation into the ways in which the exploitation of the natural environment both engaged with and transcended nationalist discourses, see Frank, *Oil Empire*. See also Eagle Glassheim's treatment of the postwar Czech-German borderlands as both imagined and material spaces. Eagle Glassheim, "Most, the Town that Moved: Coal, Communists, and the 'Gypsy Question' in Post-War Czechoslovakia," *Environment and History* 13, no. 4 (2007): 447-476.
[61] Zahra, "Imagined Non-Communities," 97.
[62] Ibid., 106.

which memories have been shaped than they do about the events themselves. Rather than providing us with an "authentic" sense of life in Volhynia, newspaper collections might be used to indicate the changing concerns of local elites, the strategies used to deal with those concerns, and the ways in which ideas of Polishness were employed at a local level. Archival documents often challenge us to look beyond national interpretations in order to reach other stories that are not immediately apparent.

Both kinds of documents—those that look at nationalism per se and those that look at other aspects of Volhynian life—are located at archival collections in Warsaw (the Archive of New Documents, the Central Military Archive), Szczecin (the Archive of the Border Guard), and Rivne in Ukraine (the State Archives of Rivne Oblast). In addition to providing documentation on the political view of the *kresy* from the center, the Archive of New Documents houses a host of sources that offered up the perspectives of bureaucrats and activists working in Volhynia. The Border Guard Archive in Szczecin similarly provided important (and recently declassified) reports on local life as seen through the eyes of the border guards. The collections in Rivne were by far the richest resource for the project, not least because they furnished me with a series of views from Volhynia's various localities. In Rivne, I was able to gain the perspectives of people who worked for a range of departments within the provincial administration (such as those concerned with land reform and policing), sub-provincial administrative units (such as Równe's municipal authorities), border guards, and various social organizations. Collections housed beyond Poland and Ukraine allowed me to situate my work within the international context. Documents from the Hoover Institution Archive in California were used to explore Poland's civilizational rhetoric in the years immediately after the First World War, while British Foreign Office reports from the National Archives in London provided an outsider's view of Volhynia. Finally, the personal collection of Jakub Hoffman (a teacher and member of the local intelligentsia) kept in the Sikorski archive in London complemented a larger collection of personal papers stored in Rivne. In addition to archival documents, my other main sources were local newspapers (particularly

Volhynia's weekly Polish-language newspapers), journals, and published and unpublished memoirs.

The chapters progress chronologically and thematically, each focusing on either a particular geographical space within Volhynia (the border, the town, or the village) or a way of looking at Volhynia as a whole (as war-torn or ordered space). Studying something as amorphous as space—as opposed to an individual, institution, or finite group of people—necessarily poses important questions about content and structure. There are many ways in which different spaces could be selected and many ways in which their stories could be told. Here each chapter concentrates on the story that seemed most important to contemporaries. For instance, I felt that it made most sense to set the chapter on the border in the early to mid-1920s, when borderland anxieties were at their height, while it seemed fitting to focus an exploration of urban problems in the late 1920s and early 1930s, as the post-1926 administration looked to transform towns and their geographical limits.

Chapter 1 ("War-Torn Space") considers the short period between early 1919 and early 1921, during which Volhynia was a militarily, diplomatically, and culturally contested borderland, fought over Poles, Bolsheviks, and Ukrainians. It traces how ideas about a superior Polish civilization in the East, promoted in both international circles and within the eastern provinces themselves, were undercut in war-torn Volhynia, where Polish and non-Polish populations prioritized their own material interests above those of the emerging state. Chapter 2 ("Unruly Space") focuses on the state's attempts to impose law, order, and effective administration in Volhynia from the early to mid-1920s. By telling the stories of three groups that were charged with bringing military order and state authority to this multiethnic region—military settlers, state police, and border guards—the chapter explores how the everyday behavior of borderland inhabitants challenged monolithic ideas about nationalism, and how the national sturdiness of state personnel on the ground was itself thrown into doubt.

Chapters 3 and 4 take a slightly different approach, concentrating on two types of environment—towns and villages—and focusing on the period from the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s. Chapter 3 ("Jewish space, Polish space") takes us on a tour of

Volhynia's towns, and indicates how Poles linked urban problems—most notably those related to municipal mismanagement and unhygienic conditions—to the fact that the majority of urban inhabitants were Jewish. By focusing on state attempts to modernize urban space and to regulate the borders between towns and their immediate environs, it shows how Polishness was expressed through the urban landscape and how "Jewish" space was perceived as "backward" and un-Polish. Chapter 4 ("Village Space") shifts the focus from the towns to the villages, tracing the ways in which right- and left-wing commentators and state and non-state agents drew on the idea of Polish superiority to transform schools, agricultural land, and sanitary practices for Polish and non-Polish populations alike. By studying local documents, I show how the underdevelopment of rural centers both stimulated and hampered the state's efforts to bring about rural change. The final chapter ("Ordered Space") considers Volhynia's physical and imagined space as a whole from the late 1920s through the outbreak of the Second World War. With an emphasis on the collection, presentation, and interpretation of local knowledge—and the ethnographers, demographers, local intelligentsia, and military officials who participated in these processes—the chapter shows how a more optimistic picture of multiethnic Volhynia was dismantled from the mid-1930s onwards, to be replaced by a new vision that used scientific rationale to demographically transform the province.

CHAPTER ONE:
War-Torn Space: Claiming Volhynia as a Polish Land

In the early 1920s, a group of British Quakers made their way into a war-torn area of Europe and described what they found: "This was the strangest place in all the world. It was sown through and through with pieces of high explosive shell. Entire fusecaps could be picked up. There were pieces of shell the size of a man's hand. There were pieces, smaller and smaller, until some of them could be stood upon a finger-nail. They lay on the sand, and more could be dug up with the toe of a boot."[1] One could be forgiven for assuming that these brave souls were in northeastern France or the fields of Belgium. As it turned out, however, they were standing in the eastern reaches of what had recently become part of the newly independent Polish state. The "strangest place in all the world" was a field in Powursk in the province of Volhynia.

The areas around Powursk, situated in the northern part of Kowel county, were by no means the only part of Volhynia to be badly damaged during the First World War. Between 1914 and 1920, life in the region's towns and villages had been turned upside down. Volhynia was on the front line for most of the war, fought over by Austrian, German, and Russian troops, while in 1919 and 1920, it became the location for a Polish-Bolshevik war that unfolded in the borderlands. By official reckonings, the levels of destruction were mind-boggling: 212,000 buildings had been destroyed or badly damaged, along with 3,800 meters of bridges, 170 kilometers of hard-surfaced roads, and a network of canals and ditches in the northern part of the province.[2] The town of Łuck, soon to become interwar Volhynia's provincial capital, also suffered in the summer of 1916 when the Russian Army launched the Brusilov Offensive and expelled the occupying Austrian troops.[3]

Damage to the countryside was even worse than destruction in the towns, with the natural landscape and its resources utterly ruined by military actions. Fish stocks

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[1] Joice M. Nankivell and Sydney Loch, *The River of a Hundred Ways: Life in the War-devastated Areas of Eastern Poland* (London: G. Allen & Unwin ltd., 1924), 58-9.
[2] Mędrzecki, *Województwo Wołyńskie*, 19.
[3] The American journalist Stanley Washburn, who was stationed in Lustk/Łuck as a newspaper reporter for the London *Times*, witnessed Russian air raids during the summer of 1916, when bombs dropped in alleyways and destroyed buildings. See Stanley Washburn, *On the Russian Front in World War I: Memoirs of an American War Correspondent* (New York: Robert Speller and Sons, 1982), 203.

were destroyed when soldiers threw bombs into the region's lakes, while the area around the River Stochód was disfigured by military instillations and equipment.[4] The Quakers stationed in postwar Powursk discovered Austrian trenches, along with an "endless chain of barbed-wire, as perfect and as forbidding as on the day the sappers put it up."[5] Red Army soldiers who made their way through the Volhynian countryside in the summer of 1920 could not help but notice the physical remnants from the First World War: "More and more frequently we come across trenches from the last war," wrote Isaac Babel, who entered the region with the Red Army, "there's barbed wire everywhere, enough for fences for the next ten years or so, ruined villages, people everywhere trying to rebuild, but not very successfully, they have nothing, no building materials, no cement."[6]

Wartime hardship and demographic upheaval had gone hand-in-hand in this multiethnic borderland. When the Russian Army retreated from the area in 1915, many civilians had chosen to go with them. Their reasons differed—some did not want to lose contact with relatives on Russian territory, others feared terrorization by enemy troops, others still felt that they could not continue to farm when their horses and livestock had been requisitioned.[7] Some population movements were not so "voluntary." Beginning in early 1915, Russian Army decrees ordered the complete clearing of all "enemy subjects," including women and children, from the Russian-occupied regions of Volhynia. There were large-scale deportations of both German colonists and Polish populations, as well as anti-Semitic pogroms orchestrated by Russian soldiers.[8] A Russian-Jewish writer who was in the region distributing aid to needy Jews commented on the sight of Volhynia's mobile population:

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[4] On the destruction of fish supplies, see "Rzeki, błota i łąki Wołynia," AAN KNP 1436/4.
[5] Nankivell and Loch, *River of a Hundred Ways,* 46.
[6] Isaac Babel, *1920 Diary*, trans. H.T. Willetts (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 23.
[7] Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 15-16.
[8] For more on the nationalizing policies of the Russian authorities during the First World War, see Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003). See also Gatrell, *Whole Empire Walking*, 15-32.

> All we met were homeless travelers—mainly deported German colonists—riding or walking. […] A German stood along his wagon, calm and self-assured, his face revealing neither confusion nor despair. This was in glaring contrast to the poor, forlorn, and despondent homeless Galicians, Russians, and especially Jews in their small, open drays, which, brimming over with a mishmash of household items, were pulled by dejected, moribund nags.[9]

By 1916, the number of people living in Volhynia had been dramatically reduced. According to an article penned by the Polish politician Leon Wasilewski, the overall population of Kowel county had fallen by three-quarters between 1912 and 1916, from 262,703 to a mere 73,358.[10]

In the latter stages of the war, the policies of a series of short-lived states and proto-states only brought more chaos to the region. As the Russian Empire collapsed in 1917, various Ukrainian political bodies claimed Volhynia as their own. In June 1917, Ukrainian nationalist leaders in the Russian Empire formed the Central Council (*Tsentral'na Rada*), declared Ukrainian autonomy (although not statehood) in an area that included the Russian *gubernia* of Volhynia, and decreed that land held by Polish and Russian landowners should be distributed to local peasants.[11] Following the Bolshevik Revolution in the autumn of 1917, an independent Ukrainian National Republic was proclaimed, encompassing the lands of the Volhynian province. In February 1918, the Bolsheviks seized Kiev, prompting Ukrainian national leaders to sign an agreement with the Germans and Austrians for protection. Several months later, the Germans initiated a coup d'état and set up their own government (the so-called Hetmanate), which reversed land reform policies. In November 1918, a few days after the signing of the armistice that brought an end to the First World War, a socialist-supported Directorate was declared in opposition to the Hetmanate. When Germans soldiers withdrew from the region in December 1918, the fledging Ukrainian

[9] S. Ansky, *The Enemy at His Pleasure: A Journey Through the Jewish Pale of Settlement During World War I*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York : Metropolitan Books, 2003), 183.
[10] Leon Wasilewski, "Polacy na Wołyniu (pow. Kowelski)," *Kultura Polski* (November-December 1917): 483-485.
[11] For more on the experiences of Polish landowners in Ukraine, see "Dokumenty reformy rolnej na Ukrainie z lat 1917-1918," BUW Microfilm 8454.

state found itself with no external support, a power vacuum opened up, and a new three-way war between Polish, Ukrainian, and Bolshevik troops commenced.[12]

Volhynia's war-torn, geopolitically-contested space forms the subject of this opening chapter. Here I cover a relatively short chronological period, from the beginning of 1919, when Poles and Bolsheviks first engaged in skirmishes, to March 1921, when Poland officially created the administrative province of Volhynia (*Województwo wołyńskie*). Within two years, both the Polish and Bolshevik armies occupied the Volhynian lands. From the summer of 1919, the area came under the occupation of the Polish Army and the rule of a Civil Administration for the Eastern Lands (*Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich*), a situation that persisted until the early summer of 1920 when the Bolsheviks invaded once again in response to a joint Polish-Ukrainian attack on their territory. After Polish forces finally drove the Red Army eastwards, an October 1920 armistice, signed by Poland and Bolshevik Russia, paved the way for negotiations on the location of Poland's eastern border, which was eventually agreed upon in Riga the following March.

Since the complex military, diplomatic, and political histories of Poland's eastern conflicts in the wake of the First World War have been told elsewhere, my task is to explore the rhetoric and techniques used by Poles to justify their claims to Volhynia during this chaotic period, and to show how those claims were undermined within the war-torn lands themselves.[13] I argue that the local situation—characterized by physical destruction, depopulation, food shortages, and conflict over land—both provided Poles with an opportunity to prove the benefits of Polish rule and confronted them with a series of economic and social problems that complicated their efforts to make the region Polish. On the one hand, attempts to rebuild, reconstruct, and govern Volhynia could be used to gain legitimacy and authority for the new state, to win over

[12] For more on the situation in the region during 1917 and 1918, see Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, 339-379.

[13] Norman Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star: The Polish-Soviet War, 1919-20* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972); Piotr S. Wandycz, *Soviet-Polish Relations, 1917-1921* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1969); Jacek Arkadiusz Goclon, *W Obronie Europy: Wojna z Bolszewicką Rosją w 1920 roku* (Toruń: Wydawn. A. Marszałek, 2006); Jerzy Borzęcki, *The Soviet-Polish Peace of 1921 and the Creation of Interwar Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); James M. McCann, "Beyond the Bug: Soviet Historiography of the Soviet-Polish War of 1920," *Soviet Studies* 36, no. 4 (1984): 475-493.

an international community fearful of Bolshevik influence and a local population in the midst of crisis. On the other, Poles found that the everyday realities of life in Volhynia made their task highly problematic. Declarations about Poland's "civilizing mission" in the *kresy* were constantly undercut by the failures of Polish governance, while the vision of Polish-led interethnic cooperation was challenged by the behavior of ethnically-mixed populations. These themes are first explored in the international context, with Poles appealing for help from the West by resurrecting their role as the last bastion of civilization. However, the central focus of the chapter is on the work of the "Borderland Guard" (*Straż Kresowa*; from 1920, *Towarzystwo Straży Kresowej*), the main Warsaw-based social organization that promoted Poland's incorporation of the *kresy*. Its newspapers, manifestos, and reports, along with minutes of local meetings, provide a rich source base through which to trace how confident pronouncements about Poland's role in the East were undercut by local realities.

Eastern Poland on the World Stage: International Propaganda

At the end of the First World War, Poles mounted a series of propaganda campaigns to champion their fledging state in the eyes of the international community and build upon the cultural diplomacy that had been carried out by Polish émigrés during the war.[14] Like their counterparts in other newly-founded and vulnerable successor states in Eastern Europe, Polish elites saw propaganda as "a necessary, fundamental tool of statesmanship, and a crucial conduit to the Great Powers."[15] In reference to the eastern borderlands, which were contested by a confusing array of national and political groups, elites emphasized that only the Poles had the historic right and civilizational know-how to provide good governance.

The Paris Peace Conference provided a forum for Polish claims at a time when conflict continued and borders were in flux. In Poland's corner sat the right-wing National Democrat and head of the Polish National Committee (*Komitet Narodowy*

[14] The most well-known figure was the Polish pianist Ignacy Paderewski, who spent the First World War in the United States, giving concerts and speeches in support of Poland. See Anita Prazmowska, *Ignacy Paderewski: Poland* (London: Haus, 2009), especially 35-56.
[15] Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe*, *1914-1948* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 8.

Polski), Roman Dmowski. The lands of Volhynia were not, in fact, a priority for the Polish delegation in Paris, who were more concerned with securing Eastern Galicia from the Ukrainians and Upper Silesia from the Germans.[16] This situation was partly due to the ongoing fighting in the east and the fact that no clear geographic or ethnographic boundaries separated Poland and Russia.[17] There also existed no definitive plan before the conference about the eastern border's location, although by October 1918 Dmowski was demanding the inclusion of the western part of the Russian *gubernia* of Volhynia. He justified his claims in a memo to Woodrow Wilson, arguing that Poles represented the only cultured elements in the *kresy*, since Jews were anti-Polish and pro-Russian, and Ukrainians were incapable of forming a responsible government.[18]

In spite of the relative unimportance of Volhynia at the Paris Peace Conference and the prevailing sense that the eastern border of Poland would not be decided upon in Paris, a number of memoranda were produced by the Polish delegation to support claims to Volhynia. Knowing that it would be impossible to prove that Volhynia was inhabited by "indisputably Polish populations"—as per Woodrow Wilson's thirteenth point—Polish elites stressed that civilizational value trumped simple demographics.[19] Many of the documents emphasized the practical ways in which Polish influence would bring economic benefits to the region and help it to recover from negligent Russian rule and wartime destruction. One memorandum, submitted by a former professor at the Mining Institute in Saint Petersburg, described the potential for using natural resources in northern Volhynia, such as the plentiful supplies of peat.[20] Another argued that the imperial authorities had failed to properly mine Volhynia's

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[16] On Polish priorities in Paris, see Margaret Macmillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2002), 207-228.

[17] For more on the perceived differences between the eastern border and the western border, see Stanisław Kozicki, *Pamiętnik 1876-1939* (Słupsk: Akademia Pomorska w Słupsku, 2009), 403-404.

[18] "Memoriał o terytorium państwa polskiego złożony przez R. Dmowskiego Prezydentowi Wilsonowi w Waszyngtonie dnia 8 października 1918 roku," in Roman Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1989), 292-308.

[19] Wilson's thirteenth point stated that "an independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant."

[20] "Złoża Minerałów Użytecznych na Ziemiach Kresów Wschodnich," HIA PA (U.S.), Box 93, Folder 2.

iron ore resources, and that Poland was the only nation capable of effectively utilizing the substantial quantities of timber to physically reconstruct the region.[21]

In addition to arguing that Polish rule would bring practical and technical improvements, some of the delegation's materials highlighted the importance of Poland's historic civilizing mission in the East. Such documents suggested that while the Poles constituted a demographic minority, they represented civilization, development, and state-building, and would therefore play a more important economic role than non-Polish Slavs. The National Democrat Joachim Bartoszewicz, whom Dmowski had put in charge of the commission for the eastern borderlands in February 1919, argued that any progress that had been made in the region of Ruthenia (which included Volhynia) was the direct result of Polish influence. After the Mongol invasion, he argued, it was the Poles who had peopled "the immense and fertile plains."[22] Even during the Russian partition, he stated, "the region did not lose its Western and Polish character—the Poles remain what they always had been, the harbinger of progress and culture. Weakened and ruined, menaced in all ways, they continue to fulfill their civilizing mission."[23] In accordance with National Democratic ideologies that had been developed before the First World War, Bartoszewicz discredited the concept of a distinct Ruthenian culture, language, and ethnicity, presenting the Ruthenians as assimilable elements that could be absorbed into the Polish nation. Moreover, he claimed that the "idiom" in which the Ruthenian people spoke was more closely related to Polish than to Russian, and that, in any case, it would be very difficult to work out the "real" nationality of a Ruthenian, since "the ethnographic mix in these transitory lands of Ruthenia is so pronounced."[24] The message was clear—civilizational influences justified the region's inclusion in the Polish state, even if Poles remained a demographic minority.[25]

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[21] "Uprzemysłowanie Rusi i rola Polski w jej przyszłem życiu gospodarczem," HIA PA (U.S.), Box 93, Folder 2.
[22] "Mémoire sur les Frontières Nord et Sud-Est de la Pologne Restaurée," AAN KNP 317/11.
[23] Ibid., 16.
[24] Ibid., 10.
[25] Holly Case noted a similar trend in Hungary's post-First World War rhetoric about Transylvania and the "less civilized" Romanians who lived there. Case, *Between States*, 47-8; 57.

Despite their dominance in Paris, Dmowski and his National Democrats did not have a monopoly over Polish visions of the East. Other members of the Polish delegation, such as the historian Oskar Halecki and the geographer Eugeniusz Romer, disagreed with the National Democrats' approach to the "assimilable" non-Polish populations, appealing instead to the early modern idea that people other than ethnic Poles could be members of a broadly-defined Polish nation.[26] Yet while these men espoused a different political vision of the East, toying with vague ideas of a Polish-led federation, they did not deny the claim that the future of these lands—like their history—belonged to Polish civilization. In a document about the region of Ruthenia, for instance, Halecki declared that "civilization and the social order find their principal support here from the Polish element, which does not forget the secular links unifying these provinces to Poland."[27]

Submitting documents at the Paris Peace Conference was not the only way in which elites attempted to prove that the eastern borderlands would be better off under Polish rule. The continued chaos and deprivation in the region, caused by the First World War and ongoing conflicts with the Bolsheviks, also provided Poles with an opportunity to appeal to the international humanitarian community. While much of Poland had suffered severely during the war, in the eastern borderlands the twin perils of disease and hunger were particularly prevalent.[28] Refugees who returned to the region found their fields damaged, their livestock gone, and, in many cases, their villages completed eradicated. International aid organizations also recognized the severity of the situation. As the author of one American report put it in April 1919, "East of the Bug River is in the most serious condition. There are practically no crops, the land has been destroyed by the constant passage of armies, and transportation is poor."[29] In an attempt to alleviate the situation, humanitarian organizations, including

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[26] For more on Halecki's politics and approach to Polish history, see Jerzy Kloczowski, "Oskar Halecki (1891-1973)," in *Nation and History: Polish Historians from the Enlightenment to the Second World War*, eds. Peter Brook et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 429-442. For information on Eugeniusz Romer, see Marian Mroczko, *Eugeniusz Romer (1871-1954): Biografia Polityczna* (Słupsk: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Pomorskiej w Słupsku, 2008).
[27] "Les Confins Orientaux de la Pologne," AAN DPnKP 153/23.
[28] "Dévastation des territoires à l'est de la Pologne," *L'Est Polonais*, November 5, 1920, 106.
[29] ARA Report (July 29, 1919), HIA ARA–Europe, Box 369, Folder 5.

Herbert Hoover's American Relief Administration, the League of Red Cross Societies, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and the Young Women's Christian Association were all involved in the distribution of aid.[30] As Polish forces pushed east in the spring of 1919, American relief workers often arrived before the Polish civil administration.[31]

On the international stage, Polish elites used their involvement in relief work to portray themselves as both needy recipients of aid and providers of that aid for their populations. Drawing on older images of their country as the "Christ of Nations" or "Bulwark of Christianity," elites depicted Poland as a civilized nation working on behalf of the West against an eastern Bolshevik infidel. Such ideas infused Polish appeals to the United States and Western Europe. In January 1919, the Polish commissioner to the United States asked Congress for loans, arguing that the Poles were not just fighting for themselves, "but for the world."[32] The *New York Times* also recounted claims made by statesmen like Roman Dmowski and Ignacy Paderewski about the perils of Bolshevism, and the importance of Poland's role in protecting Western Europe.[33] Starving people in the eastern lands needed food, Polish officials wrote to their American counterparts, in order to resist the Bolshevik menace.[34]

In particular, Polish politicians depicted the peril of typhus, which was spreading westwards from Bolshevik Russia, as both a medical threat and an expression of political contagion from the East. In April 1919, the Polish Public Health Ministry issued an appeal for relief against typhus, arguing that Poland was defending Western Europe from a disease that emerged out of the "anarchy" of Russia: "Only Poland […] may be able to establish an effective dam to prohibit the extension of typhus into Western Europe. It is, therefore, in the interest of the Western

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[30] For a general introduction, see Harold H. Fisher, *America and the New Poland* (New York: Macmillan, 1928).
[31] *American Relief Administration European Children's Fund Mission to Poland, Polsko-Amerykański Komitet Pomocy Dzieciom, 1919-1922* (Warsaw: Printed by Galewski and Dau, 1922), 12. See also William R. Grove, *War's Aftermath: Polish Relief in 1919* (New York: House of Field, 1940), 77.
[32] "Poles to Ask Congress for Loans to Poland," *New York Times*, January 6, 1919, 2.
[33] "Poland sees safety in World League," *New York Times*, February 20, 1919, 2; "Must Fight Reds, Paderewski says," *New York Times*, March 30, 1919, 1.
[34] "To the Cabinet Council, Warsaw, memorandum Concerning the Supply of Food to the eastern districts," (By General Commissioner Osmolowski and Chief of Approvisation Gordzialowski, submitted to Col. Olds by Col. Habicht), HIA ANRC, Box 118, Folder 12.

European Countries to support and to aid this young State, which gets from all sides so many rude attacks."[35] Such appeals echoed long-standing ideas about Poland as a cordon sanitaire against eastern epidemics that could be traced back to the 1830s.[36] Significantly, this rhetoric was taken up by the international organizations themselves. In a League of Red Cross Societies report from October 1919, the Poles were referred to as a "gallant people" who were undertaking a task on behalf of the West as a whole: "From the moment of her birth, she has been called upon to assume her historic duty and responsibility as a bulwark and defence against those forces which menace all civilization."[37] The report's author contrasted Poland—"a nation which possesses already organized civil and military sanitary departments"—with Russia—"a vast area without any civilized form of government or health organisation," suggesting that observation stations be set up along the border between Polish and Bolshevik-controlled areas.[38] Throughout 1919 and 1920, Polish and Western appeals tapped into the idea that the Poles represented Western civilization in the eastern borderlands.

Winning over the Locals: The Work of the Borderland Guard

Polish appeals concerning development and humanitarianism were not only aimed at Western audiences. As long as these lands were contested, Poles attempted to win over local populations, a technique that was praised by American military observers stationed there. As the head of Hoover's relief mission to Poland wrote in the summer of 1919, providing aid and reconstruction for the region was "not only […] necessary from a humanitarian standpoint, but it is plain, simple politics for the Poles to so minister to the wants of these people as to make them feel an interest in the Polish government."[39]

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[35] "The Typhus Epidemic in Poland" (Polish Public Health Ministry), April 1919, HIA ARA–Europe, Box 369, Folder 5.
[36] Marta Balinska, "La Pologne: du choléra au typhus, 1831-1950," *Bulletin de la Société de Pathologie Exotique* 92, no. 5 (1999): 349-354.
[37] "Bulletin of the League of the Red Cross Societies" (Geneva, Switzerland, October 1919) 1 (4), 10, located in HIA LRCS, Box 2, Folder 32.
[38] Ibid., 11.
[39] Grove, *War's Aftermath*, 80.

The strongest voices in favor of relief and reconstruction emerged from the Borderland Guard, an organization that operated as the *de facto* social wing of the civil administration. Originally established in February 1918 in protest against plans for the annexation of Chełm province to Ukraine, the Borderland Guard saw its work as apolitical, shunning offers of collaboration from right-wing political parties but receiving funds from the state.[40] It attracted social activists and politicians, as well as prominent intellectuals, writers, historians, and geographers. An overwhelming percentage of its activists had belonged to the pre-war nationalist youth society ZET (*Związek Młodzieży Polskiej*), and they brought their experiences of national activism to the new political situation.[41]

The organization's work centered on the promotion of reconstruction, education, good governance, and interethnic cooperation, all of which were seen as interconnected. Following his trip to the borderlands in August 1919 as the head of a cross-party parliamentary commission, the politician Witold Kamieniecki—who was involved in the work of the Borderland Guard—told the Polish parliament that "perhaps the most important thing is to raise the spirit of the local people" in those areas that had been "unbelievably affected by the war." "I am speaking here not only about material destruction," Kamieniecki continued, "[…] but also about the unbelievably deep destruction and moral desolation."[42] The Borderland Guard also published a number of newspapers and journals dedicated to winning over both international and domestic audiences, with the well-known journalist Melchior Wankowicz at the helm of its press and publicity department. For Western audiences, the society published *L'Est Polonais* (Polish East) in French from November 1920, while domestic Polish audiences were catered for by *Wschód Polski* (Polish East), which was published from December 1919 and featured articles penned by, among others, Oskar Halecki and Eugeniusz Romer. In order to reach populations living within the eastern borderlands themselves, the Borderland Guard also published around twenty local titles. In Volhynia, the organization issued *Polak Kresowy*

[40] For an example of the rejection of collaboration with the National Democrats, see letter of November 12, 1919 to the Volhynian regional leader, AAN TSK 144/24.
[41] Zielińska, *Towarzystwo Straży Kresowej*, 34.
[42] *Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z 96 posiedzenia Sejmu Ustawodawczego*, November 7, 1919, 17.

(Borderland Pole), a weekly publication aimed at Polish-speaking peasants, as well as *Nash Holos* (Our Voice), which was published in Ukrainian from April 1920 and aimed at convincing Ukrainians that their best option for the future lay with Poland.[43]

But winning over local populations could not be accomplished merely through issuing pro-Polish newspapers and journals, particularly since so few people in the eastern borderlands could actually read. Therefore, in order to carry out the necessary organizational work on the ground, the Borderland Guard also created local cells that operated across the occupied territories. Their task was to collect information about social, economic, and political conditions, publish manifestos, support the work of local organs of democracy (most notably the People's Councils [*rady ludowe*]), and encourage friendly feelings towards the Polish state.[44] Significantly, the activists were almost always from areas of Poland beyond the eastern borderlands, and they arrived with preconceived ideas about how the region might be reshaped. The reports filed by these activists, along with corresponding records from the Polish Army, the civilian authorities, and foreign aid workers, tell us much about everyday life in Volhynia immediately after the First World War. More importantly, however, they indicate the extent to which propaganda about Poland as a civilizing force was challenged by realities on the ground. Indeed, viewed close up, local society in Volhynia revealed itself as an unstable place, full of national contradictions and economic and social dislocations. While Poles tried to project an image of the civilizational benefits of Polishness, local problems associated with land reform, war damage, the dearth of communications, and poorly-disciplined bureaucrats, not to mention the influence of Ukrainian and Bolshevik activists, severely undermined Polish claims.

The Good, the Bad, and the Indifferent: Encountering Poles in Volhynia

As was the case with the Franco-German borderland region of Alsace, which was reincorporated into the French state following the First World War, abstract

[43] Zielińska, *Towarzystwo Straży Kresowej*, 170-171.
[44] For more on the organization of local units, see Ibid., 51.

mythologies about the *kresy* "did not quite square with reality."[45] Borderland Guard activists were permanently concerned about the weaknesses of Polishness in a land that had been under Russian rule since the end of the eighteenth century and subjected to de-Polonization campaigns following the unsuccessful 1863 Polish Uprising.[46] The local Polish-speaking Catholics they encountered here seemed more concerned with their own material conditions than with acting upon a national agenda, a far cry from the ideal Pole hailed in the official propaganda. In reports filed by local activists, Polishness was not a clear category; instead, it was intrinsically connected to the social relationships and physical environments of Volhynia itself.

In the eyes of Borderland Guard activists, a significant portion of the blame for the sorry situation in Volhynia could be placed on the shoulders of the Polish-speaking landowners. Significantly, the landowners themselves used nationalist sentiments and rhetoric to argue that they constituted "the mainstay of Polishness" in Volhynia.[47] At their inaugural meeting in April 1920, members of the Union of Volhynian Landowners (*Związek Ziemian Wołynia*) claimed that they even subordinated their own class interests "completely to the general interest of the whole population."[48] They reported on the various contributions they had made to the Polish cause in the East, highlighting not only their "historical mission" to connect Volhynia to Poland, but also the work of the various commissions they had established to deal with local agricultural, economic, social, and educational deficiencies. Among many other things, the landowners proposed construction work around the River Stochód in northern Volhynia, the development of the timber industry, an increase in the availability of credit to local Poles, and the renovation of church edifices.

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[45] Christopher Fischer, *Alsace for the Alsatians*: *Visions and Divisions of Alsatian Regionalism*, *1870-1939* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 129.
[46] Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 98.
[47] "Protokuły posiedzeń Zjazdu Polaków Ziemi Wołyńskiej w Łucku dnia 12, 13 i 14 kwietnia 1920 roku," AAN MRiRR 732/9. As Eagle Glassheim has shown, large landowners in interwar Czechoslovakia also used nationalism as a way of attempting to maintain their local power. See Glassheim, *Noble Nationalists: The Transformation of the Bohemian Aristocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 50-82.
[48] "Protokuły posiedzeń Zjazdu Polaków Ziemi Wołyńskiej w Łucku dnia 12, 13 i 14 kwietnia 1920 roku," AAN MRiRR 732/9.

Yet while Polish-speaking landowners used the idea of Polishness to press for their own political and economic interests, Borderland Guard activists argued that their true Polishness had been compromised by their behavior during the days of the Russian Empire. As Daniel Beauvois has shown, after the 1863 Uprising, Polish-speaking landowners came into conflict not only with the Russian imperial authorities, but also with fellow Polish-speaking populations from other social classes.[49] Indeed, Polish-speaking landlords retained a significant amount of their land and economic power in the western provinces of the Russian Empire—according to Theodore Weeks, almost 48% of the Volhynian *gubernia*'s private land was in Polish hands in 1905, as opposed to the 45% that was owned by Russians.[50] With the threat of land reform looming, these landowners attempted to maintain their power and authority by filling positions in Poland's civil administration.[51]

For activists in the Borderland Guard, the landowners were power-hungry men who undermined, rather than promoted, a Polish civilizing agenda in the East. Their engagement in political corruption, fuelled by a desire to hold on to their land, made the Polish state appear illegitimate, and thoroughly alienated local populations. In Łuck county, where the situation was particularly acute, a Borderland Guard report from the summer of 1919 claimed that the landowners displayed "a complete ignorance of local conditions" and viewed "everything from the point of view of their class interests."[52] It was also reported that some landowners forced local peasants to provide compensation for timber that they had taken from the forests during the war. If the peasants did not comply, they were beaten by the police on the recommendation of the landowners, and, since the peasants knew that these men were involved in the upper echelons of the civil administration, they did not resist.[53] Although action was

[49] Daniel Beauvois, *La Bataille de la Terre en Ukraine, 1863-1914: Les Polonais et Les Conflits Socio-Ethniques* (Lille: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1993), 149-241.
[50] Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia*, 87.
[51] In Volhynia, the landowners filled almost all the positions in the civil administration. See Joanna Gierowska-Kałłaur, *Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich (19 lutego 1919-9 września 1920)* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2003), 329.
[52] "Wyciągi z raportów kierownika Straży Kresowej pow. Łuckiego za rok 1919 dotyczące stosunków rolnych," AAN TSK 201/101.
[53] Ibid., 106.

taken in late 1919 to discipline some of the worst offenders, abuses continued.[54] Only by making these local power-holders accountable to the laws of Poland, Borderland Guard activists argued, could such problems be eradicated.[55]

The poor quality of the administration was also blamed for the failure to adequately distribute food to the hungry population. Harvest failures caused by ongoing conflict meant that food had to be imported into the region, despite the fact that much of the soil in Volhynia, particularly in the southern part of the province, was naturally fertile. The winter of 1919-1920 proved to be particularly harsh. By the end of October, the food supply situation in Kowel county had reached "a deplorable state," and there was "a complete deficiency in the provisioning of salt, sugar, fat, flour, and potatoes."[56] The state store, which distributed food supplies to the population, was also liquidated due to the lack of food, while the price of products had increased. Such inefficiencies in the food supply system were blamed on the corruption of people who staffed the local offices of the civil administration. At a meeting of regional leaders in Kowel county, it was reported that the activities of the food supply department were limited to "office work," and that the police were confiscating even the smallest quantities of salt from the population.[57] Two days later, another report highlighted the terrible situation in both the town of Kowel and the surrounding region, where the food supply authorities had received nothing during the previous week and shortages were driving up food prices.[58] The area around the River Stochód was in a particularly bad state, with hunger reaching "catastrophic measures" by December 1919.[59]

The inability of the population to get hold of salt caused major problems across the Polish-occupied eastern territories. An "item of the first importance," salt was

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[54] "O Nadużycia w Administracji Ziem Wschodnich: Wyniki dochodzenia dyscyplinarnego," *Kurjer Polski,* December 27, 1919, 2.
[55] "Memorjał w sprawie położenia na Wołyniu, zadań administracji i straży kresowej," AAN TSK 217/95.
[56] "Raport tygodniowy za czas od 22.X. do 29.X.1919 r.," AAN TSK 214/15.
[57] "Protokół z posiedzenia Naczelników Rejonów w dniu 3/XI.1919 w Starostwie powiatowym w Kowlu," AAN TSK 214/22.
[58] "Raport tygodniowy za czas od 29/X. do 5.XI.19r." (Kowel), AAN TSK 214/25-26.
[59] "Wyciągi z raportów kierownika Straży Kresowej pow. Łuckiego za rok 1919 dotyczące stosunków rolnych," AAN TSK 201/116.

crucial for local people who used it for the conservation of meat and cabbage. In January 1920, the Borderland Guard's political journal reported on the effects of a lack of salt across the region:

> Since October, a new dangerous symptom has manifested itself in supplying the population of the eastern borderlands […]: this symptom is a lack of salt. In some localities the price of salt went up to 15-20 rubles per pound, in others there is simply no way of buying it. Everywhere, the county heads are begging for salt to be sent, reporting that the lack of salt brings the population to boiling point. […] Among the population there arises a genuine "salt panic."[60]

Populations in the swampy northern regions near the River Stochód were apparently dying of hunger due to the lack of crops, while quantities of salt were woefully insufficient and the offices of the food supply authorities had closed.

The civil administration also made slow progress in its attempts to physically reconstruct the area. A report into the situation in Łuck county from April and May 1919 suggested that Polish laws be applied in the borderlands to ensure that local reconstruction work was undertaken. "I think that in Volhynia," claimed the report's author, "it would be necessary to extend the mandatory law in Poland, which ensures that people have considerable help from the government, and makes it easier for essential material to be obtained quickly without financial burdens."[61] Near the River Stochód, all houses had been destroyed and people were living in dugouts and German trenches, which were flooded with water.[62] Repairing destroyed villages would, it was believed, improve the attitude of the population towards the Polish authorities. By January 1920, the Building Commission in Warsaw, which formed part of the Ministry of Public Works, argued that more aid needed to be sent in order to deter anti-Polish activities in the region.[63] By May, the Borderland Guard was reporting that "building is closely related to the tranquility of the population, and that is also why,

[60] "W sprawie soli dla kresów," *Wschód Polski*, December 1919, 34.
[61] "Wyciągi z raportów kierownika Straży Kresowej pow. Łuckiego za rok 1919 dotyczące stosunków rolnych," AAN TSK 201/94.
[62] "Do Naczelnika Państwa Józefa Piłsudskiego," AAN TSK 218/3.
[63] "Kronika Sejmowa: Odbudowa kraju," *Roboty Publiczne: Organ Ministerstwa Robót Publicznych*, January 1920, 18.

above all else, the Borderland Guard should impose an influence on the appropriate government authorities, so that this year the reconstruction of destroyed villages and small towns leads to considerable progress."[64] However, conditions on the ground made for a tricky situation. Local authorities struggled to protect nearby forests—a vital source of building materials—from looting peasants, while a lack of horses made the transportation of timber problematic.[65]

The hardships suffered by the Volhynian population meant that attitudes towards the civil administration were often negative, even among Polish-speaking peasants. In Łuck county, impoverished Poles were described as "having feelings of belonging only to Catholicism and to the farming movement," and were allegedly providing recruits for Symon Petlura, the leader of the Ukrainian state.[66] There were also fears about the extent to which Polish-speaking peasants in Volhynia had lost their Polishness as a result of permanent contact with the surrounding Ruthenians. In his report into the situation in 1920, the deputy leader of the Borderland Guard in Volhynia, Antoni Zalewski, argued that Polish peasants with local roots had "Ruthenianized quickly, frequently losing [their] language, such that, at the moment when the war broke out, they connected themselves with Polishness only in terms of the Roman Catholic religion; moreover, they have hitherto been a quite indifferent element, not presenting for the moment any great value."[67] There were even cases of local Poles siding with anti-Polish "bandits" who roamed the countryside. In December 1919, a military report from Równe county stated that the spread of Bolshevism was a problem in certain areas, and that local Poles who behaved "with a certain aloofness" did not help the authorities catch the agitators.[68] Polish-speaking peasants, uncertain about their immediate future after so many invasions, also failed to pay their taxes.

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[64] "Protokuł Zjazdu Instruktorów Straży Kresowej Okręgu Wołyńskiego z dnia 5 i 6/V 1920 r.," AAN TSK 240/22.
[65] "Memorjał delegacji Rady Miejskiej i Magistratu miasta Włodzimierza w sprawie najpilniejszych potrzeb miasta," AAN TSK 215/196.
[66] "Wyciągi z raportów kierownika Straży Kresowej pow. Łuckiego za rok 1919 dotyczące stosunków rolnych," AAN TSK 201/91.
[67] "Raport o sytuacji na Wołyniu," AAN TSK 215/40.
[68] "Raport sytuacyjny D.P.K. od 1 do 20 grudnia 1919," DARO 30/18/14/41od.

Rather than forming a united national front, the Borderland Guard argued, Polish-speaking populations in Volhynia prioritized their own class and material concerns above all else, sometimes clashing with their compatriots over issues of local importance. One example of this phenomenon was noted in the conflict between landlords and the more prosperous peasants whom Borderland Guard activists singled out as potential reservoirs of Polishness. In particular, the Borderland Guard believed that two groups of peasants—those who had previously rented land (the renter-colonists, or *koloniści-dzierżawcy*) and those who had formerly worked for the landowners (farm laborers, or *służba folwarczna*)—might be inclined to support the new Polish state, whose rule in the region would help them to gain land and economic prosperity. As the author of one article in *Borderland Pole* put it, "the colonists, especially the Poles, are the main element giving absolute and selfless support to the Polish authorities."[69] Farm laborers also suffered as a consequence of Ukrainian-led land reform movements in the region; they had been thrown off the properties of their employers by the peasants and persecuted by landowners who evicted them or forced them to give up a third of their harvest. According to the Borderland Guard, the Polish government would work to protect both groups: "Our government has already thought about the farm laborers and the poor colonists or villagers who escaped during the war and are now returning. […] All this is evidence that the government genuinely has the needs of the people of Volhynia at heart."[70] Antoni Zalewski similarly argued that such elements were of utmost importance for the Polish cause, and that providing them with access to land would create a loyal Polish element and diminish the pernicious influence of the landowners.[71]

In the towns, Borderland Guard activists were disappointed by the apathy of Volhynia's small Polish-speaking intelligentsia and lower-middle class. In October 1919, the Polish intelligentsia in the town of Krzemieniec (a place with a long tradition as a bastion of Polish education and culture) was apparently "very small,"

[69] "Sprawy rolne na Wołyniu," *Polak Kresowy*, August 31, 1919, 2.
[70] Ibid., 4.
[71] "Raport o sytuacji na Wołyniu," AAN TSK 215/43.

while community life was "completely broken."[72] In Dubno county, Borderland Guard activists reported that "the Polish intelligentsia is small and quite broken. There is a lack of community life. There exists a hospital, run by several women, a soldier's inn, which is not fit to hold a candle to [the one in] Łuck county; beyond this there is nothing. Universally, a lack of initiative is felt."[73] Opinions about the Polish lower-middle class in Dubno county's towns, where it apparently made up only three or four percent of the overall population, were similarly negative. "The population is colorless, broken, has little consciousness, gives no real signs of life," one report concluded, "On the towns' streets its presence is not known at all."[74] The situation had not improved by the spring of 1920, when the county's Polish population was described as mainly "Russified" and interested only in its own material conditions. Rather than promoting Polishness in the East, these Poles were "completely indifferent to the fate of the country" and did not manifest "national aspirations."[75] In the dire material circumstances that existed after the war, populations prioritized their quotidian economic interests over a Polish national mission.

"Poland is a Mother who Loves All Her Children": Appealing to Non-Poles

As Antoni Zalewski's comments on the "Ruthenianization" of Volhynia's Poles suggested, anxieties about the weakness of Polishness on the ground needed to be understood within a multiethnic context. After all, the overwhelming majority of Volhynia's inhabitants were neither Polish-speaking nor Catholic, and Polish elites recognized that no plan for winning over the locals could ignore this fact. In contrast to their right-wing counterparts, members of the Borderland Guard believed that the (re-)establishment of Polish civilization in Volhynia would entail a partnership with the non-Polish populations (albeit one in which the Poles would constitute the senior partner), rather than an attempt to assimilate non-Polish Slavs into the Polish nation.

[72] "Raport w objazdu pow. Dubieńskiego i Krzemienieckego dn. 21, 22, i 23 października 1919 r.," AAN TSK 327/11.
[73] Ibid., 9.
[74] Ibid., 9.
[75] "Raport miesięczny z powiatu Dubieńskiego za czas od 21/III od 11/IV 1920 roku," AAN TSK 328/1.

Activists emphasized how short-term Polish aid for relief and reconstruction, as well as access to democratic institutions, would make the Polish state more popular among its non-Polish inhabitants. They even explicitly acknowledged the existence of distinct Ruthenian and Belarusian identities, in some cases promoting feelings of Ruthenian separateness to counter Russophile tendencies.[76] In August 1919, the Borderland Guard issued an appeal to all inhabitants of Równe county, regardless of their ethnicity, utilizing a phrase that would be echoed throughout the interwar period: "Poland is a mother who loves all her children."[77]

That same month, the organizational department of the Borderland Guard in Warsaw emphasized the need to persuade non-Polish groups that becoming part of the Polish state lay in their best interests, particularly when considering the threat from Russia. "We are convinced that only in union with Poland can the Lithuanians deliver themselves against Prussia and Russia, [and] the Belarusians and Ruthenians deliver themselves against Russia […]," one report argued.[78] In order to do this, people had to be convinced that the Polish state could provide them with food, economic reconstruction, and education.[79] Only through such policies might Poles and Ruthenians avoid succumbing to the historical "bogeyman" that stood between them.[80]

Borderland Guard activists argued that the involvement of Warsaw's parliament in Volhynian politics would bring democracy and equality to the ethnically and religiously heterogeneous population, and they appealed to central government authorities and the Polish parliament to extend Polish laws to Volhynia. They had practical reasons for doing so, believing that only through government supervision, order, and financial support could the major problems in the region be adequately addressed and the power base of the landowners eroded. Meetings of local delegates resolved to strengthen the legal and administrative ties between Volhynia and the rest

[76] "Memorjał w sprawie położenia na Wołyniu, zadań administracji i straży kresowej," AAN TSK 217/92. It is worth noting, however, that the Borderland Guard reports tended to use the term "Ruthenian" rather than "Ukrainian" when describing Volhynia's non-Russian Orthodox population, reserving the latter title to describe Ukrainian nationalists.
[77] "Obywatele!" (Borderland Guard in Równe, August 1919), DARO 30/1/2/38.
[78] "WOSK do Pana Komisarza Generalnego Ziem Wschodnich," AAN TSK 147/1-2.
[79] Ibid., 2.
[80] "Memorjał w sprawie położenia na Wołyniu, zadań administracji i straży kresowej," AAN TSK 217/90.

of Poland. At a meeting in Kowel county in September 1919, delegates demanded "the speediest joining-up of the Volhynian lands to the Polish Republic, as well as their immediate alignment with Poland as regards the system of administrative authorities and laws that are obligatory in the Polish state."[81] This process consisted of appointing people with democratic convictions to administrative positions, regulating farming issues based on the principles of the Polish state, applying reconstruction laws, and providing immediate help for people whose properties had been destroyed.

For Antoni Zalewski, democracy would encourage the political and economic participation of Volhynia's non-Polish populations. Addressing Borderland Guard delegates in the town of Sarny in September 1919, he explained the benefits of Polish democracy, as opposed to Russian autocracy, to local non-Polish peasants. The Russian system, he argued, had been based on "the law of the Tsar who, with a stroke of his pen, decided upon the fate of millions with no regard as to whether it was good or bad for the people."[82] Polish democracy provided a more attractive alternative, since it was based on parliamentary elections by secret ballot in which all citizens could participate. Moreover, everyone's vote—whether they were lord of the manor or peasant, "Pole, Ruthenian, or even Jew"—was of equal importance, and the voting system was proportional. To demonstrate the significance of this principle for the various national groups, Zalewski depicted it in its simplest terms: if there were one hundred people in a county—eighty Ruthenians, ten Poles, and ten Jews—then the population would democratically elect ten Members of Parliament—the Ruthenians would choose eight, the Poles one, and the Jews one.[83] The following month, Zalewski once again asserted the need for centralized Polish democracy in Volhynia, stating that one of the tasks of the administration lay in "acquainting people with the democratic arrangements of the Polish Republic."[84] In addition to "spreading national consciousness among the Polish masses and organizing them to battle for the

[81] "Protokół zjazdu delegatów ludności polskiej pow. Kowelskiego w dniu 14/9.1919 r.," AAN TSK 239/109.
[82] "Protokuł Zjazdu delegatów połnocnych częśći powiatów Łuckiego i Równieńskiego dnia 28 września 1919 r w Sarnach," AAN TSK 239/114.
[83] Ibid., 114.
[84] "Memorjał w sprawie położenia na Wołyniu, zadań administracji i straży kresowej," AAN TSK 217/91.

Polishness of Volhynia," the administration also needed to get other nationalities on board by showing them "the real benefits that a connection to Poland could bring."[85] Economic cooperation between Poles and non-Poles would similarly provide an important catalyst for regional prosperity. In a 1920 report, the Borderland Guard argued that Poland should take the lead from Western European countries, all of which understood that economic levels could only be raised if the entire society, and not merely the political elite, supported the endeavor. If Volhynia was to prosper economically, Poles and Ruthenians who had both suffered terribly from wartime destruction "must work together," since there was "room only for collaborative, mutual community work."[86]

Stories about Poland's historical connections to Volhynia played an important legitimizing role in such initiatives, appealing to long-standing ideas about Polish civilization in the East. Through meetings, newspaper articles, and proclamations, Volhynia's activists drew upon a usable past to argue that Poles, Ruthenians, Jews, Germans, and Czechs could live side-by-side in equality and harmony. In a fortuitous coincidence, the 350th anniversary of the Union of Lublin fell in June 1919, providing an opportunity for local activists to emphasize the continuities between the historic and present-day "unions" of Poland and Volhynia. After recounting the tale of the union's foundation, the fall of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth due to the "perversity and cunning of its neighbors," and the pains suffered under Russian servitude, an article in *Borderland Pole* stressed the significance of contemporary developments: "Today the moment of mutual liberation has finally arrived! Today the Polish Army enters the Volhynian land, bringing the slogans of brotherly bonds in accordance with coexistence: 'equal among equals, free among the free.'"[87]

Celebrations and festivities similarly provided symbolic arenas in which a more inclusive vision of Polish history might be promoted.[88] In June 1919, Borderland

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[85] Ibid., 91.
[86] "Pierwsze zadania gospodarcza na Wołyniu," AAN TSK 215/173-174.
[87] "Wielki święto Wołynia," *Polak Kresowy*, June 9, 1919, 1.
[88] There is a considerable amount of literature on the links between nationalism and participatory commemorations in Eastern and Central Europe. See, for example, Maria Bucur and Nancy M. Wingfield, eds., *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2001). On the significance of

Guard activists organized a series of public celebrations to commemorate the Union of Lublin in the towns of Łuck, Włodzimierz, and Kowel, descriptions of which were subsequently published in *Borderland Pole*. Describing the town of Łuck, the author of one article painted a colorful picture of streets filled with people, houses decked out in Polish flags, and a beautiful outdoor altar decorated with flowers and greenery.[89] In Włodzimierz, the town was similarly decorated "in greenery and national flags," while stores boasted "handsome window displays."[90] Particular attention was dedicated to the participation of non-Polish populations in these patriotic celebrations. The article on celebrations in Łuck emphasized how "the Polish peasant of Volhynia desires agreement and understanding with his Ruthenian neighbors," and stated that the signs carried by people in the streets declared "Long Live Polish-Ruthenian brotherhood!" According to the article, a group of Ruthenians had even traveled over twenty kilometers from the town of Rożyszcze to join the celebrations in Łuck, where they wrote signs in the Cyrillic script that featured the old Polish saying, "For your Freedom and Ours."[91] In Włodzimierz, the festivities included a speech by Mikołaj Pajdowski, a delegate of the Borderland Guard, who assured the Ruthenians that Poland did not bring oppression, as many of them thought, but "freedom, the like of which people here have not known!"[92] The behavior of Kowel's Jews was also mentioned in a positive light:

> It was nice to see in these great celebrations the numerous and obvious participation of the Jewish population and representatives. It is necessary to underline that Kowel's Jews clearly, and of their own volition, declared their participation, and the whole time they excellently demonstrated their connections with the experiences of the Polish people.[93]

Proclamations about the necessity of interethnic cooperation were also made during local meetings at which non-Poles were present. At one meeting in Łuck

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commemorations in the pre-First World War Polish lands, see Patrice M. Dabrowski, *Commemorations and the Shaping of Modern Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).
[89] "Obchody narodowe na Wołyniu," *Polak Kresowy*, June 22, 1919, 1.
[90] Ibid., 4.
[91] Ibid., 2.
[92] Ibid., 5.
[93] Ibid., 4.

county in July 1919, for instance, delegates applauded statements about the "brotherhood" of the county's various ethnic groups. One delegate's declaration that "we are all brothers: Ruthenians, Czechs, Germans. […] We are all equal, we should all work together, because otherwise there will be no happiness" was met with shouts and applause.[94] At a meeting in September, delegates of the Polish population in Kowel county expressed similar sentiments about the importance of Polish-Ruthenian brotherhood. Jan Dębski opened the proceedings by voicing his support for the coming together of Poles and Ruthenians, while Mikołaj Pajdowski—who had delivered the speech at the celebrations in Włodzimierz several months earlier—emphasized the joint suffering of Poles and Ruthenians under Russian imperial rule.[95] At a meeting in Równe the following month, another Polish delegate acknowledged the religious diversity of the participants, addressing both Polish Catholic and Ukrainian Orthodox members of the audience with traditional religious greetings.[96] The many similar examples in the minutes of local meetings indicated the importance of interethnic cooperation—on a rhetorical level at least.

The Limits of Interethnic Harmony

It was clear that Polish activists presented the narrative of rebuilding the region as a way of winning over non-Polish populations and of discouraging them from siding with Bolsheviks or Ukrainian nationalists who offered their own solutions to material hardship. Polishness, so the story went, meant Western civilization, good governance, and protection from Eastern barbarism. Yet just as the promises of Polishness were challenged by economic and material circumstances on the ground, so the pressures of everyday life in Volhynia meant that interethnic harmony also had its limits. In times of deprivation, land hunger, and food shortages, even those activists who aimed to unite the various ethnic groups under the banner of cooperation argued

[94] "Protokuł Zjazdu delegatów ludności Polskiej powiatu Łuckiego dnia 27 lipca 1919 roku," AAN TSK 239/15.
[95] "Protokuł Zjazdu delegatów ludności polskiej pow. Kowelskiego w dniu 14/9 1919r.," AAN TSK 239/94-95.
[96] "Protokuł Zjazdu delegatów powiatu Równieńskiego w dniu 26 października 19r.," AAN TSK 239/155.

that there existed a hierarchy of ethnicities. In their desire to bring about the political, economic, and cultural transformation of Volhynia, Borderland Guard activists reified long-standing ideas about the roles of various ethnic groups.

Despite claims that "Poland is a mother who loves all her children," therefore, not all of Volhynia's inhabitants were equally loved. On one extreme, local Russians, who continued to fill administrative and railroad positions, were deemed to be inherently disloyal to the Polish state due to their links with the landowning classes of the Russian Empire and because Bolshevism was equated with Russia. Put simply, since the Polish state was defined against Russia, Russian populations living within the borders of the Polish occupation zone constituted an internal enemy.[97] Henryk Orłowski, the head of the Borderland Guard in Volhynia, certainly saw things this way, arguing that the continued employment of Russian personnel on the railroads "created the impression among the local population that Poland would return the land to Russia after the battle with Bolshevism."[98] Orłowski even went so far as to suggest that the Russians should be immediately removed from their posts and Poles sent to the eastern borderlands to do their work.[99] In addition, Russian railroad workers allegedly spread rumors among vulnerable peasant populations, leading to recommendations that every station should also employ several Poles; the worst situation was in the railroad town of Mokwin, which was described as "a nest of Bolsheviks."[100] Russians were also accused of prioritizing their own personal interests when it came to food distribution. According to a report from Łuck county in October 1919, "the Russians are in charge of the food supply office and above all supply their own families."[101]

On the other end of the scale stood the province's Germans and Czechs, who were generally seen as apolitical and relatively prosperous, and whose material situation predisposed them towards supporting the Polish state. Borderland Guard

[97] "Raport o sytuacji na Wołyniu," AAN TSK 215/43.
[98] Gierowska-Kałłaur, *Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich*, 337.
[99] Ibid., 337.
[100] "Wyciąg z raportu Naczelnika Rejonu Kostopolskiego z dnia 29 grudnia [1919]," DARO 30/18/14/46.
[101] "Wyciągi z raportów kierownika Straży Kresowej pow. Łuckiego za rok 1919 dotyczące stosunków rolnych," AAN TSK 201/112.

activists did not worry about either group acting on their inherent national characteristics, partly because those characteristics were not seen as particularly subversive, and partly because Germans and Czechs constituted such a small percentage of the overall population of Volhynia (around 2.3% and 1.5% respectively). Since both Czechs and Germans were more prosperous than Ruthenian peasants and many impoverished Jews, they were not seen as threats to the Polish state. More importantly, they were even judged to be suitable elements for longer-term processes of "Polonization." Recognizing that the Poles constituted such a meager percentage of Volhynia's population, Antoni Zalewski argued that every opportunity to "thin out" the Ruthenian element should be exploited, and he singled out Volhynia's Germans and Czechs as particularly promising candidates. Zalewski pointed to the fact that Germans had been easily "Polonized" prior to the outbreak of the First World War—the German town of Józefin in Łuck county, for instance, had been "completely Polonized," and the population constituted "a Polonophilic element through and through."[102] The small size of each group made them ideal candidates for assimilation, since it guaranteed "that they will not long maintain themselves as a distinct element and will quickly yield to Polonization."[103]

More ambiguous was the Borderland Guard's attitude towards Volhynia's two larger ethnic groups, the Jews and the Ruthenians. On one level, the organization did not condone the rabid anti-Semitism of the Polish right. Indeed, as the assessment of the Jews in the article from *Borderland Pole* cited above indicates, the Borderland Guard nominally welcomed the Jews, arguing that Jewish populations could participate in, and contribute toward, local civic life. Activists did, however, question the ability of the Jews to put Polish state interests before their own. Even the aforementioned article suggested deeper suspicions about "true" Jewish intentions:

> We see from the side of the Jewish population a willingness to befriend the new state conditions, a willingness for agreeable coexistence with the Polish population and contacts with the Polish state, and we want to believe that these signs are, and will be, sincere expressions of the Jews adapting to Polish

[102] "Raport o sytuacji na Wołyniu," AAN TSK 215/43, 53.
[103] Ibid., 43.

> factors and interests, *not artificial and false decorations, beyond which lie hidden permanently hostile and deceitful participation in activities and agitation that are harmful to us*.[104]

Indeed, those reporting on everyday economic and political life in Volhynia were often skeptical about Jewish loyalties to the Polish state. Such suspicions grew from a combination of anti-Semitic preconceptions and the material situation on the ground, as Jews were accused of actively driving up the price of food and firewood to the detriment of local peasants. In Łuck county in the autumn of 1919, for instance, Jews were said to be working with local landowners, meaning that "the majority of the grain ends up in the hands of black-marketers, mainly the Jews."[105] The following month, it was similarly reported that "the food supply situation is terrible as a result of the sale of grain by the landowners to the Jews."[106] According to these reports, the more prosperous Jews who engaged in local trade were working in cahoots with the class enemies of Polishness to the detriment of the rest of the population, a motif that fit well with a long-standing stereotype of the Jew as the enemy of the simple peasant.[107] Rumors also spread around the countryside that money sent by American Jews to help their coreligionists in Volhynia was being spent on anti-state agitation among the peasants.[108] In addition to these anxieties about the alleged economic exploitation of the population, impoverished Jews were frequently denounced as Bolshevik sympathizers and agitators. At the beginning of 1920, Jews were accused of "carrying out Bolshevik agitation on the whole territory, [and] spreading rumors about Polish corruption and the march of the Red Army."[109] Significantly, reports alleged that Volhynia's Jews worked against the material interests of the wider population in two seemingly contradictory senses, as allies of both the landowners and the Bolsheviks. According to a report sent to the Polish head of state, Józef Piłsudski, in

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[104] "Obchody narodowe w Kowlu," *Polak Kresowy*, July 20, 1919, 4. Emphasis added.
[105] "Wyciągi z raportów kierownika Straży Kresowej pow. Łuckiego za rok 1919," TSK 201/22.
[106] Ibid., 23.
[107] For more on the image of the Jews in the Russian Empire during the nineteenth century, see Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia,* 59-64.
[108] "Raport miesięczny z powiatu Dubieńskiego za czas od 21/III do 11/IV 1920 roku," AAN TSK 328/2.
[109] "Wyciągi z raportów kierownika Straży Kresowej pow. Łuckiego za rok 1919," AAN TSK 201/33.

January 1920, the towns in Volhynia were being driven to starvation because the Jews were taking grain away from farms and sending it to Kowel county, from whence it was distributed to unknown destinations, "allegedly to the Bolsheviks in the east".[110]

Attitudes towards the Ruthenians were different still. As discussed earlier, Borderland Guard activists perceived the Ruthenians as potential allies in the quest to develop regional prosperity and to fight against the power of the landowners. They recognized that the Ruthenian population was almost exclusively composed of land-hungry peasants for whom the farming question was critical.[111] Yet, as was the case during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, conflict over land often took place along ethnic lines, with Ukrainian-speaking villagers pitted against Polish-speaking landowners.[112] Erasing such memories would not be easy. In October and November 1919, crimes related to farming disputes—including murder and arson—were said to be bound up with "ethnic conflicts."[113]

While advocating a greater sense of brotherhood between Poles and Ruthenians and aiming to eliminate the abuses suffered by Ruthenian populations at the hands of local Polish officials, Borderland Guard activists claimed that Poles were the only possible leaders for state-building projects in the region—the older, wiser brother. Indeed, in spite of slogans about equality and freedom, the Borderland Guard was primarily concerned with ensuring the political power of the Polish state, as well as the preservation and rejuvenation of Volhynia's Polish culture. Local activists argued that the Poles would lead the Ruthenians towards the light of civilization and development. At a meeting of Równe county delegates in October 1919, one participant argued that the Poles simply wanted to help their "Ruthenian brothers," who had very few options available to them: "We only want to show you the way. Russia has fifty different governments. About Ukraine, nobody knows. Poland is the

[110] "Do Naczelnika Państwa Józefa Piłsudskiego," AAN TSK 218/6.
[111] "Wyciągi z raportów kierownika Straży Kresowej pow. Łuckiego za rok 1919," AAN TSK 201/102.
[112] Beauvois, *La Bataille de la Terre*, 81-145.
[113] "Wyciągi z raportów kierownika Straży Kresowej pow. Łuckiego za rok 1919," AAN TSK 201/113.

closest neighbor that has access to the sea, oil, iron, salt. What do you have? Only fertile land and forests."[114]

Despite the welcoming statements with which the Ruthenian delegates were greeted at local meetings, Ruthenian appeals and complaints were frequently dismissed. At the September 1919 meeting in Sarny, a Ruthenian by the name of Iwan Liniewicz argued that, while people talked about the equality of Polish rule, his experiences had led him to believe that it was merely an illusion. He complained about the abusive treatment of the Ruthenians at the hands of both the administration and the army, and stated that the government distributed money to Polish schools but not to their Ruthenian counterparts.[115] Henryk Orłowski's response was telling. In addition to throwing the peasant's story into doubt, he stated that "this is a Polish meeting to which the Ruthenians were invited."[116] The following month, at a meeting of Kowel county delegates (attended by 200 Poles, 120 Ruthenians, nine Germans, three Jews, and two Czechs), a Ruthenian participant stated that the Borderland Guard had not sufficiently publicized the fact that the meeting was open to people of all nationalities, arguing that the president should reconvene the meeting once the entire population had been informed. The answer he received was unequivocal. "We did not have the intention of calling together all the representatives of the county's people. We called together the Poles in order to hear their opinions, and we invited the Ruthenians as guests, so that they listen to what we advise," stated Edmund Strauch, the instructor for Kowel county, adding that postponing the meeting would be "too great a waste of time."[117] After several Ruthenians added their voices to the initial concern, Antoni Zalewski stated that "the Poles are the only ones offering the Ruthenians a good alternative" and alluded to Poland's history of bestowing freedom upon non-Polish nations.[118] Another Polish delegate argued that "the Ruthenians do not yet know what

[114] "Protokuł Zjazdu delegatów powiatu Równieńskiego w dniu 26 października 19r.," AAN TSK 239/155.
[115] "Protokuł Zjazdu delegatów północnych części powiatów Łuckiego i Równieńskiego dnia 28 września 1919 r w Sarnach," AAN TSK 239/120-121.
[116] Ibid., 121.
[117] "Protkół zjazdu delegatów ludności polskiej pow. Kowelskiego w dniu 14/9.1919 r.," AAN TSK 239/102.
[118] Ibid, 106-107.

they want. We need not wait for the Ruthenians' considerations."[119] Democracy clearly had its limits.

Bolshevik Reinvasion and the Problems of Peace

The reinvasion of Volhynia by Red Army forces in the summer of 1920, which followed the joint Polish-Ukrainian invasion into Ukraine, brought more fighting and destruction to an already war-torn region. Economic, social, political, and ethno-national relations on the ground were once again stirred up by the presence of an invading army. As news that the Bolshevik army was moving westwards reached Volhynia, panic spread among the region's inhabitants. At the end of June, rumors circulated in the town of Krzemieniec, based on news brought by people fleeing westwards; a few days later, there were almost no Poles left in the town.[120] In Kowel too, the advances of the Red Army led Polish soldiers and much of the civilian population to pack up their things and retreat amid chaotic scenes. In Volhynian villages, Bolshevik soldiers took everything they could, with no regard for the nationality of the rightful owners, while policies of requisitioning did little to endear the Bolsheviks to the occupied populations.[121] The Bolsheviks were to move through the region again in the late summer of 1920, retreating eastwards following the Battle of Warsaw and leaving more destruction in their wake.

The conclusion of the Polish-Bolshevik war brought some stability to Volhynia. The signing of an armistice between Poland and Bolshevik Russia in October 1920, followed by the Treaty of Riga in March 1921, ushered in a "new, constructive period in Polish relief work" for international humanitarian organizations.[122] Reports from various localities in Volhynia also indicated that some of the patterns of life that had characterized the region prior to the First World War were beginning to return. In the small town of Tuczyn on the River Horyń, a local

[119] Ibid., 107.
[120] "Raport ewakuacyjny pow. Krzemienieckiego," AAN TSK 215/146.
[121] Babel, *1920 Diary,* 17-18.
[122] Fisher, *America and the New Poland*, 291.

market was held in November 1920, the first for "a long time," although admittedly "some of the stores were closed due to a lack of goods."[123]

Yet the advent of peace did not bring an end to the social, political, and ethnic conflicts that had engulfed the region for the previous six years. For one, the Bolshevik reinvasion in the summer of 1920 had reignited debates about the trustworthiness of non-Polish populations, causing conflicts between those on the left and right of Polish politics. Addressing the Polish parliament in October 1920, the right-wing politician Stanisław Głąbiński argued that certain members of the local populations—most notably the farm laborers so beloved by the Borderland Guard—had "withheld horse [and] cattle transportation" from Polish soldiers and had willingly accepted the Bolshevik invaders. Głąbiński also accused the Jewish population of demonstrating disloyalty to the state by enthusiastically welcoming the Bolsheviks.[124] In contrast, politicians and activists connected with the Borderland Guard openly proclaimed that the Bolsheviks had failed to break local solidarity. During the same parliamentary session at which Głąbiński spoke, Jan Dębski—a politician, legionnaire, and supporter of the Borderland Guard—stated that:

> The two-month stay of the Bolsheviks in these lands brought the annihilation of Polishness, destroyed prosperity that had been developed in these lands under the Polish government, wrought havoc in cruelties and persecution. The Polish borderland people, their behavior during the Bolshevik invasion, their cooperation with our army, their hiding of prisoners of war, merits a special distinction. The Polish state must come to these people with help.[125]

In Dębski's view, support for Polish soldiers among the region's various ethno-national groups had also been strong, and the army had been "greeted everywhere as a savior" by Poles, Ruthenians, and Jews.[126] In private, however, Borderland Guard

[123] "Raport Sytuacyjny za czas od 25 października do 5 listopada" (Tuczyn), DARO 30/18/51/8od.
[124] *Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z posiedzenia 170 Sejmu Ustawodawczego*, October 7, 1920, 15-16.
[125] Ibid., 11.
[126] Ibid., 11.

activists expressed ongoing doubts about the behavior of Jewish populations, reporting that 3,000 Jews had traveled eastwards with the Bolsheviks when they retreated.[127]

It was clear that although the fighting was over, its consequences were still keenly felt on the ground, undermining the idea that the Polish state provided higher standards of civilization. Economic and administrative problems persisted in the last few months of 1920, as they would throughout the decade. The brief period of Bolshevik occupation during the summer had heaped more destruction upon the local economy, leaving "a deep trace in people's psychology."[128] There was a lack of police in the region, meaning that the state struggled to control its precious natural resources, most notably the forests from which local peasants stole timber.[129] In the area of Klewań, it was reported that peasants engaged in the illegal production of vodka, but police were unable to discover the exact locations of the crime; similarly, the authorities knew that populations in Ludwipol and Stepań participated in illegal distilling, but "due to the lack of police, they cannot be detected."[130] In areas where there were policemen, they had no uniforms and were insufficiently qualified, while police stations were old and inadequate.[131] A report from Korzec argued that local policemen were "mentally backward" and "not very literate," while eight roaming bandits who carried out raids on people's farms in the Storożowski forest north of the town dressed up in police uniforms.[132] With peasants unable to distinguish between the real police and the bandits, the rule of law seemed shaky indeed.

Just as worrying was the fact that the men who were supposed to represent the Polish state seemed indifferent to the problems all around them. A military report from November 1920 argued that the police in Równe ignored the fact that the town center looked like a "trash dump," even though they passed it "an innumerable number of

[127] "Raport L.2 Kierownika Okręgu Wołyńskiego Straży Kresowej za czas od 11.9 do 20.9.1920," AAN TSK 324/11.
[128] "Okólnik Wewnętrzny Nr. 1 Wydziału Organizacyjnego Straży Kresowej" (Warsaw, September 30, 1920), AAN TSK 188/2.
[129] In Równe county, authorities struggled to deal with the peasant practice of felling trees in the forests. "Raport Sytuacyjny z dnia 13-go do 23 listopada 1920r." (Tuczyn), DARO 30/18/51/25od.
[130] 'Raport Sytuacyjny za czas od 20 grudnia 1920 roku" (Berezno), DARO 30/18/51/101.
[131] "Raport Sytuacyjny II Rejonu pow. Równieńskiego za czas od dnia 9 do 15 grudnia 1920r." (Klewań), DARO 30/18/51/65.
[132] "Raport Sytuacyjny za czas od dnia 20/XI do dnia 15/XII 1920r." (Korzec), DARO 30/18/51/68od-69.

times" every day.[133] Polish soldiers continued to requisition goods from the peasants and continued to be unpopular because of it. In Tuczyn, soldiers who were quartered around the village took food, horse wagons, cows, pigs, coats, and other things from local peasants, and in most cases did not pay.[134] In the colony of Kołowerta, one regiment took 500 boxes of oats, while in the village of Kurozwany, another tore off the lock from the peasants' warehouse and took 300 boxes of grain (in addition to taking three boxes of grain from every peasant). In some cases, they left peasants with nothing to sow.[135]

Concerns about the ongoing lack of Polishness in the region also persisted. At the beginning of 1921, the Polish urban intelligentsia was still "not numerous and not showing any political work," while the number of Polish schools, not to mention the number of teachers who could provide instruction in the Polish language, remained insufficient.[136] As the Polishness of the province and its inhabitants continued to be the subject of debate, concerns persisted about the potentially damaging influence of non-Polish populations. Polish officials blamed non-Poles for exacerbating the fragile economic and political situation. The Jews, in particular, were singled out as an economic and demographic threat to the Polish state, due to their alleged involvement in illegal distilling and bogus immigration applications.[137] Such anxieties about Polishness and the influence of non-Polish groups were not limited to the first few years after Polish independence. Instead, they would echo throughout the interwar period, long after the influence of the Borderland Guard began to wane.[138]

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[133] Letter from the Commander of Równe to the state police (November 22, 1920), DARO 30/2/48/2.
[134] "Raport Sytuacyjny z dnia 13 do 23 listopada 1920r." (Tuczyn), DARO 30/18/51/25od.
[135] Ibid., 25od.
[136] "Raport kierownika okręgu Wołyńskiego T-wa Straży Kresowej za okres od 1/XII 20 r. do 1/III 1921 r.," AAN TSK 325/1. In a report from the end of 1920, it was stated that the only schools in Korzec county were the Russian-Ukrainian secondary school, the Russian gymnasium, a four-class Ukrainian school, and several small village schools, and that the lack of Polish teachers meant that the Polish language was not taught in many schools. See "Raport Sytuacyjny N1 za czas od dnia 20/XI do dnia 15/XII 1920r." (Korzec), DARO 30/18/51/69.
[137] "Raport Sytuacyjny N1 za czas od dnia 20/XI do dnia 15/XII 1920r." (Korzec), DARO 30/18/51/69.
[138] According to Nina Zielińska, the Borderland Guard's activities began to decrease after the parliamentary elections of 1922. See Zielińska, *Towarzystwo Straży Kresowej*, 191.

The years that immediately followed the First World War constituted the formative period in Volhynia's interwar history. Over the next twenty years, ideas about Poland as a civilizing, modernizing force that would bring good governance to this "backward" borderland were utilized by elites in both Warsaw and Volhynia. In official proclamations and in hundreds of unpublished reports produced between 1919 and 1921, one can trace an emerging ethnic hierarchy in the East, with the Poles standing at the top of the pile and the various non-Polish populations—while not necessarily condemned outright—viewed as inferior, underdeveloped, and less trustworthy. Such ideas—the products of longer-standing stereotypes and the experiences of occupation—fed into the discourse employed by thousands of people, including settlers, border guards, scouts, teachers, urban planners, army men, and public health officials who lived, worked, and even vacationed in the eastern borderlands during the 1920s and 1930s.

However, this first chapter has also demonstrated how the "holy ideals" of Polish civilizational superiority were constantly undercut by "prosaic life" in Volhynia. On the ground, Polishness could not always be linked to civilizational development; indeed, it was constantly undermined by both the paucity of state representatives in the *kresy* and the weak, nationally indifferent, and internally divided Polish-speaking population they encountered. To understand this story, therefore, it is necessary to consider the realities of everyday life in this war-torn land. The failure to deliver the hallmarks of good governance—reconstructing destroyed buildings, supplying the population with food, dealing with the pressures of land reform, and providing law and order—all meant that the Polish state, and Polishness more generally, appeared weak in the eyes Volhynia's inhabitants. This chapter, therefore, not only forms the dramatic chronological opening to Volhynia's interwar story, but it also indicates that the paradoxes and tensions in Poland's internal civilizing mission existed right at the outset, born alongside the Polish state against a backdrop of war, misery, and material destruction. In the eyes of the Borderland Guard activists, the end of the First World War did not witness spontaneous outbursts of nationalist

conviction. Rather, both Polish and non-Polish populations prioritized their own economic and material interests at the expense of a larger Polish collective.

CHAPTER TWO:
Unruly Space: Law and Disorder at the Border

If 1919-1921 marked a period of contingency, uncertainty, and anxiety, as the Polish state attempted to diplomatically, militarily, and culturally lay claim to *kresy*, the early 1920s brought some stability. In February 1921, state authorities officially created the provincial administration of Volhynia and agreed upon the location of Poland's eastern border with Bolshevik Russia. Personnel from beyond Volhynia's borders traveled to the province to take up positions within the new administration, while the end of military conflicts meant that longer-term planning and reconstruction could be envisaged. None of these events, however, erased the anxiety of the earlier period. Indeed, it quickly became apparent that claiming sovereignty over the region and ensuring that it constituted an economically, culturally, and politically integral part of the new state were not the same thing.

Interwar problems associated with integrating new borderlands—and the people who inhabited them—were by no means unique to Poland. In the aftermath of the First World War, states across Europe struggled to deal with the demands of newly-drawn borders and newly-gained, or indeed regained, borderlands. In France, the recently won region of Alsace-Lorraine brought new populations into the French state that could not easily be placed into neat national groups and whose national and ethnic identities—or lack thereof—were seen as potentially subversive.[1] Romania also suffered from an "embarrassment of riches," gaining the largely non-Romanian (demographically speaking) regions of Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transylvania after the war.[2] Across Eastern and Central Europe, nation-states that emerged from the ruins of the continental empires struggled to find political, social, and economic coherence, leading to well-publicized turbulence and instability, particularly in multiethnic borderland areas.

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[1] Tara Zahra, "The 'Minority Problem': National Classification in the French and Czechoslovak Borderlands," *Contemporary European History* 17, no. 2 (2008): 137-165.
[2] Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 7.

In Poland, a new state made up of lands that had previously belonged to three separate empires, the challenge was particularly acute.[3] The various regions that constituted the state had modernized at different rates; some, like the formerly German territories of Upper Silesia were economically well-developed compared to the vast eastern *kresy*, where peasants relied on agriculture and where there was little, if any, evidence of industrialization. The percentages of various ethno-national groups differed across the state, as did the prevalence and successes of political parties. During the interwar years, Polish elites were faced with the unenviable challenge of picking up the imperial jigsaw pieces and attempting to fit them together into some kind of coherent whole. Their biggest problem undoubtedly lay in the formerly Russian territories, the least developed area of the new state and home to an overwhelmingly illiterate peasant population, the vast majority of whom did not consider themselves to be Polish.

The Polish state attempted to politically, economically, and culturally integrate the *kresy* in many different ways during the early 1920s, although, as this chapter will show, the lack of an overarching plan contributed to the inefficiency of such efforts. Rather than dealing with all the state's policies, I focus here on attempts to integrate the *kresy* by imposing law and order. During this period, the *kresy*'s location next to the Soviet Union meant that the region became an increasingly lawless borderland, where bandits crossed the border in both directions, Bolshevik and Ukrainian nationalists agitated among local populations, and unruly peasants engaged in illegal activities, continuing economic practices that they had pursued before the war.

By focusing on this story, it is possible to explore how, on one level, Polish state representatives, including local bureaucrats, military settlers, state policemen, and border guards, attempted to fulfill one of the tasks of all modernizing states—the integration and pacification of borderland regions in which local populations did not respect the tenets of state sovereignty. Yet the imposition of law and order was also seen a way to deal with ethnic, religious, and national diversity, to ensure that

[3] Most general surveys of the interwar period begin with an assessment of the significant differences between the formerly partitioned lands that made up the Polish state. See, for example, Polonsky, *Politics in Independent Poland*, 1-44.

Ukrainian peasants and Jewish traders fully recognized the Polish state as a permanent fixture, and to quash attempts to ignore, circumvent, or even protest against Polish sovereignty. As was the case with the Borderland Guard activists from Chapter 1, however, the protagonists in this story discovered that their plans to protect Polishness through the idea of state sovereignty encountered problems at a local level. While they frequently linked unlawful behavior to the non-Polish (particularly Ukrainian and Jewish) populations who lived there, they also found that Polish-speaking populations were guilty of prioritizing their own interests above those of the state. In addition to unwittingly stirring up anti-state agitation, official and non-official representatives of the Polish state struggled to control people who did not willingly obey the laws of the land, regardless of their ethnic affiliation. Moreover, the competence and indeed the loyalties of these state representatives were themselves thrown into doubt, suggesting that the mission to impose Polish statehood was undercut by the very people charged with carrying it out.

Borderland Anxieties

Between the wars, Volhynia was a borderland in more ways than one. Indeed, it was the presence of borders—and the state's inability to control those borders—that contributed to the province's ongoing instability. First, and most obviously, the eastern border that marked the boundary between the Polish state and Bolshevik Russia (and, from the end of 1922 onwards, the Soviet Union) posed a huge challenge for the fledging state, not least because it was initially unclear where the border should go. When a group of experts led by the politician Leon Wasilewski arrived in the *kresy* to demarcate the border during the summer of 1921, they discovered that the maps provided by the Russian authorities were often incorrect, forcing them to obtain private plans and data from local populations in order to determine the border's final position.[4] The border also disrupted familial, social, and economic relationships, dividing communities and proving "as divisive locally as it was internationally."[5] The use of topographical features, particularly rivers, to demarcate the border meant that

[4] Leon Wasilewski, "Wschodnia Granica Polski," *Bellona* 17, no. 1 (January-March 1925): 130.
[5] Brown, *A Biography of No Place*, 7.

human factors were frequently sidelined. Northern Volhynia's rivers often ran through the properties of villages or farmsteads, resulting in situations whereby a settlement was found on one side of the river and its arable land on the other.[6] Half the village of Rudnia Klonowa, for example, was included within Bolshevik Russia, while the other half was placed on the Polish side and given the new name of Huta Korecka.[7] Polish-speaking populations frequently found themselves on the Russian side of the final border.[8]

Even when the border was established, the Polish state lacked the resources, personnel, and expertise to control it. Goods, people, and animals regularly crossed the seemingly porous eastern frontier, which ran through the "wild fields" (*dzikie pola*) of the East.[9] The early 1920s, in particular, witnessed the mass return of people who had been deported during the First World War and now found their way back to the province, either to settle or on their way further west.[10] A British government official who traveled to Volhynia in May 1921 was informed "that the frontier is practically unguarded and that frontier guards on both sides are stationed only in villages and towns," which accounted for the fact that "large numbers of refugees from Soviet Russia cross the frontier unmolested with their carts, luggage etc."[11] In November 1921, the Polish military leader in charge of guarding the eastern border created instructions about how to manage the terrible situation that was unfolding, stating in his report that the border had become a place of "bribery and all types of moral corruption."[12] The lack of control on the ground was partly due to the fact that the

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[6] Wasilewski, "Wschodnia Granica Polski," 131.
[7] See the entry for "Wieś Rudnia Klonowa, powiat Zwiahel (Nowogród Wołyński)" on the *Strony o Wołyniu Przedwojennym* website, accessed February 17, 2011, http://wolyn.ovh.org/.
[8] Letter from August 14, 1922 (Równe), AAN ALW 51/25. In June 1922, eighteen families from the village of Pomiary in Równe county stated that they did not want to be placed on the Russian side, since "as Poles, we are joined with Poland." Letter from Jan Bagiński on behalf of eighteen families, June 6, 1922, AAN MSZ 12668c/77-78.
[9] "Zagadnienie Ziem Wschodnich w świetle bezpośredniej obserwacji," AAN MSW (Part I) 946/6.
[10] Jerzy Kumaniecki, "Repatriacja Polaków po Wojnie Polsko-Radzieckiej w latach 1921-1924," *Przegląd Wschodni* 1, no. 1 (1991): 145. In 1921, 39,082 people in Volhynia were registered as having been born "beyond the boundaries of the state." However, since many people (especially non-Poles) did not register for fear of being deported, the actual number was probably much higher. See Mędrzecki, *Województwo Wołyńskie*, 67.
[11] "Report on Visit to Volhinia [sic] and Eastern Galicia" (May 1921), NAL FO 417/191.
[12] "Rokaz ogólny Nr. 2 Dyspozycyjny. Część I" (Łuck, November 5, 1921), DARO 147/1/2/129.

Polish state placed the border in the hands of a whole range of ever-changing authorities. From October 1920, it was under the control of the Polish Army, with customs battalions only arriving in August of the following year. A border guard (*Straż Graniczna*) was created in September 1923, only to be replaced by the state police in May 1924.[13] Each agency struggled to fulfill its task.

In the winter of 1921-22, the situation was further exacerbated by a famine in southern Russia, which resulted in an influx of refugees, many of whom were infected with typhus. Despite gaining help from the League of Nations to set up transit camps to delouse people heading west, Polish authorities struggled to maintain their cordon sanitaire. In November 1921, the head of the Polish government's Chief Extraordinary Commissariat for the Battle with Epidemics reported that the camp at Równe had inadequate facilities for washing repatriates, meaning that typhus was being transmitted to the interior of the Polish state.[14] A League of Nations report sent the following June was similarly negative, pointing to the deficiencies in sanitary practices in Równe, where "'clean' repatriates departed from the same platform as the arriving dirty repatriates."[15]

Political contagions also arrived from the East. Armed men from the Soviet Union terrorized local populations, taking advantage of poorly-equipped Polish state officials at the border. In February 1922, debates in the Polish parliament touched upon the lowly material conditions of officials stationed in the *kresy*, which exacerbated the deteriorating security situation. According to one parliamentarian, soldiers charged with protecting the border did not have any barracks in which to reside and were forced to live with local people who crossed the border at will. Allegations were also made against customs officials who were posted to the border without adequate equipment; some even lacked clothes and boots and were both

[13] Jerzy Prochwicz, "Polskie Formacje Graniczne na Wołyniu w latach 1921-1924," in *W dolinie Bugu, Styru i Słuczy: Wołyń w najnowszej historii Polski*, ed. Jarosław Rubacha (Piotrków Trybunalski: Naukowe Wydawnictwo Piotrkowskie przy Filii Akademii Świętokrzyskiej w Piotrkowie Trybunalskim, 2005), 97-115

[14] "Sprawozdanie dla Sejmowej Komisji Zdrowia" (November 29, 1921), AAN MOS 90/12.

[15] Letter from the Commissioner of the League of Nations (Norman White) in Poland to the Minister for Public Health (June 26, 1922), AAN MOS 90/47.

physically unfit and of dubious morals.[16] In response, the minister of internal affairs was forced to admit that, due to financial constraints, barracks had not been built, the border was open, and problems involving the division of people's land adjacent to the border had not yet been resolved.[17] In Volhynia, bandits from the Soviet Union penetrated deep into the province, running rampant in Kowel and Luboml counties, neither of which were located directly at the border.[18]

For Polish observers, particularly those on the political right, such practical problems resulted from the high percentage of non-Polish populations in the borderlands. Indeed, as Konrad Zieliński has pointed out, Polish local authorities in the *kresy* were increasingly suspicious of non-Poles who fled westwards across the border and attempted to claim Polish citizenship.[19] There were also concerns about the number of Orthodox believers who served in the border guard during the early 1920s, with a report from 1922 indicating that 52% of border guards were Orthodox, "not knowing the Polish language and not belonging to the Polish nation."[20] Moreover, as had been the case during the First World War and subsequent borderland conflicts, right-wing politicians viewed the Jews with suspicion, regarding them as a threat to border security due to their alleged proclivity for Bolshevism and traditional sympathies with all things Russian. During parliamentary debates in February 1922, one right-wing deputy drew a connection between the "Jewishness" of the eastern borderlands and the dangers of Bolshevism, since borderland towns were "overflowing with Jews."[21] Another member of parliament, the National Democrat Catholic prefect Kazimierz Lutosławski, similarly stated that the Jews created a human "traffic jam" in Poland that acted as a seedbed for Bolshevism.[22] The provincial governor of Volhynia, Mieczysław Mickiewicz, even claimed that the mass immigration of Jews into Volhynia in the summer of 1922 constituted more of a

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[16] *Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z posiedzenia 286 Sejmu Ustawodaczego*, February 17, 1922, 54-55.
[17] *Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z posiedzenia 288 Sejmu Ustawodaczego*, February 24, 1922, 63-66.
[18] Ibid., 70-71.
[19] Konrad Zieliński, "Population Displacement and Citizenship in Poland, 1918-24," in *Homelands: War, Population and Statehood in Eastern Europe and Russia, 1918-1924*, eds. Nick Baron and Peter Gatrell (London: Anthem Press, 2004), 98-118.
[20] Prochwicz, "Polskie Formacje Graniczne na Wołyniu," 111.
[21] *Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z posiedzenia 286 Sejmu Ustawodaczego*, February 17, 1922, 54.
[22] Ibid., 62.

problem than Bolshevik raids, since Jews were allegedly stocking up on false passports and documents allowing them to illegally stay in Poland.[23] Jews were also blamed for the state's problems in equipping soldiers and officials at the frontier. Although the Ministry of the Treasury had given money to customs officials to purchase clothes and boots, it was claimed that they had "spent it in Jewish stores at enormous prices."[24] The allegation that 40% of the functionaries working in the customs department at the border were Jewish was also used to argue that Poland's border security was being undermined.[25]

The state border with the Soviet Union was not, however, the only one that Polish officials believed needed to be controlled. There were also concerns about the internal border between Volhynia and its southern neighbor Eastern Galicia, which was referred to as Eastern Little Poland (*Małopolska Wschodnia*) in the interwar years and was made up of the provinces of Tarnopol, Stanisławów, and Lwów. This region shared geographical characteristics with southern Volhynia, such as its climate, fertile "black earth" soils, and insubstantial areas of forest, but the two regions were divided by a historic border. Unlike Volhynia, Eastern Galicia had been part of the Habsburg Empire, and, as a result of the more liberal nationality policies pursued there, levels of Ukrainian national consciousness were deemed to be more advanced than those in the formerly Russian provinces. Ukrainian cultural and educational societies, most notably *Prosvita* (Enlightenment), had developed in Galicia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while the clergy of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church constituted the basis for a national movement.[26] As such, the interwar Polish government feared that Ukrainian nationalism would spread across the so-called

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[23] "Posiedzenie popołudniowe zjazdu wojewodów kresów wschodnich z dn. 13 czerwca 1922 r.," AAN MSW (dopływ) 1001/19a-20.
[24] *Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z posiedzenia 286 Sejmu Ustawodaczego*, February 17, 1922, 55.
[25] Ibid., 55.
[26] John-Paul Himka, *Religion and Nationality in Western Ukraine: The Greek Catholic Church and Ruthenian National Movement in Galicia, 1867-1900* (Montreal and Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999); John-Paul Himka, *Galician Villagers and the Ukrainian National Movement in the Nineteenth Century* (New York St. Martin's Press, 1988); Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, *Feminists Despite Themselves: Women in Ukrainian Community Life, 1884-1939* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1988), 47-110.

"Sokal border" (*Kordon Sokalski*).[27] With this in mind, the Polish government developed separate policies for each region, stating in its 1923 guidelines that "Volhynia and Eastern Little Poland should not be treated as a uniform territory."[28]

State officials also feared that Volhynia might provide a conduit for Ukrainian nationalism to spread northwards towards Polesie, a sparsely populated marshland region. Polesie was deemed to be even more "backward" than Volhynia, while its inhabitants, labeled as "Polesians" (*Poleszucy*), were said to be untouched by modern nationalism—quite the opposite of the Galician Ukrainians with their more developed national consciousness.[29] The Polish state characterized the peasants of the marshes as somehow proto-national; the 1931 census-takers categorized 62% of Polesie's population as "locals," while people who spoke Belarusian were seen to have little national consciousness.[30] What was identified as an underdeveloped sense of identity also suggested the possibilities for anti-state agitation, particularly since these peasants were frequently characterized as "dark," stubborn, and ignorant. During the postwar borderland conflicts, Polesie had also been awash with Bolshevik bandits, who hid in the swampy forests and agitated among the population. Polesian provincial reports from the early 1920s indicated concerns about both Ukrainian and Belarusian national movements making inroads here.[31] In 1923, the provincial governor of Polesie stated that "Volhynia undoubtedly is and will remain in the zone of Ukrainian influences and actions," and warned against the dangers of placing Belarusians and Ukrainians in close proximity, raising the specter of the two national groups ominously "shaking hands" across the Pripet Marshes.[32]

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[27] Jan Kęsik, "'Kordon sokalski'. Problemy pogranicza galicyjsko-wołyńskiego w latach 1921-1939," *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis*, Historia CXI, no. 1532 (1993): 125-155. See also John-Paul Himka, "Western Ukraine in the Interwar Period," *Nationalities Papers* 22, no. 2 (1994): 351.
[28] "Ogólne wytyczne dla polityki na Kresach Wschodnich," AAN PRM (Part IV) 25/32/6.
[29] Polesie had a lower population density, fewer hard roads, higher rates of illiteracy, and a larger proportion of land deemed unsuitable for agriculture than Volhynia. See Tomaszewski, *Z Dziejów Polesia,* particularly Chapter 6.
[30] Jerzy Tomaszewski, "Belorussians in the Eyes of the Poles, 1918-1939," *Acta Polaniae Historica* 51 (1985): 109.
[31] For a history of the Ukrainian movement in Polesie, see "Ruch Ukraiński na Polesiu 1918-1933r.," AAN UWwBnB 36/3-43.
[32] Stanisław Downarowicz, "Zarys programu zadań i prac państwowych na Polesiu," AAN MSW (Part I) 938/5, 2-3.

An Authority in the East: The First Military Settlers

One early attempt to make these eastern land more secure and to minimize the impact of external agitation was the Polish government's decision to send military settlers (*osadnicy wojskowe*) to the *kresy* in the early 1920s. While the first settlers only arrived in Volhynia in the spring of 1921, the idea of settling the eastern borderlands had already been raised during the conflict with the Bolsheviks. At a conference in April 1920, representatives of the civil administration and the Borderland Guard discussed the ways in which Polish settlers might fulfill strategic, political, and economic goals by living along the main transport routes, satisfying economic needs, and cooperating with local populations. Because these men had to possess strong feelings of national belonging, the best candidates were said to be "resourceful" Poles who were well-acquainted with local conditions and the character of native populations—examples included people who had long been settled in the region, demobilized soldiers, farmers from all three partitions, and re-emigrants from America.[33]

Following the end of the Polish-Bolshevik war in October 1920, plans for settlement moved quickly. On October 18, the head of state, Józef Piłsudski, declared that soldiers who had fought for Poland would be entitled to plots of land in the eastern borderlands, many of which had been expropriated from local landowners.[34] Legislation was drawn up in parliament and, by the beginning of 1921, a Department for Soldier Settlements had been established at the Ministry of Military Affairs. Volhynia was one of the main provinces marked out for settlement. In 1921, 1,605 individual soldiers journeyed to the province, along with 1,055 soldiers who arrived as

[33] "Protokół z konferencji w sprawie osadnictwa i akcji parcelacyjnej na Kresach Wschodnich," AAN TSK 241/22-33.

[34] Lidia Głowacka and Andrzej Czesław Żak, "Osadnictwo wojskowe na Wołyniu w latach 1921-1939 w świetle dokumentów centralnego archiwum wojskowego," *Biuletyn Wojskowej Służby Archiwalnej* 28 (2006): 141. Wojciech Roszkowski, *Land Reforms in East Central Europe after World War One* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 1995), 99-103. For a complete list of the properties that were owned by Russian, Polish, and German landowners before they were used for military settlement, see the chart in Jerzy Bonkowicz-Sittauer, "Osadnictwo wojskowe," *Rocznik Wołyński* (1934): 539-550.

part of the so-called "workers' columns."[35] They joined civilian settlers, who had migrated to Volhynia during the war and established over 3,000 farmsteads by 1922.[36]

In the early to mid-1920s, those who supported military settlement asserted that settlers would bring security by spreading Polish civilization in the *kresy* and strengthening ties between local populations and the state. Pro-settler politicians stated that settlement policies would be universally accepted by borderland populations, regardless of their nationality. In a Polish parliamentary session dedicated to the issue in October 1920, the politician Jan Dębski argued that local Ruthenian peasants would not mind that the land was given to soldiers who had protected them from the Bolsheviks, particularly since those peasants did not have the ability to till the land that was currently lying fallow.[37] By the mid-1920s, such sentiments found echoes in the Volhynian press. In a 1925 article published in the *Lublin-Borderland Review*, Antoni Zalewski commented that the settlers were "a healthy element that can play a distinguished role in the *kresy* and successfully contribute to the strengthening of ties with the fatherland."[38] In another article from the same year, published in the right-wing newspaper *Volhynia Life*, settlement was placed in the context of Poland's age-old ethnographic push towards the East.[39] Articles allegedly written by settlers also made their way into the local press. In 1926, a military settler from Krzemieniec county argued that settlers needed to be "the cement joining the eastern lands to the Republic," since "the rudder of the spirit of Western civilization has always been in Polish hands."[40]

But the first few years of settlement action indicated that material problems on the ground severely limited the positive role of the settlers. For one, their arrival aggravated local tensions over land, which often intersected with ethnic and national frictions. Some critics of the settler scheme argued that local Ukrainians, who constituted the vast majority of the peasants, failed to gain land that rightfully

[35] Głowacka and Żak, "Osadnictwo wojskowe," 144.
[36] Hryciuk, *Przemiany narodowościowe*, 144.
[37] *Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z posiedzenia 198 Sejmu Ustawodaczego*, December 17, 1920, 28.
[38] Antoni Zalewski, "Osadnictwo Wojskowe," *Przegląd Lubelsko-Kresowy*, January 5, 1925, 6.
[39] "Osadnictwo Polskie," *Życie Wołynia,* January 25, 1925, 1.
[40] "Zadanie i cele osadnictwa na ziemiach wschodnich," *Życie Wołynia*, July 31, 1926, 3.

belonged to them.[41] Tensions were also exacerbated by the fact that settlers sometimes meted out their own brand of justice upon Orthodox peasants. In 1921, for instance, the leader of the settlement of Krechowiecka, Bolesław Podhorski, decided to deal with the local Orthodox peasants who had been "envenomed by the nearby eastern border" and who saw "the settlers as the usurpers of 'abandoned' land, which should belong to the 'locals'."[42] After multiple night thefts and anonymous threats, Podhorski sent a messenger to the nearby village of Koźlin to inform its inhabitants that a meeting would be held after the church service. When he arrived in the village, Podhorski told the assembled crowd that the settlers wanted to live in harmony, but that if the villagers continued to threaten and damage the settlements, "they would not report it or bother the courts, but would mete out justice themselves because they are people of war and they are armed."[43] According to Podhorski's daughter, "from this day, the stealing and the threats ceased," and relations between the settlers and the neighboring villagers "were friendly through mutual permanent contacts."[44] One doubts, however, that resentments were so easily ironed out. In Krzemieniec county, bad relations were once again stirred up in the summer of 1923 as a consequence of rumors about the imminent removal of the settlers.[45] According to Stanisław Srokowski, Volhynia's governor from February 1923 to August 1924, settlers were too quick to underline their military character and "play the role of some kind of privileged Cossacks, which irritates the Ukrainian peasant."[46]

Politicians who opposed settlement attempted to garner support for their cause by tapping into these persistent resentments. In August 1924, one member of parliament visited a number of Volhynian villages to speak about the problems caused

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[41] Stanisław Srokowski, "Wytyczne zasady dla projektu autonomii narodowościowej i terytorialnej na kresach ziem południowo-wschodnich (Rusi Czerwonej, Wołynia, Podola i t.d)," BUW Manuscript Collection, MS 1764/2.
[42] Bolesławowa Elżbieta Podhorska, "Osada Krechowiecka," *Zeszyty Historyczne* 69 (1984): 126. Significantly, Bolesław Podhorski would go on to become an outspoken critic of the more conciliatory policies of Henryk Józewski. See Mędrzecki, *Województwo Wołyńskie*, 163.
[43] Podhorska, "Osada Krechowiecka," 127.
[44] Ibid., 127.
[45] Representative of the Ministrty of Military Affairs (Krzemieniec) to the Department of Soldier Settlements in Warsaw (July 8, 1923), CAW I/300/1/649/269.
[46] Stanisław Srokowski, "Uwagi o Kresach Wschodnich," *Przegląd Współczesny* 32 (1924): 336. See also Małgorzata Szostakowska, *Stanisław Srokowski (1872-1950): Polityk, Dyplomata, Geograf* (Olsztyn: Ośrodek Badań Nauk. im. Wojciecha Kętrzyńskiego w Olsztynie, 1999), 45.

by Polish military settlement. To an audience in one settlement, he claimed that the settlers were "Poles from far away and not native people," and that they were receiving land from the government "which is Ukrainian property."[47] Elsewhere, he told people that when a settler had shot a peasant in one particular village, the peasant—not the settler—had been investigated for allegedly raping the settler's wife.[48] That same year, British Foreign Office personnel commented that the presence of the settlers exacerbated ethnic tensions between Poles and Ukrainians and was, after the issue of schooling, "the main grievance of the peasant."[49]

Problems with the settlers, however, went deeper than national antagonisms between Poles and Ukrainians. Polish elites also expressed anxieties about whether the military settlers were hardy enough to deal with the desperate material conditions they found in the eastern borderlands.[50] Indeed, anxious reports indicated that far from being knights in shining armor, ready to defend the eastern borderlands and spread Polish civilization, the settlers were not always seen as positive representatives of the nation, even in the eyes of the local Polish-speaking population. Many of the problems were caused by the specific characteristics of the terrain. The poor quality of arable land (particularly in northern Volhynia), the paucity of roads, and the destruction that had been brought about by the war all meant that former soldiers found a barren landscape, rather than a land of plenty. Although the government provided some help, the first settlers lacked building materials, temporary shelters in which to live while more permanent structures were built, and a ready supply of credit. Local transportation problems made things worse. Settlers in the region of Powursk by the River Stochód were forced to travel 25 kilometers in order to collect their allotted 80

[47] "Sprawozdanie miesięczne z ruchu zawodowego, społecznego i politycznego na terenie Województwa Wołyńskiego za m. sierpień 1924r.," DARO 33/4/7/320.
[48] Ibid., 321.
[49] "Report on a Visit to Volhynia and Eastern Galicia," NAL FO 417/83.
[50] Fruitful comparisons might be drawn here between the disappointing settlers who were sent to British overseas colonies in the nineteenth century. See, for example, John Laband, "From Mercenaries to Military Settlers: The British German Legion, 1854-1861," in *Soldiers and Settlers in Africa, 1850-1918*, ed. Stephen M. Miller (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), 85-122. In the story of the settlers, we also find parallels with Judson and Zahra's paradoxical nationalist motif in which the nation is both inherently strong and highly vulnerable. See Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*; Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*.

cubic meters of wood, along roads that were inaccessible during the spring when the winter snows thawed.[51]

Memoirists frequently mentioned the difficult conditions faced by the first settlers in the East. Early arrivals in the area around Horyngród in Równe county found that there were absolutely no inhabitable buildings in the area that had been allocated to them—an old Russian Army firing range. While more permanent buildings were constructed, the settlers were forced to live in dug-outs or in neighboring villages.[52] According to the memoirs of a settler in Kurhany, located just up the River Horyń to the north of Ostróg, "the difficulties of settler life were enormous at the beginning," and they initially lived in a barn that was "very modestly furnished."[53] Such tales of suffering are typical of settler memoirs more generally. As David Blackbourn pointed out, "all settler or frontier societies have a stock of stories about the epic struggle of starting over. […] There is a common shape to these narratives of endurance: the hopeful journey, setbacks that test resolve, eventual success in the face of the elements."[54] Certainly this is true of the settler memoirs from Volhynia. The difficulties of the immediate post-First World War period formed part of a wider story about the triumph of Polishness in an underdeveloped borderland and the national martyrdom of the settlers, most of whom were deported by the Soviets in 1940.[55]

While archival sources confirm that the settlers lived in difficult conditions, contemporary accounts often lacked an overarching narrative of national redemption. Polish commentators worried, for example, about the damage that settlers were doing to Volhynia's cultural and historical landmarks. In 1922, in the village of Zahajce in Krzemieniec county, not far from the Russian border, the lack of adequate housing led some settler families to camp out in a local abandoned nobleman's house, "a typical

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[51] Franciszek Moczulski, "Osadnictwo Cywilne i Wojskowe od chwili odzyskania niepodległości w gm. Powursk pow. Kowelskiego (Praca dyplomowa)," BUW Manuscript Collection, MS 1774/53-54.
[52] Podhorska, "Osada Krechowiecka," 124, 130.
[53] Stefania Borowy and Stanisław Borowy, "Osada Kurhany n/Horyniem, Osada Chorów n/Horyniem," in *Z Kresów Wschodnich*, 266.
[54] Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature*, 61-62.
[55] For more on the idea that identity was crystalized following the 1940 deportations from the *kresy*, see Jolluck, *Exile and Identity*.

residence of the Volhynian noblemen, erected with taste and grandeur."[56] A report from an organization involved in protecting Volhynia's heritage claimed that the settlers were ruining the property:

> As a result of the management of the military settlers, who are currently living in the palace with their families, the interior succumbs almost completely to destruction: the windows are quickly bricked up, leaving only small openings; in the rooms, stables are established and there is threshed grain on the floor. The rooms, which are distinguished with beautiful finished mantelpieces and ceilings […], serve as storerooms for farming utensils […].[57]

According to the report, the intensity of military settlement meant that many historic residences could succumb to a similar fate, resulting in "sad consequences" for Polish culture.[58]

At a local level, settlers also came into conflict with county land distribution committees (*Powiatowe Komitety Nadawcze*, hereafter PKN), the staff of which were accused of low levels of administrative competence and high levels of corruption. A group of Polish members of parliament who traveled to the *kresy* in 1922 to evaluate the efficacy of settler legislation concluded that the PKN's failings led to frictions between settlers and local populations.[59] In particular, supporters of the settlers, such as Antoni Zalewski, accused local Polish-speaking landowners of deliberately creating conflicts between settlers and local people in order to protect their own land from unwanted reforms.[60] Russian and Polish landowners were also said to be putting up a "united front" against the settlers, their class interests as landowners trumping those of national solidarity.[61] In Krzemieniec county, a local landowner allegedly gave bribes to a delegate from the Ministry of Military Affairs in exchange for not having to give

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[56] "Pałac w Zahajcach: Sprawozdanie z delegacji odbytej w dniu 7.8.1922 z ramienia T-wa Opieki nad Zabytkami Przeszłości" (Professor Zygmunt Kamiński), CAW I/300/1/649/61.
[57] Ibid., 61.
[58] Ibid. 62.
[59] Stobniak-Smogorzewska, *Kresowe Osadnictwo Wojskowe*, 51.
[60] Zalewski, "Osadnictwo Wojskowe," 6.
[61] "W sprawie osadnictwa wojskowego słów kilka," *Przegląd Wołyński*, December 17, 1924, 2. For more on the conflicts between settlers and landowners, see Stobniak-Smogorzewska, *Kresowe Osadnictwo Wojskowe*, 43-45.

up his land.[62] Concerned landowners in the *kresy* also wrote to the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Issues of Military Settlement, warning that settlers might end up as a "powerless class of unsatisfied and derailed people who do not get along well with the local people and conditions, will forsake their plots of land, and further increase the number of people who engage in harmful ferment."[63]

Settlers similarly clashed with police and local authorities. On one level, the police saw the settlers as allies against unruly borderland populations. The author of a 1924 police report found it necessary to underline "the unquestionable position of the military settlers who, despite unhelpful conditions in the localities by the border, organized self-defense and gave considerable help to the security services."[64] But incidences of settlers taking justice into their own hands caused problems for local law enforcement. In November 1923, the provincial administration issued a secret document concerning firearm possession by settlers. While settlers were technically allowed to own weapons, their firearms needed to be deposited with the instructing officer for the military society to which they belonged. The local authorities discovered, however, that this was not always the case, since some military settlers illegally held on to their weapons in their capacity as civilians. According to governor Stanisław Srokowski, who was himself critical of military settlement, the weapons needed to be stored in a safe place to prevent them from being stolen, while administrative authorities needed to record which of the settlers possessed weapons.[65]

For their part, the settlers complained about the local administration. In 1925, delegates at settler meetings in Volhynia expressed concerns that local authorities were acting against settler interests; in particular, the forestry management allegedly forbade settlers from cutting down trees in order to use the timber for construction.[66] In Horochów county in 1926, settlers complained that their community life was

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[62] Report from the Ministry of Military Affairs to the Head of the Department for Soldier Settlements (April 12, 1922), CAW I/300/1/652/352.
[63] Letter from Eastern Borderlands Union of Landowners to the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Issues of Military Settlement (Warsaw, February 14, 1922), CAW I/300/1/649/36.
[64] "Sprawozdanie miesięczne z ruchu zawodowego, społecznego i politycznego na terenie Województwa Wołyńskiego za miesiąc wrzesień 1924r.," DARO 33/4/7/263od.
[65] Confidential circular from the Volhynian Provincial Office (November 26, 1923), DARO 147/1/11/2.
[66] "Protokół posiedzenia Rady Wojewódzkiej Osadniczej odbytej w lokalu P.Z.O. w dniu 27.IX.1925 roku," DARO 223/1/22/4od.

hindered by a lack of transportation and that "the almost complete lack of forests does not allow for the necessary building work."[67] Everywhere, settlers argued that they lacked credit to undertake construction and organizational work, as well as legal rights to their land. A report from Krzemieniec county in 1922 called for an additional inspection of local settlements, because "of the 67 officers who received settlements, barely twelve are in place, and probably nobody has so far received the permission that is required by law for the development of the settlement by proxy."[68] At the beginning of 1924, many of the nineteen military surveyors who worked for the Volhynian land office had not yet finished work designated for 1921-22, and none had executed the plans for 1923.[69] Even in 1927, barely 20% of military settlers in Volhynia possessed titles to their land.[70]

The desperate material conditions, hostile local interactions, and unclear political situation meant that the loyalty and indeed the Polishness of the settlers was thrown into doubt. Reports from Volhynia indicated that Polish settlers might be negatively influenced by local Ukrainian-speaking Orthodox populations. According to one report filed by a delegate of the Ministry of Religion and Public Education in 1922, settlers were marrying Orthodox women and converting to Orthodoxy, thus losing their "Catholicness," an important part of their Polish identity. Such men, the report concluded, "must be considered lost for Polishness," since religion was the only characteristic that separated them from the surrounding Ruthenians.[71] While such anxieties may well have been exaggerated, they revealed the extent to which the Volhynian borderland was feared as a place of fluid identities, where Poles could lose their Polishness if they were not on their guard.[72] They also suggested a gender

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[67] "Protokół posiedzenia Rady Wojewódzkiej z dnia 18 lutego 1926 w lokalu P.Z.O. Łuck ul. Sienkiewicze 15," DARO 223/1/22/2od.
[68] Report from the Ministry of Military Affairs to the Head of the Department for Soldier Settlements (April 12, 1922), CAW I/300/1/652/353.
[69] Stobniak-Smogorzewska, *Kresowe Osadnictwo Wojskowe*, 54.
[70] Głowacka and Żak, "Osadnictwo wojskowe," 146.
[71] "Delegat Ministra Wyznań Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego na okręg Wołyński. Przedmiot: przechodzenie osadników żołnierzy na prawosławie" (Łuck, May 5, 1922), CAW I/300/1/652/101.
[72] In his memoir, Antoni Górski argued that of the forty settlers whom he knew, only two married Ukrainian girls. The remainder were married to Polish girls and had little contact with the local population. See Antoni Górski, *Pamiętniki lat mego życia (1922-2006)* (Kraków: Collegium Columbinum, 2007), 149.

dynamic to the story—in the East, Polish men might become denationalized through the influence of local Orthodox women.

The fear of Polish Catholic settlers losing their Catholicness was also linked to physical shortages on the ground, not least of which was the lack of suitable Roman Catholic clergy. The feared encroachment of Orthodoxy was thus seen in the light of the failures of Roman Catholic priests who were "not reaching these Polish corners of the world" and often had "very little culture and Polish consciousness."[73] According to the report, the physical distance between Roman Catholic churches and the newly-arrived settlers was also a significant problem, prompting the delegate to argue that the soldiers should be served by military chaplains who would "systematically visit the region with priestly goals" and carry out "strenuous national-consciousness work" among the settlers.[74] After all, many of these new settlers found that their local church was not Roman Catholic, but Orthodox, not such a surprising fact given that the vast majority of the population was Orthodox and that the Roman Catholic Church had been persecuted during the years of Russian rule. In the village of Kurhany, for example, the only existing church was Orthodox, meaning that settlers had to go to Ostróg (an eighteen kilometer round-trip by road) if they wanted to worship in a Roman Catholic house of prayer.[75]

In the face of ongoing problems, the settler movement was suspended in 1923. While some settlers abandoned life in the borderlands, many settlers stayed put—in 1923, there were 3,507 settlers in the Volhynian province, most of whom would remain there for the duration of the interwar period.[76] They got married, raised children, built their lives in Volhynia, and continued to claim their privileged position as representatives of Polishness. Yet the troubled attempt to send settlers to the *kresy* demonstrates how this early effort to make the region more secure—and more Polish—often ran into physical difficulties on the ground, stirring up social and economic conflicts and leading to doubts about the strength of Polish authority.

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[73] "Delegat Ministra Wyznań Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego na okręg Wołyński. Przedmiot: przechodzenie osadników żołnierzy na prawosławie" (Łuck, May 5 1922), CAW I/300/1/652/101.
[74] Ibid., 101a.
[75] Borowy and Borowy, "Osada Kurhany n/Horyniem, Osada Chorów n/Horyniem," 266-267.
[76] Głowacka and Żak, "Osadnictwo wojskowe," 144-145.

Authority over the Peasants: Law Enforcement at the Border

The settlement program was only one in a range of attempts to master the natural and human environment and to make the eastern borderlands more secure. In the early 1920s, politicians in Warsaw debated how they might prevent populations in the peripheral eastern regions from coming under the pernicious influences of communist agitation and Ukrainian nationalism. In his speech to parliament in February 1922, the minister of internal affairs, Stanisław Downarowicz, who had briefly been the provincial governor of Volhynia in August and September 1921, emphasized that policies at the border needed to promote more than mere technical expertise. Instead, members of local society should be encouraged to support and work alongside the security services, since they were currently passive and did not assist the police in their mission to catch local bandits. There was, Downarowicz regretted, "no material cooperation with, or help for, the government."[77] At a meeting of the provincial governors of the eastern borderlands held in Warsaw in June 1922, the director of public safety and the press echoed his concern, stating that the Ministry of Internal Affairs was not only responsible for defending the border, but should also take care of the "mood of the population."[78] While political policies included reprisals against bandits, they also aimed at convincing local peasants of the state's authority.

Since the majority of state representatives in Volhynia originated from the central and western provinces or from territories that now lay to the east of the Polish-Soviet border, they lacked specific knowledge about the area they were charged with governing.[79] They were also almost exclusively Polish, meaning that they frequently lacked the linguistic skills to communicate with a population that was mainly made up of Ukrainian-speaking peasants.[80] Such bureaucratic ignorance prompted the need for domestic intelligence work. In September 1922, the state police in Ostróg county

[77] *Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z posiedzenia 288 Sejmu Ustawodaczego*, February 24, 1922, 73.
[78] "Posiedzenie popołudniowe zjazdu…13 czerwca 1922," AAN MSW (dopływ) 1001/15od.
[79] On the origins of the state bureaucrats in interwar Volhynia, see Mędrzecki, *Inteligencja polska*, 35-45.
[80] Mykoła Kuczerepa, "Polityka narodowościowa Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej wobec Ukraińców w latach 1919-1939," in *Polska-Ukraina: Trudne Pytania t. 1-2*, 35.

issued instructions to all police stations about how to compile reports on the behavior of local populations that took into account the incidences of crime, activities of political, social, educational, industrial, and agricultural organizations, and the mood of the populace. Questions included: "What is the attitude of the local people towards the police?," "Do they help the police in trying to eradicate crime (or the opposite)?," and "Which regions are the most dangerous, and what are the reasons for this?"[81]

At the Polish-Soviet border, the state police found that peasants were exposed to destabilizing forces that further undermined Polish authority. One of the reasons for this was the ongoing porousness of the border, large stretches of which remained unfortified.[82] Activities on the Soviet side could be clearly viewed by populations who lived close to the border, and curious peasants ventured out to observe what was going on in neighboring communities. In February 1924, Soviet commemorations that were held at the border to mark the sixth anniversary of the formation of the Red Army and the recent death of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin caused problems for local Polish police. In Krzemieniec county, state police compiled a report about one "typical" incident that occurred in the Soviet border village of Zinki. On February 27, a small parade of around twenty civilians and fifteen Soviet soldiers, armed with rifles and accompanied by an orchestra, moved towards the border, coming to a halt on the bridge that divided Zinki from the Polish village of Chodaki. Soviet representatives made speeches that criticized the Polish state and accused it of only serving the interests of the bourgeoisie, the landowners, and the police. According to the police report, "the people of Chodaki were naturally lured by the sound of the music and came out of their houses in order to see the Soviet celebrations," although border guards prevented the villagers from gathering at the border.[83] That same day, border guards in Ostróg county stopped peasants going to the border to witness a funeral possession in which a

[81] Letter from County State Police Commander in Ostróg to all state police stations in the county (September 28, 1922), DARO 147/1/5/63.
[82] In many places the border was simply marked by four-meter tall wooden border posts. As Leon Wasilewski reported when he led the expedition to demarcate the border in 1921, "the transportation difficulties did not allow for the time being for more permanent types of border posts." Leon Wasilewski, "Sprawy Techniczne w Traktacie Pokoju z Rosją i Ukrainą," *Roboty Publiczne: Organ Ministerstwa Robót Publicznych* (May 1921): 164.
[83] "Sprawozdanie miesięczne z ruchu zawodowego, społecznego i politycznego na terenie Województwa Wołyńskiego za miesiąc luty 1924r.," AAN UWwŁ 4/34 [document page no.]

military platoon, a civilian orchestra, and a small number of Soviet civilians participated.[84]

While the Polish border guards could, in some cases, prevent peasants from watching Soviet celebrations, they found it more difficult to eliminate rumors that spread across the border via personal and familial connections. In the early 1920s, peasants crossed the border from Poland to the Soviet Union with impunity in order to trade in towns on the Soviet side, and local authorities worried about the content of conversations between people who lived on opposite sides of the border.[85] At the beginning of 1924, the Volhynian state police reported that "in local society there have recently been in circulation many versions of news from across the eastern border. The proximity of this border and the generally unclear political conditions in Europe […] create an uncertainty about the near future."[86] People who crossed the border from the Soviet Union and were detained by Polish authorities also introduced rumors about an impending war. According to reports made by Równe county state police in January 1924, new arrivals "talked about the mass arrests of Poles by the Soviet authorities and their expulsion into the depths of the Russian interior, allegedly with the aim of holding hostages in case of a war with Poland. They also said that there were appeals for voluntary mobilization in Russia […]."[87] In March, rumors also spread about the movement of the Red Army towards the borders of Poland and Romania.[88] In the eyes of Volhynia's state police, the danger of these rumors lay in the fact that local populations easily succumbed to agitation. In the March 1924 report, it was stated that "the rural population, peasants who are generally quite indifferent, sometimes as a result of their ignorance yield to these prompts and even commit offenses," as was the case in Równe county where "crowds of peasants pounced on several police stations and forest protection authorities and disarmed police functionaries."[89]

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[84] Ibid., 35 [document page no.]
[85] "Sukcesy Korpusu Ochrony Pogranicza," *Przegląd Wołyński*, December 17, 1924, 4.
[86] "Sprawozdanie miesięczne z ruchu zawodowego i społeczno-politycznego na terenie Województwa Wołyńskiego za m. styczeń 1924r." AAN UWwŁ 4/1-2 [document page no.]
[87] Ibid., 2 [document page no.]
[88] "Sprawozdanie miesięczne z ruchu zawodowego, społecznego, i politycznego na terenie Województwa Wołyńskiego za m. marzec 1924r." AAN UWwŁ 4/1 [document page no.]
[89] Ibid., 1 [document page no.]

In addition to spreading rumors and demonstrating a curiosity about Soviet celebrations, local peasants engaged in illegal economic activities, often using the border as a shield to protect them from the law. Indeed, during the 1920s, Volhynia had the highest figures in the entire state for the crimes of mugging and murder by bandits, theft of horses and cattle, and the distillation of vodka—all crimes that could be linked to the existence of the Polish-Soviet border.[90] The illegal distillation of homemade vodka, described in one report as "the greatest plague of Volhynia," was seen as a natural result of the large size of the province (which was difficult to police), the poor quality of the roads, and the resistance of a population that had been demoralized by multiple occupations and Bolshevik raids.[91] Peasants also engaged in smuggling, an activity that made much economic sense on both sides of the border, since the rising price of foodstuffs and other goods in the Soviet Union created a demand for cheaper products from Poland.[92] In August 1924, 132 people were caught smuggling goods from Volhynia into Soviet territory, while there were 169 cases of illegal border crossings in both directions (although we can assume that the actual numbers were somewhat higher).[93] Horse theft flourished, with 171 cases reported in the second quarter of 1924, only 48 of which led to arrests.[94] In borderland communities, horses were taken from pastures in the middle of the night and smuggled to the Soviet side, the border "easing the obliteration of the traces of theft."[95]

Like their Soviet counterparts, Polish state officials linked crimes at the border with security threats and, as such, wanted local populations to help them catch the culprits.[96] Much to their chagrin, however, the state police discovered that peasants frequently sided with local criminals. In the second quarter of 1924, for instance, the

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[90] Wołoszynowski, *Województwo Wołyńskie w świetle liczb i faktów*, 173.
[91] "Krótki szkic walki skarbowych z przekroczeniami akcyzowemi i monopolowemi na Wołyniu," AAN PRM (Part IV) 26/13/34.
[92] Andrea Chandler, *Institutions of Isolation: Border Controls in the Soviet Union and its Successor States, 1917-1993* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 50.
[93] "Sprawozdanie miesięczne […] za m. sierpień 1924r.," DARO 33/4/7/335.
[94] "Sprawozdanie sytuacyjne za II-gi kwartał 1924r.," DARO 33/4/9/83od.
[95] Wołoszynowski, *Województwo Wołyńskie w świetle liczb i faktów*, 172.
[96] For more on the situation in the Soviet Union, see Brown, *A Biography of No Place,* 8; Chandler, *Institutions of Isolation,* 57-58. On smuggling and security in Poland, see "Protokuł spisany z przebiegu pierwszego perjodycznego zebrania Naczelników władz II instancji na obszarze Województwa Wołyńskiego, odbytego w Wołyńskim Urzędzie Wojewódzkim w dniu 27 kwietnia 1925 roku," AAN MSW (Part I) 69/13.

police reported that "the local population is ill-disposed towards our statehood and willingly favors all criminal elements who, according to the opinion of the population, undermine the authority of our administration."[97] In the border settlement of Międzyrzecz, located just to the south of Ostróg, state police complained that local people supported those who committed acts of horse theft and did not assist police when they sought out the wrongdoers.[98] Reports also reflected the idea that the mood of the peasants was intrinsically linked to their immediate economic situation. In Ostróg county, it was reported that the population was "indifferent" to the border guards, while in Równe county the mood was described as "hostile," a difference attributed to the fact that, in the latter county, smuggling—which the border guards attempted to eliminate—brought "enormous profits" to local people.[99]

Local populations, with their more intimate knowledge of the physical terrain in which they lived, certainly had an advantage over state police officials. In this respect, Polish policemen experienced a wider problem that had been encountered for centuries, whereby peasants used their knowledge of local environments, such as forests and mountains, to outfox state officials.[100] Yet in Volhynia, the state's relatively poor knowledge of the terrain had critical geopolitical and security implications. Bandits from the Soviet Union could hide in the forests (particularly those in Włodzimierz county) to prevent capture, just as they had done during the Polish-Bolshevik war.[101] The Polish authorities also struggled to locate the illegal firearms that peasants had allegedly stashed in hay, in their roofs, and even underground. A circular issued by the Volhynian provincial authorities in October 1924 stated that the work of the security services and the army had been largely

[97] "Sprawozdanie sytuacyjne za II-gi kwartał 1924r.," DARO 33/4/9/83od.
[98] "Raport sytuacyjny kwartalny za czas od 1/IV do 30/VI 1924r." (Międzyrzecze), DARO 147/1/5/64.
[99] "Sprawozdanie miesięczne z ruchu zawodowego, społecznego i politycznego na terenie Województwa Wołyńskiego za miesiąc czerwiec 1924r.," DARO 33/4/9/118.
[100] See, for example, Peter Sahlins, *Forest Rites: The War of the Demoiselles in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).
[101] "Sprawozdanie sytuacyjne za II-gi kwartał 1924r.," DARO 33/4/9/82od.

unsuccessful, and that local people needed to be recruited to point police towards the hidden weapons.[102]

As one might expect, the nationality of Volhynia's inhabitants factored into reports compiled by state police. Significantly, all reports from local police stations included sections that were broken down by nationality, meaning that, in addition to making comments about the population as a whole, the police remarked on the actions of different national groups. Reports commented, for instance, that Jews in Volhynia generally looked after their "own" interests, rather than those of the state as a whole, and constituted a corrupting influence on the local peasantry. Such ideas echoed comments expressed by right-wing politicians and in reports made by the Borderland Guard in 1919-1921, as well as older stereotypes about the role of the Jews. One state police report from June 1924 argued that since the Jews did not want to pay taxes, they encouraged the peasants to withhold their money, informing them "that if the whole village doesn't pay the tax then the treasury authorities can't do anything about it and will not collect the tax."[103] Jews who lived in towns along the border were also accused of crossing to the other side in order to trade, thus undermining Polish security.[104]

In some borderland localities, Ukrainian populations were similarly seen as "generally hostile to the Polish state" and ripe for agitation from the Soviet-backed Communist Party of Western Ukraine.[105] Local reports also suggested that some Ukrainian elites—including Orthodox priests, teachers, members of parliament, and Prosvita activists—spread ideas about "Polish oppression in the *kresy*" and protested against state policies, which included putting the Orthodox calendar in line with the Catholic one and collecting taxes from the peasantry.[106] When Ukrainian

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[102] Letter from the County Police Commander in Ostróg to all state police stations in the county (December 9, 1923), DARO 147/1/11/3-4.
[103] "Sprawozdanie miesięczne […] za miesiąc czerwiec 1924r.," DARO 33/4/9/114.
[104] Ibid., 114.
[105] "Sprawozdanie miesięczne z ruchu zawodowego, społecznego i politycznego na terenie Województwa Wołyńskiego za miesiąc lipiec 1924r.," DARO 33/4/7/70od. On Soviet support for the Communist Party of Western Ukraine, see "Sprawozdanie miesięczne […] za miesiąc wrzesień 1924r.," DARO 33/4/7/263od.
[106] On the spreading of anti-Polish ideas, see "Sprawozdanie sytuacyjne za II-gi kwartał 1924r.," DARO 33/4/9/84od.

parliamentary deputies traveled around the Volhynian countryside in 1924 to speak to thousands of peasants about the injustices of Polish rule, they were accused of "exerting negative influences among the dark mass of the Ukrainian peasantry, leaving it ill-disposed towards the Polish state."[107]

Yet local police reports indicated that nationality was not always a clear indicator of anti-state attitudes. Significantly, the problems state police encountered at a local level—crime, support for bandits, and the spreading of rumors—were often linked to internal dynamics within rural communities, rather than with overtly nationalistic politics or ideology. In the villages, for example, crimes were frequently the result of conflicts between peasant families: some murders were revenge attacks against rival families, while acts of arson—of which there were 47 reported cases in the second quarter of 1924—were generally, although not exclusively, the result of "revenge and the settling of personal accounts among the local population," as well as "disputes between employers and workers."[108] As one journalist observed, as late as 1931, fights between villagers often occurred on Sundays, since vodka was available in the village and "everybody likes to drink."[109]

State police officials recorded that the actions of Ukrainian-speaking populations (as opposed to Ukrainian nationalists) were economically, rather than politically or nationally driven, and their attitudes depended very much on the specific locality in which they lived. In some places, Ukrainian-speaking populations were depicted as having a weak sense of nationalism and as being friendly to the Polish authorities. A 1924 report from the village of Międzyrzecz in Zdołbunów county indicated how state police believed that the economic interests of Ukrainian-speaking villagers trumped a sense of national solidarity. Międzyrzecz—whose name literally means "between the rivers"—was situated right on border with the Soviet Union, meaning that its inhabitants could easily see the little town of Slobodka that lay on the Soviet side (see Figure 4). Although the vast majority of villagers were Ukrainian-speaking Orthodox peasants, the state police report explained their actions in

[107] "Sprawozdanie miesięczne […] za m. sierpień 1924r.," DARO 33/4/7/339.
[108] "Sprawozdanie sytuacyjne za II-gi kwartał 1924r.," DARO 33/4/9/83.
[109] "Trzeci list ze wsi wołyńskiej," *Przegląd Wołyński*, April 5, 1931, 5.

economic rather than national terms. For instance, the police accounted for the prevalence of theft in the area by citing a combination of general ignorance and the failure of the Polish state to adequately provide for peasants' needs. By 1924, the populations were significantly friendlier towards the police than they had been in 1921 and 1922, and they had even started to send their children to the local state elementary school.[110] However, they were not seen as politically engaged, being "very neglected in terms of culture and education," as well as "dirty and sloppy" in their lifestyles.[111] In another report from the same year, the mass of the Ukrainian people—beyond national activists—were described as "sluggish."[112] While they listened intently to news from across the border, such information was said to have little influence on public opinion.

On one level, therefore, the Polish authorities in Volhynia spent the early 1920s trying to gain control of the populations inhabiting the borderland. Such plans might be seen within a wider story in which modernizing states attempt to gain control over peripheral borderland areas and eliminate acts of smuggling and border transgression.[113] The Polish-Soviet borderland—which might be labeled an "unruly borderland," according to Michiel Baud and Willem van Schendel's typology—was one in which the state was relatively weak and where local society resisted the imposition of the border.[114] Yet, as we saw in the previous chapter, efforts to integrate the Volhynian borderlands were intrinsically connected to ideas about extending Polishness into a region where the majority of inhabitants were not of the Polish nationality. This was not merely an issue, therefore, of imposing state control over an intransigent population; it was also about convincing a largely non-Polish population that their best interests lay in siding with Polish officials, obeying Polish law, and rejecting anti-Polish agitation.

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[110] "Raport sytuacyjny kwartalny za czas od 1/IV do 30.VI 1924r.," DARO 147/1/5/64od.
[111] Ibid., 65.
[112] "Sprawozdanie miesięczne […] za m. styczeń 1924r." AAN UWwŁ 4/14 [document page no.]
[113] As has been the case across many borderlands, actions referred to as "smuggling" by the state may not have been considered criminal acts by those who were carrying them out. See Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson, *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 87.
[114] Michiel Baud and Willem van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands," *Journal of World History* 8, no. 2 (1997): 227-228. For a description of the unruly behavior of peasants on the Soviet side of the Polish-Soviet border, see Brown, *A Biography of No Place*, particularly 52-83.

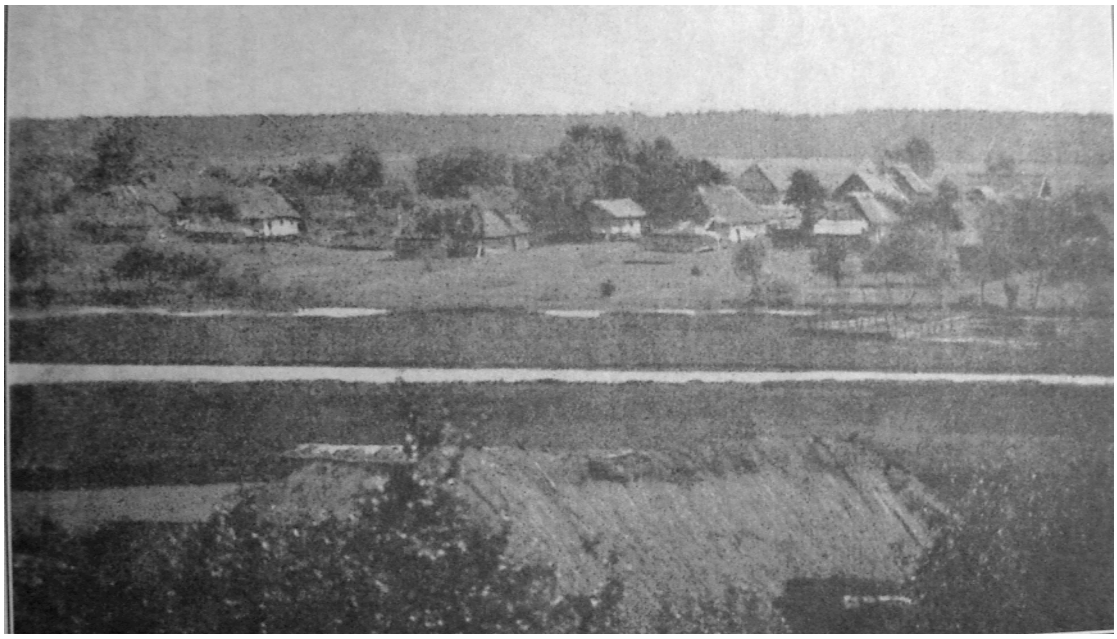

Figure 4: The Polish-Soviet Border on the River Wilja near Międzyrzecz. Source: Mieczysław Orłowicz, *Ilustrowany Przewodnik po Wołyniu*, 277.

Unfortunately for the Polish state, representatives of state authority at the periphery appeared scarce, weak, and incompetent, and were unable to implement law, order, and a functioning administration.[115] In many ways, the situation in Volhynia echoed the overall political instability of the Polish state, which was largely a consequence of its weak presidency and powerful parliament. Between November 1918 and May 1926, Poland had fourteen governments, while no fewer than seven Volhynian governors came and went between March 1921 and February 1925.[116] In the *kresy*, the very concept of law—let alone its implementation—was problematic, since laws were a mish-mash of legislation created by Russian imperial officials, the civil administration of 1919-20, and the new Polish parliament in Warsaw.[117]

[115] In his memoir on the interwar settlement of Katerburg, Antoni Górski pointed out that the fifteen-village district (*gmina*) in which he lived was chronically understaffed, having only five employees (along with the community head) and four or five policemen. Górski, *Pamiętniki lat mego życia*, 63.
[116] Statistics on changing governments from Eva Plach, *The Clash of Moral Nations: Cultural Politics in Piłsudski's Poland, 1926-1935* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 3.
[117] On the need to regulate the chaotic legal situation in the eastern borderlands, see AAN MSW (Part I) 674/201. Also Srokowski, "Uwagi o Kresach Wschodnich," 331.

According to the journalist and historian Władysław Pobóg-Malinowski, prior to Piłsudski's coup in 1926, legislation issued by parliament came into conflict with older Russian laws, failed to cancel out the resolutions of the civil administration, and did not fit with local conditions. All of these factors led to chaos in the eastern borderlands, where state officials appeared dirty and poor, and where outposts of the security services constituted the "apex of primitivism."[118]

Polish commentators in Volhynia were certainly concerned about the administrative, political, and legal chaos that reigned in the *kresy*—and what that chaos said about Polish governance. In December 1924, Antoni Zalewski published a damning article in the *Lublin-Borderland Review* about Warsaw's eastern policies, laying the blame with a government in Warsaw that showed little interest in the *kresy* and calling for the implementation of basic measures to improve the situation. In order to emphasize that the simplest and most obvious route should be taken, Zalewski recounted a story about a man with a smelly foot who took off his shoe in a full train compartment, exposing his fellow passengers to the foul stench. As people complained and put their handkerchiefs to their faces in disgust, Zalewski's fictitious passenger apologized, stating that he had thrown away much money on physicians and medication, all to no avail. In response, one passenger asked the man if he had tried washing his foot. "Washing?" the man replied, "do you have a prescription?" "Soap and water," came the reply. Red in the face, the man declared that he would try it, and the compartment sat in silence for the rest of the journey.[119]

Although his fable is one of the more memorable indictments of the government's eastern policies to be found in the local press, Zalewski was not the only one who believed that the situation needed to be rectified. The men whose articles filled the pages of the province's two main newspapers—the left-leaning *Volhynian Review* (*Przegląd Wołyński*) and the right-wing *Volhynia Life* (*Życie Wołynia*)—constantly complained about Warsaw's directionless policies. In February 1924, *Volhynia Life* published an article that criticized journalists in Warsaw (who blamed

[118] Cited in Mędrzecki, *Województwo wołyńskie*, 28.
[119] Antoni Zalewski, "Województwo Wschodnie," *Przegląd Lubelsko-Kresowy*, December 24, 1924, 14-15.

local administrators for the problems in the *kresy*) and accused the central government of lacking "a clear political plan for governing the eastern borderlands."[120] Later that same year, an article in the *Volhynian Review* argued that Warsaw was treating the *kresy* "with great contempt" and as a "godforsaken province," concluding that the government needed to work out a clear plan for dealing with the East.[121]

The local press also complained that only the worst state officials were being dispatched to the *kresy*. While local Polish journalists suggested that borderland communities were places in which the superiority of Polish civilization might be showcased to populations on both sides of the border, in reality administrative personnel proved to be highly incompetent. According to a *Volhynian Review* article published in July 1924, the border town of Korzec "should serve as a model of rational urban economics," but the economy had instead been very badly run due to the governance of the mayor.[122] Similarly, an article published the following year argued that the lack of salt in the border town of Ostróg indicated poor governance.[123]

State police personnel also gave cause for concern. Even in 1925, the governor of the province described how Volhynia's policemen possessed lower levels of education than their counterparts in central Poland.[124] Their lot was not helped by the poor conditions in which they lived—state police officers in Volhynia suffered from a disproportionately high incidence of chest illnesses due to the overburdens of service, the generally unhealthy climate, and the uncomfortable and unregulated conditions of life.[125] In early 1924, incidences of desertion by border guards were also on the increase. Between the end of October and the middle of January, thirteen state police border guards had gone over to the Soviet side, having been subjected to "direct agitation and prompting by Soviet border guard functionaries."[126] The following year,

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[120] "W sprawie kresów," *Życie Wołynia*, February 17, 1924, 1.
[121] "O konsekwentną politykę kresową," *Przegląd Wołyński*, September 17, 1924, 1.
[122] "Z Całego Wołynia," *Przegląd Wołyński*, July 23, 1924, 4.
[123] "Z Całego Wołynia," *Przegląd Wołyński*, March 11, 1925, 4.
[124] "Protokół spisany z przebiegu pierwszego perjodycznego zebrania Naczelników władz II instancji na obszarze Województwa Wołyńskiego, odbytego w Wołyńskim Urzędzie Wojewódzkim w dniu 27 kwietnia 1925 roku," AAN MSW (Part I) 69/3.
[125] "Sprawozdanie sytuacyjne za II-gi kwartał 1924r.," DARO 33/4/9/85.
[126] "Sprawozdanie miesięczne […] za m. styczeń 1924r.," AAN UWwŁ 4/27 [document page no.]

reports continued to suggest that policemen were not sufficiently armed, since a large percentage of their rifles were broken.[127]

A New Authority in the East: The Borderland Protection Corps

Following several high-profile bandit attacks in the summer of 1924, the Polish government was forced to completely rethink its border protection plan. In the eyes of the government, this was not only a military issue, but was rather a problem of the entire Polish administration.[128] Władysław Sikorski of the Ministry of Military Affairs enumerated the matrix of problems faced by the state in an August 1924 memo:

> The weak, relatively poor administration, the demoralized police, whose members drink a lot of alcohol and go to Soviet Russia with their families, the complete lack of state authority among local people, the toleration of the open incitement of residents—all of these factors prepare the perfect ground for Bolshevik raids in the eastern borderlands.[129]

The following month, the Polish government organized a new force to guard the border and quell internal agitation—the Borderland Protection Corps (*Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza*, hereafter KOP). This elite unit, which came under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and was comprised of specially-selected soldiers serving in the Polish Army, had a predominantly military remit—its soldiers reported on daily events across the border and within the Polish borderlands, attempted to eliminate communist banditry, and (along with the state police) evicted people who crossed the border from the Soviet Union.[130] In time, they were even involved in sending agents across the Polish-Soviet border—sometimes as far as Kiev—to collect intelligence for the Polish state.[131] But KOP's leaders believed that

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[127] "Sprawozdanie sytuacyjne za III kwartał 1925 roku," DARO 33/4/20/58.
[128] As Jerzy Prochwicz has suggested, new policies were based on the fact that the border divided two distinct socio-political systems, and that the borderland had an ethnic structure that was unfavorable for the Polish state. See Prochwicz, "Polskie Formacje Graniczne na Wołyniu," 115.
[129] "Pismo ministra spraw wojskowych gen. dyw. Władysława Sikorskiego do prezesa Rady Ministrów Władysława Grabskiego – załącznik do protokołu Komitetu Politycznego Rady Ministrów z 6 sierpnia 1924 r.," in *O Niepodległą i Granice*, 15.
[130] See DARO 30/18/1018 for examples of situational reports.
[131] Snyder, *Sketches*, 89.

security did not only come through repression and military aptitude. Central to the security mission was an attempt to encourage local populations to support the Polish state, rather than the bandits in their midst. After all, the majority of KOP outposts were situated in small rural settlements within 30 kilometers of the Polish-Soviet border, often far from the nearest communication route or train station, and in which the soldiers frequently represented one of the only points of contact with the state.[132]

The majority of the soldiers who served in KOP's ranks (which totaled almost 6,000 servicemen by 1933-34) were drawn from the western or central parts of Poland, areas deemed more "civilized" than the eastern provinces to which soldiers were sent. In the mid-1920s, the vast majority of KOP soldiers serving in the eastern borderlands were Polish (80%), although other nationalities, most notably Czechs and Germans (twelve percent combined), also served in KOP's ranks. The majority nationality groups in the *kresy*, however—the Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Jews—collectively constituted only eight percent of the total number of KOP soldiers.[133] With their more "civilized" characteristics, KOP soldiers—like the military settlers discussed above—were charged with creating eastern outposts of Polish civilization, which would feature military buildings and hygienic accommodation.[134] The Ministry of Internal Affairs stipulated that soldiers' quarters "should be warm and adjusted for the strong frosts that occur in the *kresy*," while soldiers were to be given beds rather than wooden bunks.[135] The architect charged with designing KOP buildings, Tadeusz Nowakowski, drew up plans for mainly wooden buildings that could quickly be constructed in regions where the transportation of other building materials was problematic.[136]

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[132] Halina Lach, "Działalność kulturalno-oświatowa KOP na kresach wschodnich," in *Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza: Materiały z Konferencji Naukowej*, ed. Jerzy Prochwicz (Kętrzyn: Centrum Szkolenia Straży Granicznej, 2005), 114; Jan Dec, *Dobrzy Sąsiedzi* (Warsaw: Nakładem Towarzystwa Rozwoju Ziem Wschodnich, 1934), 21.
[133] Tomasz Głowiński, *Zapomniany garnizon: Oddziały Korpusu Ochrony Pogranicza w Iwieńcu w latach 1924-1939* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo GAJT, 2008), 12. The 8% was broken down as follows: 3% Ukrainian, 3% Belarusian, and 2% Jewish
[134] Letter to the Commander of the Borderland Protection Corps (General Minkiewicz) from the Head of the General Staff (General Haller) (September 6, 1924), AAN ATN 8/1.
[135] Tadeusz Nowakowski, "Budowa Pomieszczeń Korpusu Ochrony Pogranicza," *Architektura i Budownictwo* 10/12 (1933): 378.
[136] Ibid., 378.

In contrast to the state police, the border guards were promoted as mythological figures in both the Polish press and KOP propaganda.[137] In these accounts, KOP buildings at the frontier took on a symbolic as well as a practical significance. Take the example of the watchtower (*strażnica*), which constituted the first line of defense against the enemy. Situated one kilometer from the Polish-Soviet border, within the so-called "border zone" (*strefa nadgraniczna*), the towers allowed KOP soldiers to look out onto the surrounding territories and gaze across the border.[138] An article that appeared in the *Lublin-Borderland Review* in 1925 drew the reader's attention towards the civilizational value of such structures. According to the caption that appeared alongside a photograph, the towers "ascend in the Polish eastern borderlands—visible symbols of the strength of the Polish state and the unswerving freedom of the nation, which with the sacrifice of its blood secured the borders of its fatherland."[139] The article went on to compare the eastern borderlands with the American frontier, pointing to similarities between tales of rapid building work completed by KOP and "the extraordinary stories from the lives of the first pioneers of American settlements, the stories of Jack London about the dangerous expeditions to Klondike, [and] incredible tales of the fearless trappers and hunters."[140] The article also stressed that economic reconstruction carried out by KOP could aid security, and claimed that "every bridge raised up, every constructed or repaired road has a significance that is worth more than a stack of cheap communist leaflets."[141] Reinforcing the border was seen as a way to overcome the widespread feeling that Polish rule was temporary, since physical transformation in the borderlands sent out a message that "Poland sets up its own barrier at the border, which nobody can cross without punishment."[142]

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[137] The image of the KOP border guard in Poland might be compared with that of the Soviet border guard. See Chandler, *Institutions of Isolation*, 78-79; Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 114.
[138] "1925, Warszawa, Z opracowania *Budowa pomieszczeń dla Korpusu Ochrony Pogranicza i domów dla urzędników państwowych w województwach wschodnich*," in *O Niepodległą i Granice*, 78.
[139] "Budowy Strażnic Kresowych," *Przegląd Lubelsko-Kresowy*, June 1925, 5.
[140] Ibid., 5.
[141] Ibid., 5.
[142] Ibid., 5

KOP propaganda also showed how the border guards mastered the *kresy*'s physical environment. In 1925, KOP authorities organized a run along the length of the Polish-Soviet border, with soldiers passing along certain segments before handing over to one of their peers. According to a report in KOP's yearbook, the run proved the connections between various border outposts, certified military preparedness, demonstrated the stamina of particular soldiers, and allowed border guards to study the roads and trails that ran through the borderlands[143] The same yearbook also featured pictures of soldiers in a range of natural environments on its front covers. While the early covers (from 1924-25 and 1925-26) depicted soldiers at ease in their surroundings, later images showed the more hostile physical conditions that soldiers had mastered. On the yearbook's 1926-27 cover (Figure 5a), two soldiers, enveloped in tree branches, peered out to the left, one with his bayonet pointed out ready for the enemy. In 1927-28 (Figure 5b) the frontispiece depicted two more soldiers, dressed in long military coats with binoculars around their necks, stealthily making their way through a snow-covered forest. Both images indicated the competence with which heroic border guards navigated the demanding eastern environments.

Articles about the exploits of particular KOP brigades added to this sense of environmental mastery. The 1924-25 yearbook featured a report on KOP soldiers moving through the difficult landscape of Volhynia from the town of Równe to the settlement of Hoszcza where the battalion was to be based. As they made their way towards their destination, they left paved roads far behind them, journeying instead through fields and forests, a cold autumn wind blowing in their faces and mud coming up to their knees. On reaching their destination, the soldiers found that the border police were ill-equipped to deal with eastern conditions, but they soon rectified the situation by seeking out bandits in the swamps, before warming and drying themselves by the fire in their quarters.[144]

[143] Kazimierz Kobos kpt., "Pierwszy bieg rozstawny K.O.P.," in *Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza*, 33-35.
[144] "Przed Rokiem (Z pamiętnika Kopisty)," in *Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza,* 53-54.

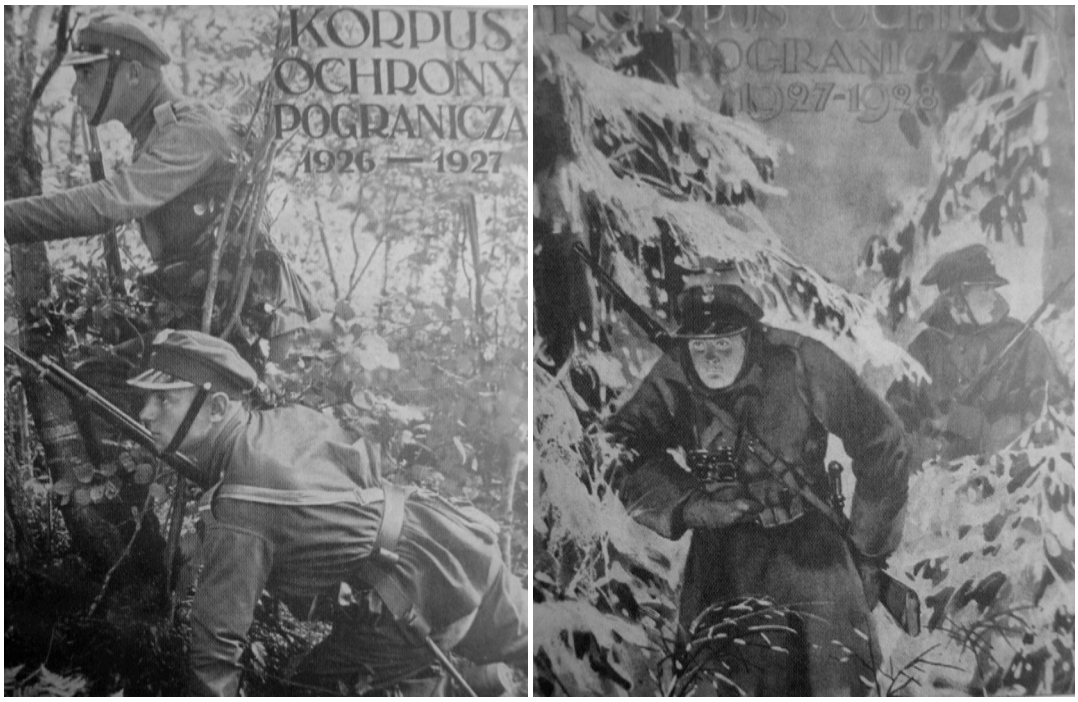

Figure 5: Images of KOP border guards. Source: *Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza: Jednodniówki w zbiorach Centralnej Biblioteki Wojskowej,* 5.

Those who supported KOP's mission argued that the newcomers were well received by both Polish and non-Polish populations. In late 1924, an article in the *Volhynian Review* claimed that Polish and Ukrainian populations had welcomed the arrival of KOP and appreciated the protection that the soldiers provided against bandits from the Soviet Union.[145] Other articles supported the idea that local people of all nationalities responded positively to the work of the border guards, helping the KOP soldiers to erect barbed wire along the border and coming out to greet General Minkiewicz on his tour of the *kresy*.[146] Yet sections of the Ukrainian-speaking population in Volhynia, particularly those that had been infiltrated by the Ukrainian National Democratic Alliance (*Ukraïns'ke Natsional'no-Demokratychne Ob'iednannia*, herafter UNDO) or the Communist Party of Western Ukraine, continued to express hostility towards the Polish state. There were reports of peasants destroying border posts and spreading agitation, while those who had gained their

[145] "Sukcesy Korpusu Ochrony Pogranicza," 3.
[146] "Odrutowanie granicy," in *Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza*, 24; Stanislaw Falkiewicz, "Praca Oświata," in *Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza*, 27-30.

political education during the war were said to be behaving like "wild Cossacks."[147] In the village of Hubków, the almost exclusively "Ruthenian" population was described as "quiet supporters of the Communist Party of Western Ukraine" who were "mainly engaged in theft from the forest."[148] KOP reports also suggested that Greek Catholic and Orthodox clergymen provided headquarters for Ukrainian uprisings and Soviet espionage.[149]

In KOP's local reports, Jews were accused of disloyalty to the Polish state, echoing the allegations made by both the Borderland Guard and the state police. Officers described local Jews as "economically and politically hostile" and "prone to join with the Soviets," who were allegedly bribing them to provide information in exchange for permission to import Polish goods to the Soviet Union, a practice that was normally forbidden.[150] Even those Jews who were not accused of acting on behalf of the Soviets were seen to be working for their own personal interests and not in the interests of the Polish state. As one 1927 KOP report put it, Jews were deemed to be "a nation without the least affection and feelings of civic obligation towards the Polish state."[151] Even when they demonstrated a friendly attitude towards the administration and the army, the same report went on, it was merely the "semblance of friendliness" because they acted out of fear and their own personal interests.[152] In the town of Ludwipol in 1927, the Jewish inhabitants were accused of being "quiet supporters of communism, who maintain contact with people over the border via letters and smugglers."[153]

But the border guards discovered that ethnic identities did not always determine the reactions of local people towards the state. While their views of the military settlers were certainly positive, interactions with local Polish-speaking

[147] KOP, Dowództwo 4 Baonu. Dederkały. "Miesięczny komunikat informacyjny Nr. 1 na czas od 1 do 28 lutego 1925" (February 28, 1925), DARO 33/4/15/143.
[148] "Wykaz ludności i nastroji [sic] politycznych na odcinku 2 baonu," ASGwS 541/78/73.
[149] "Miesięczny komunikat informacyjny Nr. 1 na czas od 1 do 28 lutego 1925," DARO 33/4/15/143.
[150] Ibid., 143.
[151] "Komunikaty informacyjne okresowe 1 Brygady KOP" (February 1-August 1, 1927), ASGwS 541/102A/17.
[152] Ibid., 17-18.
[153] "Wykaz ludności i nastroji [sic] politycznych na odcinku 2 baonu," ASGwS 541/78/73.

populations gave KOP soldiers cause for concern.[154] These people not only lived in miserable conditions, but they also remained very underdeveloped in terms of national and civic identities. In particular, Roman Catholic priests were said to be failing in their nationalizing mission, since they possessed a weak national consciousness, were indifferent, and showed little initiative in influencing the "dark masses."[155] Border guards also found that they needed to understand local relationships, both between members of communities and between Volhynia's populations and the physical environment. After all, while bandit attacks might be read on one level as an ideological clash between Soviet communism and Polish democracy, KOP soldiers reported that these acts of violence were often rooted within specific social, familial, and economic conditions. In the region around Zdołbunów in July 1928, it was noted that all four of the recent bandit attacks had a "local character" and were carried out by people looking for material gain.[156] KOP soldiers also realized that villagers often sided with the bandits rather than with representatives of the state authorities. In the same locality of Zdołbunów, KOP reports concluded that local people hid bandits, thereby paralyzing attempts to reprimand them.[157]

Significantly, KOP officials did not interpret peasant behavior as a result of "national consciousness, education, their own initiative, or hatred towards us," but rather as a consequence of the population's general ignorance.[158] In the borderland areas of Zdołbunów county, 98% of the population were deemed to be "dark men, old and wild, not able to have their own thoughts, urged to evil, living according to the idea that 'strength comes before the law.'"[159] Since these men feared the bandits who crossed the border from the Soviet Union, KOP concluded that the border guards needed to demonstrate that those who transgressed the laws would be brought to

[154] In one report, the military settlers were described as "militant material" who were "militarily well-educated, patriotic, and prepared to make sacrifices for the fatherland," despite their current conditions of misery. See "Miesięczny komunikat informacyjny Nr. 1 na czas od 1 do 28 lutego 1925," DARO 33/4/15/142.
[155] Ibid., 143.
[156] KOP. Dowództwo 1 Brygady. Zdołbunów. "Komunikat Informacyjny Okresowy za czas od 1/VII do 30/IX.28" (October 10, 1928), ASGwS 541/102/2 [document page number].
[157] Ibid., 2.
[158] KOP report from Zdołbunów (June 25, 1925), DARO 30/18/1018/95.
[159] Ibid, 95.

justice. Similarly, in Dederkały in Krzemieniec county, the attitudes of local Ukrainian-speaking populations were understood as a consequence of their material conditions, rather than of a strictly nationalist ideology. Attempting to maintain a family of nine on a limited area of land resulted in misery that was "heightened by the day."[160] Crop failures, rather than an adherence to political ideology, provided a reason for anti-state activities.

Along the border at least, peasant attitudes towards the Polish state authorities were therefore determined not only by ethnic criteria, but also by the specific conditions on the ground. People of various nationalities maintained contact with friends and relatives on the other side of the border, meaning that acts of smuggling—which KOP soldiers were charged with controlling—were not only carried out by the non-Polish population. In 1927, the KOP battalion stationed at Ludwipol indicated that practical opportunities and economic needs were more likely to govern local behavior than loyalty to a particular ethnic group.[161] Hence, just as there were loyal settlements where the majority of people were classified as Poles, there were also villages like Mokre—with a population of 268 Poles—where the inhabitants were politically unsettled, agitated for land reform against local landowners, engaged in theft, and smuggled goods and people across the border. In the settlement of Huta Korecka, which lay right on the border with the Soviet Union and was inhabited by 137 Poles and five Jews, people were allegedly "not completely loyal to the state," engaged in smuggling, and were "very susceptible" to communist agitation. Similarly, in the settlement of Budki Uściarowskie, which was almost exclusively Polish, KOP personnel found a "smuggling settlement where every family has a member who engages in smuggling," although the village was "politically peaceful" and "doesn't think about communism." Just as Poles were not necessarily loyal, so Ukrainians were not necessarily hostile. In the settlement of Ujście, which was inhabited by 711 Ukrainians, 28 Poles, and sixteen Jews, people were described as "very peaceful and loyal" and did not take part in subversive action, while in Marenin, which was almost

[160] "Miesięczny komunikat informacyjny Nr. 1 na czas od 1 do 28 lutego 1925," DARO 33/4/15/142.
[161] All statistics cited in this paragraph can be found in "Wykaz ludności i nastroji [sic] politycznych na odcinku 2 baonu," ASGwS 541/78/72-73.

exclusively inhabited by "Ruthenians," the population was "loyal and peaceful" and there was "no contact with Russia." While KOP's propaganda promoted the concept of a Polish civilizing mission, its officers observed that people's behavior and attitudes towards the state were not dictated solely by nationality.

Significantly, newspaper reports indicated that KOP soldiers, like settlers and state police, were also negatively influenced by the physical and human conditions in which they found themselves. While most of the propaganda emphasized the role of the border guards as civilizers who mastered their environment, the first few years of KOP's work in the *kresy* indicated their vulnerability and weakness, with one article in the *Lublin-Borderland Review* pointing to the "sad life of the KOP soldier," about whom "our society currently has so little interest."[162] Practical problems during the first few years of KOP's mission also meant that soldiers faced greater dangers than their counterparts stationed elsewhere. Despite attempts to get KOP buildings erected as quickly as possible, for instance, the desired barracks were often not built in time for the first battalions who arrived in late 1924, meaning that soldiers who were initially deployed to the border had to live with local populations and were subject to their "demoralizing influences."[163] Similarly, local people posed a danger to the physical health of the soldiers. According to an article in KOP's first yearbook, the soldiers in the *kresy* were deemed to be at a higher risk of contracting venereal diseases, since so many local women had been infected by soldiers serving in the Russian, German, and Austro-Hungarian armies during the First World War. Indeed, the article even claimed that elements hostile to the Polish state deliberately infected women in order to "weaken our detachments at the border," suggesting that women posed a threat to the physical and moral robustness of incoming Polish men.[164]

Internal reports also indicated that the ability of the soldiers to master their environment was fraught with obstacles, many of which were related to the region's specific historic and geographical conditions. Extinguishing fires, one of the tasks that KOP was charged with executing, was often problematic due to the poor quality of the

[162] "Migawki kresowe: w strażnicach Korpusu Ochrony Pogranicza. Nad mogiłą nowej ofiary," *Przegląd Lubelsko-Kresowy*, April 5, 1925, 15.
[163] "Zakwaterowanie," in *Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza*, 22.
[164] "Organizacja Służby Zdrowia," in *Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza*, 25.

roads and the distances that had to be traversed.[165] Krzemieniec county, which lay along the border with the Soviet Union, was particularly troublesome, since the soils and hilly terrain meant that, according to a British Foreign Office report, "it is impossible to build a kilometer of really good road for less than 70,000 zlote [sic]."[166] In April 1925, the battalion stationed in the town of Dederkały in Krzemieniec county claimed that the poor standard of roads created an unsatisfactory transport situation, which became much worse during periods of bad weather.[167]

The authorities similarly worried about psychological challenges, reporting that KOP soldiers often felt lost and disoriented. In January 1925, on a section of the border near the town of Korzec, KOP authorities contacted the county authorities in Równe after a raid was allegedly carried out by bandits on a farmhouse in Hołownica, four kilometers from the border. When it turned out that the bandit raid had not occurred at all, the state police reported that the erroneous response provided "evidence of a certain type of nervousness and disorientation within the KOP ranks."[168] Cross-border traffic also had a demoralizing effect on KOP soldiers. In 1925, the provincial authorities found that people who came over the border under the pretence of trading in vodka were often communist agitators in disguise who had "an effect on the demoralization and loosening of discipline of the border guard units."[169] While individual battalion reports claimed that the border guards constituted "material that was not susceptible to agitation," the rank-and-file soldiers proved a worry for their superiors.[170] Incidences of desertion were noted with alarm, although most of the cases reported in the files were not attributed to ideological corruption by the communists or a desire to get to the Soviet Union for political reasons, but were due

[165] Fires were a particular problem in Volhynia because buildings were often constructed from wood and straw. See "Działalność Urzędów Ziemskich na terenie Województwa Wołyńskiego: Okres 1921-1924r.," AAN PRM (Part IV) 26/13/5.
[166] "Report on the Eastern Marches of Poland" (Mr Savery, July 1930), NAL FO 417/74.
[167] KOP, Dowództwo 4 Baonu (Dederkały). "Miesięczny komunikat informacyjny nr. 3 za czas od 1 do 30 kwietnia 1925r." (April 30, 1925), DARO 33/4/18/94.
[168] "Sprawozdanie miesięczne z ruchu zawodowego i politycznego na terenie Województwa Wołyńskiego za m. styczeń 1925r.," DARO 33/4/15/127.
[169] "Wołyński Urząd Wojewódzki. Przedmiot: Zamknięcie granicznego handlu wódką" (Łuck, March 9, 1925), DARO 143/1/30/11.
[170] KOP Dowództwo 4 Baonu (Dederkały). "Miesięczny Komunikat Informacyjny Nr. 1 za czas od 1 do 28 lutego 1925" (February 28, 1925), DARO 33/4/15/145.

instead to local conditions, familial circumstances, or the fact that soldiers feared punishment for an offense committed while on duty. On the territory of the first brigade in 1928, for example, there were eighteen instances of desertion by KOP soldiers.[171] Some, including Private Franciszek Cieślik, had relatives on the other side and escaped across the border to join them.[172] Another soldier, Private Paweł Kicuła, deserted because he feared being punished for stealing a watch, while Mikołaj Stolarz fled over the border after sleeping at his border post.[173]

* * *

The early to mid-1920s witnessed a security crisis in Volhynia. Bandits and agitators—whether communists, Ukrainian nationalists, or local "criminals"—threatened the new province's stability. In addition to fighting such threats with military and policing efforts, the Polish state attempted to win over local people and convince them that their interests were best served by obeying the laws of the land and resisting agitation. While the arrival of KOP improved the situation, anti-state agitation persisted throughout the unruly borderland of Volhynia during the interwar years.

This chapter has attempted to interpret the ways in which Polish state officials and local commentators made sense of the situation as it unfolded on the ground. While the task of integrating and controlling peripheral borderland regions is one shared by all modernizing states, issues of borderland security in multiethnic Volhynia were intrinsically connected to the national identities of local populations. Yet a close reading of the reports filed by state police and KOP border guards implies that, while local Ukrainians and Jews were seen as hostile towards the Polish state, their attitudes were frequently attributed to local conditions and relationships. Indeed, similar

[171] "Sumaryczne zestawienie wypadków zaszłych na terenie 1-szej Brygady K.O.P. za rok 1928," ASGwS 541/102 [no page numbers in file].
[172] Zestawienie wypadków zaszłych na terenie 1-szej Brygady K.O.P. za czas od dn.1.X do dn. 31.XII 28 r.," ASGwS 541/102.
[173] For Stolarz: Ibid. For Kicuła: "Zestawienie wypadków zaszłych na terenie 1-szej Brygady K.O.P. za czas od 1.VII do 30.IX 1928 r.," ASGwS 541/102.

conclusions were also drawn in reference to the native Polish-speaking populations; they too appeared to prioritize their own immediate concerns, engaging in smuggling and other criminal activities at the border to the detriment of the state. Moreover, even the Polishness of incoming personnel was thrown into doubt. While propaganda presented settlers and border guards as "civilizing" agents, these men were themselves not immune from the demoralizing influences of local people, the subversive nature of the Polish-Soviet border, and the harsh physical conditions that prevailed in the East.

CHAPTER THREE:
Jewish Space, Polish Space: Transforming Volhynia's Towns

Interwar Volhynia was a rural province in a predominantly rural country, a land of fertile plains, rolling hills, and marshlands where the majority of people made ends meet by working the land or raising cattle. Those who dwelled in the towns made up a relatively small percentage of the province's population.[1] In 1930, only 10% to 15% of people lived in the towns, compared with a countrywide average of 25% to 30% and a figure of 40% to 50% in Warsaw province.[2] The towns that did exist were in a rather sorry state. Years of neglect by the Russian imperial authorities had left their mark on urban landscapes: train lines bypassed many towns, cutting them off from potential resources and markets; the urban population had drastically declined; and town facilities had fallen into a state of disrepair. Adding insult to injury, the First World War had turned Volhynia into a battleground, reducing many of its urban centers to rubble. Towns like Ostróg and Krzemieniec, whose names had once been synonymous with Polish culture, were shadows of their former selves.

Despite the fact that so few Volhynians actually lived in the towns, urban issues became a point of great debate among the province's journalists, intelligentsia, and local officials during the interwar years. Like their counterparts across Europe, Polish elites worried about a plethora of problems associated with urban life, including low levels of sanitation, bad urban governance, the mores of impoverished townsfolk, and the lack of amenities—such as hospitals, schools, and paved roads—that served as indicators of "civilization."[3] Concerns surrounding the neglected state of Volhynia's towns constantly intersected with pressing social, economic, political, and ethno-national issues. Volhynia's towns were a far cry from Paris, London, or Berlin, as local elites were all too well aware, and urban spaces appeared to exhibit symptoms of

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[1] The interwar Poland countryside consisted of small peasant properties and larger estates that were gradually broken up as a consequence of agrarian reform. *League of Nations European Conference on Rural Life. National Monographs drawn up by Governments. Poland*, No. 29 (Geneva, 1940), 5.
[2] *Rzeczpospolita Polska Atlas Statystyczny* (Warsaw: Główny Urząd Statytyczny Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 1930), Table 1 [no page numbers].
[3] For an overview of European urban history between 1890 and the 1930s, see Helen Meller, *European Cities, 1890-1930s: History, Culture, and the Built Environment* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2001).

wider ailments whose origins and effects stretched far beyond the towns themselves. Debates about towns were simultaneously debates about the failings of Warsaw's eastern policies, poor local governance, and the "backwardness" of townspeople.

Yet towns also gave cause for hope. In this demographically non-Polish borderland, might towns not serve as Polish centers of culture, radiating out to the surrounding villages? Discussions of urban environments could be used to hark back to pre-partition Polish rule and to prove the benefits of contemporary Polish statehood. More importantly perhaps, discussions about towns were inseparably linked to the minority status of Poles within Volhynia's urban spaces. After all, just as Poles constituted a minority in the countryside (outnumbered by their Orthodox Ukrainian-speaking counterparts), the largest single demographic group in the towns was Jewish. Hopes of transforming towns into modern Polish spaces were therefore inextricably intertwined with questions about the present and future role of Volhynia's Jews.

The issue of urban development in Volhynia has been largely neglected in both the English-language and Polish historiography, perhaps partly as a consequence of the overwhelmingly rural character of the province. The work of Włodzimierz Mędrzecki is a notable exception, although he presents urban modernization as evidence of the success of local Polish elites.[4] More importantly, while towns have provided the backdrop for historical events, studies of ethnic relations in Volhynia have failed to take account of the importance of urban spaces, both in terms of what it meant to create a Polish town and the ways in which such ideas took shape within the physical places themselves. While some recent studies have considered the relationships between urban areas and nationalizing projects in the Polish lands, the backwater towns of Volhynia have remained largely unexplored.[5]

In this chapter, I seek to redress this imbalance. My aim is not to tell the comprehensive story of all aspects of Volhynia's towns during the interwar period.

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[4] Mędrzecki, "Przemiany cywilizacyjne," 107-113. On the interwar towns of the eastern borderlands, see also Andrzej Ziemilski, "Miasto Kresowe Polski Międzywojennej: Mit i Rzeczywistość," *Odra* 4 (1983): 38-43.

[5] Frank, *Oil Empire*. Frank's work on the oil industry in Galicia demonstrates how a region that we think of as largely rural was profoundly influenced by industrialization and urbanization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Instead, I focus on elite attempts to modernize "backward" urban spaces and on the perceived links between modernization and Polishness. The first part of the chapter explores the anxieties expressed by local elites—including administrators, health professionals, and journalists—about the unpaved streets, wooden houses, and muddy backyards that were characteristic of Volhynia's towns in the 1920s. This is followed by an investigation into how ideas about the role of the towns were framed. Who was to blame for the poor conditions in Volhynia's urban spaces? What might a Polish town look like? How were urban-dwelling Jews perceived? A close reading of documents related to the administrative expansion of towns into the surrounding areas allows us to consider how urban modernization was used to reduce "Jewish" influence. The concluding section reflects on the more optimistic tone of the 1930s, while showing how urban elites still planned to "de-Jewify" and "de-Russify" urban spaces. Ominously, even liberal state officials and local elites who opposed the rabid anti-Semitism of the Polish right believed that the "Jewish" character of the towns needed to be reduced.

"Saturated with the Fumes of Depravity": Encountering Volhynia's Towns

Leafing through the pages of the province's two major weekly newspapers, one is struck by the amount of column space that was dedicated to urban woes in the 1920s. Journals on public health and technological modernization also featured articles about the problems facing urban inhabitants, while municipal councils discussed what could be done to improve their towns, recording the debates in their minutes. Such sources provide the historian with invaluable insights into what contemporaries considered to be the major problems of Volhynia's towns.

One image that pervades many of the documents is mud, a substance that caused particular problems in the spring and autumn when the seasonal rains fell on Volhynia. Significant sections of land within the borders of many Volhynian towns were undrained marshes, prompting one engineer to comment that "the towns of

Volhynia are sinking into the mud."[6] In 1924, it was reported that certain areas of Łuck—the provincial capital and Volhynia's second largest town—remained impassable for most of the year.[7] Indeed, the muddy streets of Łuck became a favorite subject for journalists writing in local newspapers. One article from October 1924 stated that the mud on Union of Lublin Street created serious problems for those traveling by horse, car, or on foot. In the autumn, the author informed his readers, a pedestrian "must equip himself with galoshes up to his knees in order to get to his apartment."[8] Although partly a consequence of the policies of pre-war Russian administrators, who had neglected to pave the roads, the ubiquitous mud was caused by the physical location of many Volhynian towns, which had sprung up around the numerous rivers flowing through the province towards the Pripet Marshes in the north. In Łuck, which lay on the River Styr, technicians working on the problem referred to the "urban meadows" that covered around 100 hectares of the town's land and could not be easily built upon, while other areas were lower than the river level and were thus subject to seasonal flooding.[9] The town of Dubno, which was picturesquely situated on the banks of the River Ikwa, suffered from a similar affliction. A map of the town and the surrounding area from the early 1930s indicated "undeveloped areas and meadows" that needed to be drained before they could be built upon.[10]

The physical limitations on the areas suitable for urban development resulted in overcrowded town centers and erratic expansion into the hinterland, both of which created headaches for town councils and administrators. In 1925, a commission established in Równe—Volhynia's largest town—to deal with the future direction of urban development reported that the most important area for expansion lay to the south of the current town center. Unfortunately, however, the marshland in this region

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[6] Inż. P. Baranowski, "Budownictwo miejskie w Województwie Wołyńskim w okresie 1923-1924 roku," *Wołyńskie Wiadomości Techniczne* 1, no. 1 (March 20, 1925): 11.
[7] Letter from the town authorities (*Magistrat*) in Łuck to the provincial governor (March 6, 1924), AAN MSW (Part I) 299 [no page numbers in file].
[8] "Z Całego Wołynia," *Przegląd Wołyński*, October 1, 1924, 3.
[9] "Sprawozdanie techniczne do projektu rurociągu betonowego, służącego dla odprowadzenia wód opadowych z terenu łąk miejskich do stacji przepompowań przy ul. Macznej w Łucku (1935)," AAN MSW (Part I) 4106.
[10] "Dubno, miasto powiatowe. Projekt rozszerzenia granic administracyjnych," AAN MSW (Part I) 301/46.

needed to be drained before it could be built upon. "In the spring there are floods from the River Ujście [sic]," the report stated, "[…] It is necessary to carry out land drainage work here with the goal of fencing it off from floods, draining it, and establishing a town park, as well as valuable building plots."[11]

Figure 6: Postcard entitled "A 'Scenic' Corner of Łuck" (1930). Source: CBN (Eastern Borderlands Collection). Poczt. 16306.

Reports on Volhynian towns indicated how Polish elites created and utilized a list of criteria about what modern urban spaces should offer. In 1927, for example, the provincial health inspector complained that Volhynia's towns did not provide adequate medical facilities for their inhabitants, and instead forced residents to visit hospitals run by the county authorities. For the inhabitants of Dubno, the nearest hospital was situated one kilometer outside of the town, while Równe had neither its own hospital nor an outpatient clinic, although the town did subsidize a Jewish hospital and outpatients clinic, and a gynecological hospital run by the Red Cross. The

[11] "Protokół komisji wyłonionej w myśl uchwały Magistratu z dnia 15 września 1925," DARO 31/1/283/567od.

Christian population of Równe, it was reported, traveled two kilometers north of the town to a hospital in Tiutkowicze run by county, rather than urban, authorities.[12] Most towns lacked public recreational spaces, municipal squares, and parks, and where such facilities did exist, they were small and run-down.[13] This sense of urban deficiency was also apparent in a 1925 report produced for the Congress of Town Representatives in Warsaw. As Równe's representative at the congress, Celestyn Galasiewicz enumerated the town's inadequacies. Równe, he declared, lacked squares and public places, a town park, an adequate number of school buildings, a market hall, a slaughterhouse, a water-supply system and sewer network, paved streets, a hospital, an independently-owned building to house the town authorities, and the means to drain the marshland in the town center.[14]

Due to the destruction caused by the First World War and the subsequent Polish-Bolshevik conflict, towns also failed to provide adequate housing for their inhabitants. The so-called *głód mieszkaniowy* (literally "housing hunger") was a particular problem in Równe, where the population rose dramatically from 30,000 in 1921 to 60,000 by the middle of the decade. In Łuck, there was only one room in the town for every three and a half people in 1925.[15] Kowel, a major railroad hub, was also badly affected by the lack of housing, prompting the president of the Directorate for the State Railroads to inform bureaucrats who worked for the Volhynian provincial authorities that two hundred railroad employees were living in railroad cars in "the most primitive conditions."[16] Those buildings that did exist were usually one-level constructions made of low-quality materials.[17] Although brick buildings were more common in towns than they were in the countryside, most urban buildings were still made of wood, which had historically been cheaper and more readily available, but

[12] "Sprawozdanie Dr. W. Hryszkiewicza, Inspektora Państwowej Służby Zdrowia, z inspekcji władz administracyjnych sanitarnych Województwa Wołyńskiego w dn. 22-26 lutego 1927r.," AAN MOS 825/5-17.
[13] Mędrzecki, "Przemiany cywilizacyjne," 108.
[14] "Sprawa Zjazdu Przedstawicieli Miast w Warszawie w marcu 1925r.," DARO, 31/1/283/715-716od.
[15] Mędrzecki, *Inteligencja polska*, 56.
[16] "Protokół spisany z przebiegu pierwszego perjodycznego zebrania Naczelników władz II-instacji na obszarze Województwa Wołyńskiego, odbytego w Wołyńskim Urzędzie Wojewódzkim w dniu 27 kwietnia 1925 roku," AAN MSW (Part I) 69/10.
[17] Mędrzecki, "Przemiany cywilizacyjne," 107.

which inevitably contributed to the problem of urban fires.[18] Many of the stores in central areas of the towns were little more than kiosks that were criticized for their lack of hygiene and the damage they did to urban aesthetics.

The physical problems of overcrowded dwellings and muddy streets, not to mention the lack of local hospitals, created a whole world of unpleasant sights and smells. In 1923, the director of Volhynia's Provincial Health Department (*Wojewódzki Urząd Zdrowia*) reported on the unhealthy conditions he found in the province's towns. According to his observations, the backyards of houses were cramped and poorly-maintained, while market squares were only swept and cleaned occasionally and were subject to problems in spring and autumn (when they were impassable due to the mud) and in summer (when they produced huge amounts of dust).[19] Because none of Volhynia's towns had purpose-built water supply systems, the populations accessed water at the nearest well. There were also no sewer systems in the towns (apart from Ostróg), a situation that resulted in periodic outbreaks of infectious diseases. Only a handful of towns had public toilets: there was one each in Kowel, Turzysk, and Mielnica; Włodzimierz boasted two.[20]

Równe was singled out for particular criticism. A 1922 article in the public health journal *Health* (*Zdrowie*) about the poor state of hygiene in the eastern borderlands mentioned only Równe by name, stating that its sanitation system dated from the "middle ages."[21] Some five years later, the author of a report on sanitation in Volhynia gave details about the problems that resulted from Równe's lack of public conveniences:

> The sanitary state of the town is very bad. The town of Równe, numbering about 70,000 inhabitants, was built freely, without any planning whatsoever. The result of this is a basic lack of toilets because there is nowhere to put them.

[18] In Volhynia, only 10-15% of buildings in the towns were made of stone. By way of a comparison, in the northwestern provinces of Poznań and Pomorze between 80 and 100% of buildings were made of stone. See *Rzeczpospolita Polska Atlas Statystyczny* (Warsaw: Główny Urząd Statytyczny Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 1930), Table 4 [no page numbers].
[19] Dr. Szaniawski, "Sprawozdanie roczne ze stanu zdrowia publicznego Wojew. Wołyńskiego za rok 1923," *Zdrowie* 40, no. 1 (January 1925): 12.
[20] Ibid., 13.
[21] *Zdrowie* 37, no. 4 (April 1922): 90.

> […] There are absolutely no public toilets. The inhabitants satisfy their natural needs as and when they can.[22]

Unsurprisingly, such conditions created a rather unpleasant smell. The town's central market square "was saturated with the fumes of depravity," despite the freezing February temperatures, prompting the author to wonder what it would have been like on a "sweltering day."[23] A report published the following year, which was also based on first-hand observations, listed the main problems Równe faced in regard to its public health. They included the chaotic way in which the town had been built, the absence of water supply and sewer systems, the inadequate number of public wells, the complete lack of public toilets, and the dirty conditions in which food was sold at the market square.[24] The marshy land upon which Równe had been built was an ongoing source of concern, creating unsanitary conditions that were thought to endanger the health of the townsfolk.[25] The town's administrative custody jail was also singled out for criticism in a 1925 memorandum by Celestyn Galasiewicz. There was, Galasiewicz wrote, a "lack of necessary toilets, unpaved courtyards, a lack of underclothes, since it often happens that people only change their underclothes every couple of months, a lack of places to wash underclothes, a lack of adequately-equipped first aid kits, thousands of flies in summer, and vermin the whole year round."[26]

While Równe was depicted in a particularly bad light, other towns were criticized too. In 1927, the regional health inspector reported that in the town of Krzemieniec "some old building complexes completely lack toilets, trash cans, and holes for swill, and even lack the space for such installations; the plots of land for buildings are so small that the inhabitants make use of every bit of land for residential

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[22] "Sprawozdanie Dr. W. Hryszkiewicza, Inspektora Państwowej Służby Zdrowia, z inspekcji władz administracyjnych sanitarnych Województwa Wołyńskiego w dnia 22-26 lutego 1927," AAN MOS 825/12.
[23] Ibid., 12.
[24] J. Rudolf, "Stosunki sanitarne w mieście Równem Woj. Wołyńskiego," *Zdrowie* 43, no. 1 (January 1928): 14.
[25] "Protokół komisji wyłonionej w myśl uchwały Magistratu z dnia 15 września 1925," DARO 31/1/283/567od.
[26] "Przypomnienie dla Wydziału Prezydialnego w sprawie stosunków w areszcie administracyjnym miasta Równego," DARO 31/1/283/707.

space without toilet installations."[27] The following year, Łuck still had no public toilets, and lacked water for drinking, cooking, and washing the streets, the latter problem leading townspeople to sweep the streets instead, which in turn caused an unpleasant increase in dust.[28] In sum, Volhynia's towns were muddy, dusty, unclean places, defined by both their horrible sanitary conditions and their lack of modern urban facilities.

Figure 7: Postcard of Third of May Street, Równe (1928). Source: CBN (Eastern Borderlands Collection). Poczt. 11524.

The question facing local elites was how such problems might be rectified. Some saw the answer in technological innovation, with the Volhynian Society of Technicians (*Wołyńskie Stowarzyszenie Techników*) creating its own journal to propose specific plans for building sewer systems, waterworks, and electricity plants.[29] The group also sent a memorandum to all town authorities and regional assemblies in

[27] Letter from Volhynian Provincial Office to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Department V: Health Service) (Łuck, May 11, 1927), AAN MOS 825/24.
[28] "Protokół zebrania naczelników władz I-instancji, odbytego dnia 14.II.1928r. w Łucku," AAN MSW (Part I) 87/60.
[29] The first issue of the journal *Wołyńskie Wiadomości Techniczne* (Volhynian Technical News) was published in Łuck on March 20, 1925.

Volhynia, arguing that "the reconstruction of the region after the destruction of war constitutes one of the most important tasks of community life in the *kresy*."[30] But others saw urban problems as part of a larger matrix of political concerns, and believed that the poor state of the towns was a manifestation of both inadequate central government policies towards the eastern borderlands and the incompetence of local authorities.

The *Volhynian Review* was particularly scathing about Warsaw's inconsistent and negligent policies in the early to mid-1920s, during which time Poland was ruled by a series of short-lived governments and dogged by economic problems. According to articles that appeared in the newspaper, one of the major problems facing Volhynia's towns was their unclear legal basis, since urban administrative structures here, like those in other areas of the eastern borderlands, were based on a supposedly temporary law from 1919. An article published in February 1926 argued that the law was "unconstitutional" because it endowed the towns in the eastern borderlands with an "exceptional" status and did not bring them into line with their counterparts in other areas of Poland. In addition, the three so-called "unincorporated" towns of Łuck, Równe, and Kowel came under the direct control of the provincial governor, which, according to the *Volhynian Review*, meant that they were subject to his virtual "dictatorship."[31] The central authorities in Warsaw had also not set formal, legally-recognized administrative boundaries for any of Volhynia's towns, meaning that local municipal authorities did not know precisely where their jurisdiction ended and where that of the rural administrative units began. In Równe, such problems had profound effects upon urban development. In 1925, the town authorities could not drain the muddy region around the Lubomirski castle since it was not legally included within the boundaries of the town.[32] Similarly, the murky legal situation in the *kresy*, which

[30] "Odezwa do wszystkich Magistratów i Sejmików Województwa Wołyńskiego," DARO 239/2/51/207.
[31] "Konieczne uzupełnienie tymczasowej ustawy miejskiej w województwach wschodnich," *Przegląd Wołyński*, February 20, 1926, 7.
[32] Letter to the Land Commissioner in Równe (January 20, 1925), DARO 31/1/283/688.

persisted into the mid-1920s, meant that older Russian building laws were still being applied.[33]

While local journalists apportioned blame to politicians in Warsaw, they also criticized incompetent municipal authorities that failed to implement basic legislation. In Łuck, for example, sanitation decrees were published and displayed everywhere, but their implementation was virtually non-existent. As one article in the *Volhynian Review* exclaimed,

> Probably no other town in the eastern borderlands presents such an awful unsanitary state as does Łuck—the capital of the province. […] Don't all these people [connected with the sanitary commission] and bureaucrats see the link between the cleaning of the town and the health of its inhabitants? Are they completely helpless, and can they not bring in a few reforms so that every owner of property must daily maintain the cleanliness of the pavements and roads in his possession, and so that the police oblige people to implement those reforms?[34]

A provincial health inspection report also indicated that Równe's town authorities had not been implementing statewide sanitary legislation in a timely fashion. "Decree Number 42" on the maintenance of basic hygiene, which was based on legislation created in 1921, was only published and displayed in Równe in 1926, leading provincial health professionals to accuse the town authorities of incompetence.[35] To make matters worse, the authorities failed to place posters advertising the regulations where Równe's inhabitants could actually see them.[36]

According to the newspapers, such failings were symptomatic of rotten political governance, with towns allegedly being run as the personal fiefdoms of local power-holders, rather than in the public interest. A 1925 article in the *Volhynian Review* argued that many towns were being run without adequate exterior supervision.

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[33] "Sprawa Zjazdu Przedstawicieli Miast w Warszawie w marcu 1925r.," DARO 31/1/283/715od.
[34] "O stan sanitarny w Łucku," *Przegląd Wołyński*, February 4, 1925, 2-3.
[35] "Ogłoszenie Nr. 42" (Magistrat m. Równego, April 30, 1926), AAN MOS 828/4-4a. The decree stated that, among other things, streets should be clean, toilets should be disinfected, and food sellers, restaurant owners, and hoteliers should maintain hygienic conditions. In addition, the owners of hotels, as well as doctors and medical staff, were to report cases of infectious diseases discovered on their property within six and twelve hours respectively.
[36] Rudolf, "Stosunki sanitarne w mieście Równem," 16.

According to the author, the mayors governed the towns as they pleased, leaving the inhabitants "wedded to the grace—or lack thereof—of the mayor, who does not take public opinion into account, but rather applies his own aspirations or ambitions, governing the urban economy as he would his own personal estate."[37] In 1927, an article in the same newspaper accused the town authorities in Volhynia, and in the eastern borderlands more generally, of incompetently applying central legislation on wooden buildings, thus putting urban inhabitants in danger from an increased risk of fire. Town authorities, it was argued, required more supervision in order to reduce the instances in which they misinterpreted central legislation.[38]

The newspaper articles indicated, however, that the incompetence of central and local government was only half the problem. Even had urban inhabitants been properly informed about the required sanitary standards, professionals in the provincial health department seriously doubted whether they would have obeyed them. Indeed, many of the concerns about urban spaces were intertwined with anxieties about the behavior of local populations who, it was assumed, would continue with their established patterns of life rather than abide by new sanitary recommendations. Just as the inhabitants of Volhynia's borderland villages were seen as ignorant and unruly in the face of the law, so urban-dwelling populations were constantly described as dirty and uncivilized. According to a report on the general conditions in Volhynia's towns in 1923, the "uncultured people" simply did not maintain basic hygiene in the private toilets that existed in the backyards of their houses, making use instead of the space around the toilets, on the fences and the walls.[39] Similarly, in response to the recommendations that kiosks on Równe's market square be torn down, town authorities highlighted the potential problems with executing such a scheme, and argued that local people would continue to use the old market square because their priority was stocking up on cheap provisions.[40] According to the 1926 Ostróg sanitary commission, townsfolk were not overly fussy about where they bought their food, and

[37] P.W., "O gospodarkę miast," *Przegląd Wołyński*, February 25, 1925, 1.
[38] K. Waligórski, "O naprawę budownictwa w miastach kresów wschodnich," *Przegląd Wołyński*, February 13, 1927, 2-3.
[39] Szaniawski, "Sprawozdanie roczne ze stanu zdrowia publicznego," 13.
[40] "Sprawozdanie Dr. W. Hryszkiewicza," AAN MOS 825/13.

a range of offenses were committed by vendors who sold meat and fish in wooden kiosks along the streets.[41] Such observations were indicative of a more general elite attitude towards local people. Public health officials who criticized the poor condition in which private homes and places of work were kept argued that the situation resulted from both overpopulation and "the ignorance of the inhabitants."[42] Similarly, Volhynian engineers wrote about cultural backwardness, stating that "the low cultural level of the majority of inhabitants of our region" helped to explain both poor quality buildings and low levels of hygiene.[43] Urban elites saw their task as the battle against these low cultural standards.

Ethnicizing Volhynia's Towns

On one level, attempts to develop Volhynia's urban spaces—like the imposition of law and order explored in Chapter 2—could be seen as an inevitable part of an internal civilizing mission that played out across the European continent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[44] Yet such an interpretation can only take us so far. In a reversal of today's situation, interwar Eastern European cities, rather than their Western European counterparts, formed centers of multiethnic and multi-religious life. Volhynia's towns were ethnically heterogeneous spaces, where people spoke Polish, Yiddish, Russian, and Ukrainian, and (to a lesser extent) Czech and German. They featured synagogues, as well as Orthodox and Catholic churches, while the larger towns, particularly Łuck and Równe, were home to a plethora of national and religious societies, clubs, cultural establishments, and schools—both public and private—that provided instruction in a variety of languages. Much of the official rhetoric associated with the towns emphasized this diversity. Town council meetings featured statements read out on behalf of the Jewish and Orthodox communities, while in preparation for the visit of President Ignacy Mościcki in 1929, the town council in Równe issued a

[41] Minutes of the Sanitary Commission in Ostróg, DARO 239/4/30/7-14.
[42] Szaniawski, "Sprawozdanie roczne ze stanu zdrowia publicznego," 12.
[43] Baranowski, "Budownictwo miejskie w Województwie Wołyńskim," 9.
[44] See, for example, Richard J. Evans, *Death in Hamburg: Society and Politics in the Cholera Years, 1830-1910* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), particularly Chapter 2.

proclamation that "our heart—regardless of nationality or religion—beats with one rhythm for the good and strength of the fatherland."[45]

In spite of this official rhetoric, some Polish commentators on Volhynia's towns seemed unable to disentangle their observations on poor urban conditions from their perceptions of the Jews, who constituted the largest single population in Volhynia's towns. It was estimated that of the 30,000 inhabitants of Łuck in 1929, 21,500 were Jewish, while 6,000 were Poles, 2,000 were Russians, and around 500 were of other nationalities.[46] Figures from the early 1920s indicated that around 80% of the population of Równe was Jewish.[47] The Jewish inhabitants of these towns by no means formed a homogenous community; they were economically, socially, and religiously diverse, from the impoverished Jews who lived in the poorest districts of the towns to the more affluent Jews who were involved in trade, industry, and philanthropy.[48] Jews also ran numerous community organizations—some religious, some secular—including branches of the statewide Society for Protecting the Health of the Jewish Population.

While the Jewish community was diverse, some Polish observers blamed the Jews as a group for the poor material conditions and low levels of sanitation in the towns as a whole. In the first comprehensive Polish-language guidebook to Volhynia, written by the well-known geographer Mieczysław Orłowicz, the Jewish inhabitants of Dubno were causally linked to the bad state of the town. "From afar the town looks beautiful," Orłowicz wrote, "on a hill surrounded by the marshes of the [River] Ikwa, on which the castle walls and the towers of the churches dominate. Inside, however, the town is inhabited by Jews, showing itself to be less attractive."[49] In the border

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[45] "Protokół z odbytego w dniu 18 czerwca 1929 roku nadzwyczajnego posiedzenia Rady Miejskiej w Równem," DARO 31/1/968/254.
[46] Orłowicz, *Ilustrowany Przewodnik*, 102.
[47] Szaniawski, "Sprawozdanie roczne ze stanu zdrowia publicznego," 9.
[48] For more on the diversity of interwar Jewish life in Volhynia, see Timothy Snyder, "The Life and Death of Western Volhynian Jewry," in *The Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization,* eds. Ray Brandon and Wendy Lowe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 79-84. Many of the Holocaust testimonies that were collected by the Shoah Visual History Archive at the University of Southern California deal with Jewish life in Volhynia's towns. See the online archive: http://college.usc.edu/vhi/. On the poor Jewish area of Łuck, see Józewski's 1928 report to the health department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, AAN MOS 825/34-5.
[49] Orłowicz, *Ilustrowany Przewodnik*, 283.

town of Korzec, Jews were blamed for the deterioration of the town's aesthetics during the nineteenth century, when the once beautiful market square had been "completely deformed" by the construction of "ugly and unstylish Jewish houses, which removed the character of the market square and transformed it into a dirty lane."[50] The unsanitary nature of the urban environment was also linked primarily to the behavior of the Jews. An official report on sanitary conditions from 1923 began by discussing the percentage of Jews in urban settlements. Indeed, in the initial section on the demographics of Volhynia's towns, the population of each town was given, followed by the percentage that was Jewish. In case the reader was in any doubt, the author of the report stated why he had included this information:

> The data about the Jewish population in urban settlements is referred to because among the Jews—despite the enormous amount of capital that a certain part of them possess—there is a significant portion of poor people, even outright paupers, living from day to day, who additionally have a lack of intellect, which together with certain habits and characteristics of the Jews negatively influence the overall health of urban settlements.[51]

For the report's author, unsanitary urban conditions could be largely blamed on the "uncultured" nature of the Jewish population.[52]

For those on the National Democratic right, urban problems and the "Jewishness" of the towns were inextricably entangled. Poles in Volhynia were depicted as the victims of pernicious Jewish influence, which was particularly "dangerous" in the eastern borderlands due to both the number of Jews who lived there and their potential for influencing the apparently vulnerable borderland people. The Jews, many of whom spoke Russian, were also seen as agents of the former imperial authorities, stoking fears that the Russians and Jews were allies in a wider

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[50] Ibid., 246-7.
[51] Szaniawski, "Sprawozdanie roczne ze stanu zdrowia publicznego," 10.
[52] The ethnicization of ideas about dirt and hygiene should be considered in a comparative framework. For another example of the alleged links between dirt and Jews, see Cathleen Giustino, *Tearing Down Prague's Jewish Town: Ghetto Clearance and the Legacy of Middle-Class Ethnic Politics around 1900* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2003), particularly 156-162. For an example of debates about cities and ethnic stereotypes in the interwar period, see Anat Helman, "Cleanliness and squalor in inter-war Tel-Aviv," *Urban History* 31, no. 1 (2004): 72-99.

plot to dominate the towns. In a 1924 publication, Joachim Bartoszewicz, the National Democrat senator who had represented Poland at the Paris Peace Conference, argued that towns in the *kresy* were "more Jewified [*bardziej zażydzone*] than [towns and cities] in other parts of Poland, and more Jewified in the postwar reborn Poland than they were in the pre-war period under Russian rule."[53] Similar fears about Jewish influence in Poland's eastern borderlands were expressed by the National Democrat Jędrzej Giertych, who argued that large towns should be centers of Polish civilization, and that Jews should either be "eliminated" from the region as a whole or have their spiritual "influence" over Christians reduced.[54]

Such ideas were also espoused in articles published by the National Democratic Volhynian press. A 1926 article from *Volhynia Life* written by Celestyn Galasiewicz (who had represented Równe at the Congress of Town Representatives a year earlier) stressed the importance of "constructing and strengthening a Polish bourgeoisie," following Russian attempts at de-Polonization.[55] To further his argument, Galasiewicz cited statistics indicating the small percentage of Roman Catholics in the various towns: Włodzimierz (25.3%), Kowel (25%), and Łuck (21.6%) had the largest proportions; Równe (8.3%), Berezne (2%), and Luboml (2%) had the smallest.[56] Demands for a distinctly "Polish" urban community—one that was numerically dominant, prosperous, and nationally-conscious—reflected longer-term anxieties about political and social apathy among urban Poles, economic competition between Poles and Jews, and the idea that remnants of foreign rule persisted.

One way in which Poles could have a positive influence on Volhynia's urban centers was through the arrival of state officials from other parts of Poland. In Łuck, where bureaucrats were negatively affected by the shortage of housing, work on the construction of a purpose-built colony commenced in August 1924. Sketches and plans of the new colony indicated what architects believed a Polish town would look like, and depicted a leafy suburb, made up of neat, uniform houses and regular, tree-

[53] Joachim Bartoszewicz, *Znaczenie Polityczne Kresów Wschodnich dla Polski* (Warsaw: A. Michalski, 1924), 12.
[54] Jędrzej Giertych, *O Program Polityki Kresowej* (Warsaw: Patria, 1932), 121.
[55] Celestyn Galasiewicz, "Miasta na Wołyniu," *Życie Wołynia,* June 28, 1925, 16.
[56] Ibid., 17.

lined streets, which would be set apart from the main town.[57] Unlike the center of Łuck, the colony would feature "buildings for general use, such as a canteen for the bureaucrats, a school, a chapel, [and] a water tower" as well as "a sewer system, electric lights, a water supply system, and modern facilities."[58] In short, this new area would offer the trappings of modern civilization that the old town center lacked.

The following year, however, an article in the *Volhynian Review* expressed disappointment at the building work that had been completed so far. Although the original proposals had been attractive, what was materializing was a "noisy, stifling, and cramped little village where more than a hundred families will be packed together."[59] Plans to provide Polish bureaucrats and their families with an adequate garden in which they could enjoy the fresh air bore little resemblance to the reality on the ground. "Each have apportioned to them a separate garden, but it is so miniature that it is probably only imagined in Japan. It does not give any freedom, fresh air, or light," the article claimed.[60] More worrying, perhaps, was the physical distance between the colony and the town itself, which meant that the colony's inhabitants—so well-disposed towards conducting a Polish cultural mission in the town—were in the wrong location. Rather than being situated in the town center—described as "the living environment where the Polish element has to fulfill an honorable cultural mission of national urban revival"—Polish bureaucrats were throwing themselves "into a separate closed Polish ghetto [sic] made up only of bureaucrats."[61] Such anxieties about the separate development of a Polish colony, with little or no influence on the town of Łuck itself, indicated deeper concerns about both incoming and local Polish-speaking populations.

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[57] For general plans of state bureaucrat colonies in the eastern borderlands, see Wiktor Mondalski, *Budownictwo Powojenne na Polesiu i w województwach wschodnich: Zeszyt I* (Brześć nad Bugiem: Nakładem Wydawnictwa "Kresów Ilustrowanych," 1925); for Łuck colony, see Mondalski, 24-25.
[58] "Z odbudowy Kresów: Kolonja urzędnicze [sic] w Łucku," *Przegląd Lubelsko-Kresowy*, May 20, 1925, 17.
[59] "Kolonje Urzędnicze w Łucku," *Przegląd Wołyński*, April 11, 1925, 3.
[60] Ibid., 3.
[61] Ibid., 3.

New Administration, New Towns

From May 1926 onwards—and particularly after 1928—the state-level administration in Volhynia attempted to transform the towns as part of a more general effort to remake the province and its people. In May 1926, Józef Piłsudski carried out a coup d'etat in Warsaw and, once in power, went about installing provincial governors who would support his efforts to cleanse Polish politics of corruption. The post-1926 government also began the processes of legal and political standardization, and pursued closer regulation of local government.[62] In Volhynia, the right-wing National Democrat governor Aleksander Dębski was replaced by Władysław Mech, who in turn made way for Henryk Józewski in July 1928. In addition to promoting rural Ukrainian and Polish rapprochement, a theme that will be explored in the next chapter, the new Volhynian administration argued that bringing about a general increase in the standard of living in urban areas was an important way of ensuring that Volhynia became an integral part of the Polish state. As such, Józewski, along with the county heads (*starostowie*) he appointed, prioritized public investment in urban development, and increased state administrative supervision over municipal government through provincial and county-level officials. Importantly, many of the men he brought in from other parts of Poland "treated their stay in Volhynia, not as exile, but as a political, civilizational, and cultural mission."[63]

In his reports and during provincial meetings in the late 1920s, Józewski argued that Volhynia's towns needed to be modernized, and he encouraged representatives of the Polish state to provide role models for local people.[64] In October 1928, Józewski sent a letter to all the heads of the counties, as well as the mayors of Łuck, Kowel, and Równe, urging administrative leaders to ensure that state sanitation standards were applied at a local level. "I especially request," he added, "that buildings occupied by state offices, local authority offices, schools, etc., are, without

[62] Hanna Kozińska-Witt, "The Union of Polish Cities in the Second Polish Republic, 1918-1939: Discourses of Local Government in a Divided Land," *Contemporary European History* 11, no. 4 (2002): 557.
[63] Mędrzecki, *Inteligencja polska*, 153-154.
[64] Ibid., 181.

exception, models of cleanliness for the local population."[65] In his annual report for 1929, he praised the fact that the province's towns had taken out loans to fund the construction of market halls and water supply systems, and he prioritized the issue of Volhynia's hospitals, declaring that medical facilities in the three largest towns were inadequate, and emphasizing the need for both a new hospital in Łuck and an expansion of the hospitals in Równe and Kowel.[66] Much of Józewski's criticism focused on the deficiencies in municipal government. While he stated that the urban authorities, some of which had only been brought to life in 1927, were improving their work, he also highlighted the discord between various groups caused by incompetence and personal disputes.[67] Józewski laid particular criticism at the door of the town councils, which, he claimed, were arrogating power for themselves in the interests of particular groups, rather than serving the interests of the town as a whole. Indeed, in 1929, Józewski dissolved several town councils in order to force elections "for the good of the towns."[68]

Józewski's county heads supported his position on urban development and suggested improvements that could be made to towns within their counties. In 1930, the head of Równe county, Stanisław-Robert Bogusławski, delivered a speech on "the role of Równe," in which he advocated the construction of a central bus station, a community center (*dom ludowy*), and a theater, and suggested sites around the town where land was cheap.[69] Józewski's policies also resonated with Jerzy Bonkowicz-Sittauer, the head of Łuck county between 1928 and 1933. In a 1928 meeting with other county heads, Bonkowicz-Sittauer complained about the poor state of sanitation on the streets of Łuck and the necessity of changing the configuration of the town

[65] Józewski's letter to the Heads of the Counties and the Mayors of Łuck, Kowel, and Równe (October 18, 1928), AAN MOS 825/52.
[66] "Sprawozdanie Wojewody Wołyńskiego o ogólnym stanie Województwa działalności administracji państowej w r. 1929-ym i ważniejszych zamierzeniach na przyszłość," AAN MSW (Part I) 69/10.
[67] "Sprawozdanie Wojewody Wołyńskiego o stanie ogólnym Województwa działalności adminstracji państwowych na jego obszarze w ciągu 1928 roku i o ważniejszych zamierzeniach na przyszłość," AAN MSW (Part I) 69/2.
[68] "Sprawozdanie Wojewody Wołyńskiego […] w r. 1929-ym," AAN MSW (Part I) 69/13.
[69] "Protokół zebrania kierowników Władz I-instancji w Równem odbytego w dniu 3 marca 1930 roku o godzinie 19-tej w Sali Starostwa," AAN MSW (Part I) 87/98.

itself, which was currently making the construction of public toilets impossible.[70] There was, he claimed at another meeting, "a lack of public toilets in Łuck, a lack of toilets for the public next to the buildings of the state authorities, a lack of water for drinking and cooking, [and] a lack of water for washing and cleaning the streets."[71] Like Józewski, Bonkowicz-Sittauer blamed the town authorities, which, he claimed, had a "very weak understanding about the sanitary needs [of the towns]."[72] During the late 1920s and early 1930s, he also wrote several newspaper and journal articles about urban development. In a 1928 article published in the *Volhynian Review*, he claimed that, despite all of its problems, Łuck was beginning to develop into a more European town.[73] In another piece, this time published in the pages of the *Volhynian Technical News* in 1930, Bonkowicz-Sittauer stressed the need for county-level supervision over town authorities and the professionalization of urban administrators. Improving urban administration, he argued, required reducing the influence of elected officials and creating management agents who would be distinguished by their "administrative talent, professional competence, and constant activity."[74] His article went on to list the areas that required improvement: plans of the towns needed to be drawn up, houses and public buildings had to be constructed, and transport networks needed to be developed, while industry, trade, the flow of credit, and schools also demanded attention. Here was the vision of a professionally run municipal government, through which the problems of the past would be resolved within a modernizing Polish state.

How did the Jews—the majority inhabitants of Volhynia's towns—fit into this vision? Certainly, Józewski and his county heads rejected the right-wing anti-Semitism of the National Democrats, and instead viewed Polishness as a civic identity in which people other than ethnic Poles could participate. As Timothy Snyder has argued, Józewski saw Polishness as an activity rather than an inherent state of being,

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[70] "Protokół Konferencji Starostów odbytej w Wołyńskim Urzędzie Wojewódzkim w dniach 19 i 20 października 1928 r.," AAN MSW (Part I) 129/13.
[71] "Protokół zebrania Naczelnika Władz I instancji, odbytego dnia 14/IX/1928 r. w Łucku," AAN MSW (Part I) 87/60.
[72] Ibid., 61.
[73] J.B.S. [Jerzy Bonkowicz-Sittauer], "Regulacja i Rozbudowa Łucka," *Przegląd Wołyński*, September 2, 1928, 4.
[74] Jerzy Bonkowicz-Sittauer, "Zagadnienia rozwoju miast kresowych," *Wołyńskie Wiadomości Techniczne* 6, no. 6 (June 25, 1930): 2.

categorizing National Democratic ideology as "a dark instinct of zoological hatred for anything that is not nationally Polish."[75] In a meeting with his county heads in October 1928, Józewski stressed the importance of including the province's Ukrainians and Jews in celebrations for the tenth anniversary of Polish independence by publishing manifestos in Ukrainian and Yiddish, as well as in Polish.[76]

Yet while Józewski and his local supporters did not espouse the radical anti-Semitism of their National Democrat foes, they did claim that Jewish town councilors were largely to blame for poor urban governance. In Volhynia, as across interwar Poland, Jews were largely excluded from positions in the state and municipal administration, although they were represented on the town councils voted in during the 1927 elections.[77] Playing on this administrative imbalance, articles in the *Volhynian Review* linked bad governance with Jewish councilors, and more enlightened rule with the town administration and municipal government (*samorząd miejski*), which was mainly composed of Polish-speaking Catholics. In 1928, the newspaper reported on a meeting of Łuck's town council, in which "all issues come from the point of view of the Jewish community."[78] According to the article, Poles constituted a minority (most of whom did not regularly attend meetings), the proceedings of the council were chaotic, and resolutions, including those on taxation, were passed without any sense of how they would be enforced.

One issue that apparently split the Polish and Jewish members of the council was a 1927 plan to rename a street after the Yiddish-language playwright I. L. Peretz. According to the report, the "poor Polish councilors" were left "looking through the encyclopedias to find out who Peretz is and how he served the field of writing."[79] An article published in May of the same year stated that Łuck's town council was made

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[75] Cited in Snyder, *Sketches*, 63. See also Mędrzecki, *Intelligencja polska*, 193.
[76] "Protokół Konferencji Starostów odbytej […] w dniach 19 i 20 października 1928r.," AAN MSW (Part I) 129/10-10a.
[77] Raphael Mahler, "Jews in Public Sphere and the Liberal Professions in Poland, 1918-39," *Jewish Social Studies* 6, no. 4 (1944): 291-350. See also W. Rotfeld, "Żydzi i rozwój miast," *Przegląd Wołyński*, December 26, 1926, 4-5. Rotfeld pointed towards the benefits of Jewish involvement in local governance, arguing that, as urban people par excellence, the Jews could help to improve conditions in Volhynia's towns.
[78] "Z Rady Miejskiej," *Przegląd Wołyński*, March 25, 1928, 5.
[79] Ibid., 6.

up of two groups—the Poles and the Zionists—and criticized the latter because it "did not defend the interests of the town."[80] Similarly, a newspaper report about the town of Dubno stated that the town council comprised eighteen Jews and only three Poles, two Russians, and one Czech, but that "despite this, the conditions of work turned out to be possible, thanks to the energy of the mayor," as well as the efforts of the Polish-dominated town administration.[81] In a report made after the town elections in Równe in 1932, it was stated that a "Jewish" mentality—described as "the product of long centuries of inhaling the air of the ghetto"— affected how the Jews were governing the towns.[82] Significantly, however, the article noted that the Jews were criticized as "sloppy landlords," rather than because they were Jews, and noted that "the enlightened part of Jewish society, the part that did not succumb to the lure of the ghetto's exclusivity," supported cooperation with other nationalities.[83]

Józewski and his county heads believed that Polish influence in the towns would have to compete with, and to a large extent replace, "Jewish" and "Russian" influences. At a meeting of the Volhynian county heads in 1929, the head of Dubno county, Adam Kański, argued that the towns had always been, and would continue to be, centers of Polish culture in Volhynia. What was unfortunate about Volhynia's towns, Kański stated, was not just the low percentage of inhabitants who were Polish (about 15% in his calculations), but the fact that urban-dwelling Poles were too concerned about their own everyday affairs to engage in community work, a situation that had led to apathy and deteriorating material and moral conditions. He recounted an anecdote to make his point:

> I am reminded of a characteristic conversation that I once had with a certain older, Jewish intellectual. He said: "You Poles are surprised that we local Jews speak Russian, sing Russian melodies, frequent Russian plays, generally relate sympathetically to Russian culture. This is completely natural, since we don't know your culture, your music, your theater, your literature, and we cannot get to know it, but your theater and all your artistic events that we do know stand on a lower level than that which we listen to currently in Yiddish and Russian,

[80] "Z Rady Miejskiej," *Przegląd Wołyński*, May 27, 1928, 5.
[81] "Nad brzegiem Ikwy," *Przegląd Wołyński*, June 28, 1928, 4.
[82] "Po wyborach w Równem," *Przegląd Wołyński*, June 19, 1932, 1.
[83] Ibid., 1.

> and therefore there is no attraction for us and it does not awaken in us an interest in Polish culture." It is necessary to admit that he is partly right.[84]

In addition to the theater, other possible means through which Polishness could be spread were high schools, traveling lectures, and a library network. Importantly, in Kański's option, although "Polish" culture battled against "Russian" and "Jewish" influences, it sought to include non-Polish populations, since "it is a state necessity that the mass of the non-Polish population living in Volhynia, which has hitherto often been hostile to Polish culture, yields to the influence of this culture."[85] Such efforts, Kański argued, were distinct from the Polonization schemes advocated by the National Democrats. Rather, he was simply proposing that "the manifestations of Polish spiritual culture reach the wide mass [of the population] and gradually get rid of the previous remnants of alien influences that are fundamentally hostile to us."[86]

Later that same year, Stanisław-Robert Bogusławski, the head of Równe county, stressed that Polish cultural and educational work could transform Równe from a town dominated by Russian and Jewish cultural influences to a truly Polish space. At a county-level meeting in November 1929, Bogusławski "underlined the necessity of strengthening work in the direction of raising Polish cultural-educational activities, which would become a future counterweight against the Russian culture that reigns in the town, [and is] maintained by the Jewish population and the small percentage of Russians."[87] While Równe could not claim any deep Polish traditions, in the same way that Łuck, Krzemieniec, or Ostróg could, its status as the largest industrial and economic center in the province meant that "it should also radiate the development of Polish culture." [88] The Polish state bureaucrats, who constituted the majority of the local Polish intelligentsia, were singled out as a group with a particularly important cultural and educational role. Again, while such a stance was

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[84] "Rola miast i miasteczek, jako ośrodków kulturalnych na Wołyniu" (Adam Kański), in "Protokół zjazdu Starostów Województwa Wołyńskiego, odbytego w dniach 3 i 4 czerwca 1929 r w gmachu Urzędu Wojewódzkiego w Łucku," AAN MSW (Part I) 129/34a.
[85] Ibid., 34.
[86] Ibid., 34.
[87] "Protokół zebrania kierowników władz I-instancji, odbytego w dniu 9 listopada 1929 roku, w gmachu Starostwa Powiatowego w Równem," AAN MSW (Part I) 87/100a.
[88] Ibid., 100a.

clearly different from that of the National Democrats, there was an underlying sense that Polish influence had to compete with a persistent "Russian-Jewish" culture.

Developing Polishness through Urban Expansion

One set of debates in which ideas about modernization and "Jewish" influence intersected concerned the expansion of urban administrative borders into the surrounding areas. During the 1920s, Volhynia's towns had languished within the legal borders they had inherited from the time of the Russian Empire, but as their populations grew, towns had naturally begun to physically expand. The regions around Volhynia's towns were "semi-urban" or "semi-rural" places (depending on who was describing them), "in-between" areas in which both rural and urban characteristics could be detected. They were often physically connected to the town itself, but the style of the buildings—such as the use of wood rather than brick for construction—endowed them with a more rural appearance. In administrative terms, the inhabitants, the majority of whom engaged in agriculture, were governed by a rural commune rather than by the town authorities. This situation meant that people did not pay taxes to the town, although they may have traveled to the town centers in order to use urban facilities, such as schools and clinics. What is perhaps most striking is the extent to which these peripheral areas had distinct ethnic and religious profiles. The most obvious difference was that they were inhabited by a much smaller percentage of Jews. Indeed, the majority of the population was Christian, whether Orthodox, Roman Catholic, or Evangelical; in terms of nationality, they were identified as a mixture of Ruthenians (or Ukrainians), Poles, and, to a lesser extent, Czechs and Germans. Because of their distinct ethnic and religious profile, the annexation of peripheral areas provided modernizing Polish elites with an opportunity to alter urban demographics.

The expansion of Volhynia's towns—like the development of sewer systems, paved roads, and modern facilities—was, on one level, part of a more general process of modernization that took place in much of Europe in the period prior to the First World War. As Nathaniel Wood has shown in his recent book on Kraków between 1900 and 1914, the creation of Greater Kraków was a profoundly modernizing

endeavor that took its inspiration from the late nineteenth-century expansion of Vienna. Urban modernizers saw expansion and progress as two sides of the same coin, with peripheral areas transformed from places of "cows and pigs" to those boasting "paving and lighting" as they came under the administration of the city.[89] Similar dynamics were at play in late nineteenth-century Germany, where elites increasingly aimed at the active incorporation of the urban hinterland.[90] In Britain too, the late nineteenth century ushered in a period of expansion in urban administrative boundaries. As Ciarán Wallace has shown in his recent dissertation on Dublin, wider city boundaries provided space for new housing, increased income through taxation, and standardized legal codes and jurisdictions.[91] Studying attempts to expand town boundaries provides historians with moments of potential change in which a range of actors were forced to decide on which side of an administrative line they wanted to live, and for what reasons.

In Volhynia, town authorities had been complaining about the problems caused by urban administrative boundaries since the early 1920s, not least in reference to the town of Łuck. As early as 1923, Łuck's mayor, Karol Waligórski, appealed for the expansion of the town into the surrounding area in a letter to the provincial governor, Aleksander Dębski. Many of his arguments were based on the fact that the town was overcrowded, lacked amenities, and failed to modernize, with the old area of the town near the castle and cathedral being particularly "built-up and densely-populated."[92] In order to address this situation, the northeasterly area near the train station, the military barracks, and the site of a future train station needed to be developed.

As with attempts to transform urban conditions, policies for expansion went hand-in-hand with efforts to make Łuck a truly Polish town. Indeed, Waligórski's arguments were also based on his desire to transform what he saw as "Jewish" space into "Polish" space. He claimed that in the overcrowded town center, the central

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[89] Wood, *Becoming Metropolitan*, particularly Chapters 3 and 4.
[90] Leif Jerram, "Bureaucratic Passions and the Colonies of Modernity: An Urban Elite, City Frontiers and the Rural Other in Germany, 1890-1920," *Urban History* 34, no. 3 (2007): 390-406.
[91] Ciarán Wallace, "Dublin Local Government and Politics, 1898-1922" (PhD diss., Trinity College Dublin, 2010), particularly 101-104 and 247-250
[92] Letter from the Mayor of Łuck to the Provincial Governor (May 26, 1923), AAN MSW (Part I) 299 [no page numbers in file].

thoroughfare, Jagiellonian Street, was "completely in the possession of the Jewish population," while the new area to be included within the town limits would be a modern "Polish" terrain, well-connected to other towns. "Only here can there come into being a new, Polish, and culturally organized district, adjacent to the train station and the main road to Równe and Dubno," he wrote.[93] In another letter, sent to the Łuck county authorities later in the same year, Waligórski again emphasized that the economic development of Łuck and its significance as a Polish center were intrinsically connected. The inhabitants of the area to be absorbed into the town would contribute significant taxes to the municipal budget, while the fertile areas to the north, northwest, and east of the town would aid economic development. But expanding the borders would also develop Łuck as a self-consciously Polish town, whose influence would radiate into the surrounding area. "As the provincial capital, Łuck can become a main center of Polish national life," Waligórski argued, "The numerous Polish settlers in Łuck county will increasingly aim to [use] the provincial capital to satisfy not only their economic needs but also their spiritual ones."[94]

The proportion of Christians (whether Polish, Ruthenian, Czech, or German) in settlements around Łuck was certainly much higher than it was in the town itself. Statistics from 1925 indicated that the majority of people living in Łuck were of "Jewish" nationality: there were 17,569 Jews, 5,947 Poles, 2,938 Ruthenians, 881 Russians, 529 Germans, 231 Czechs, and a handful of people of other nationalities.[95] Data from 1926 provided by the district of Poddębce—one of the main areas into which the town would expand—indicated the dramatic distinction between the ethnic composition of the town and its immediate environs. Jarowica, the largest settlement, was inhabited by 408 Ruthenians, 130 Poles, and eight Jews, while the village of Dworzec was home to 187 Ruthenians, 69 Jews, 42 Poles, 28 Czechs, and 24 Germans. There were other smaller settlements too, including a brickyard, an unfinished brick building owned by a Polish educational society, and a military area

[93] Ibid.
[94] Letter from the Mayor of Łuck to County Authorities in Łuck (November 30, 1923), AAN MSW (Part I) 299.
[95] Letter from Town Administration in Łuck to the Volhynian Provincial Office (Department of Local Self-Government) (August 7, 1925), AAN MSW (Part I) 299.

with fifteen underground dug-outs, inhabited by sixty Poles. Many of the smaller settlements were also home to Czech and German populations, but according to the statistics, there were no Jewish residents.[96]

In 1930, with the issue still unresolved, the head of Łuck county, Jerzy Bonkowicz-Sittauer, and the vice-governor of Volhynia, Józef Śleszyński, submitted memoranda to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in support of extending the town's boundaries. Both men were modernizing state bureaucrats who formed part of Józewski's governing circle after 1928. Like Waligórski before them, they paired arguments about an improvement in the material situation of the town's inhabitants and the Polishness of the space itself. Bonkowicz-Sittauer stressed Łuck's historical connections to the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, arguing that its current borders were simply too narrow for the town to fulfill its role as "the main center of national Polish life, which satisfies both the economic and the spiritual needs of the citizens of Volhynia."[97] Claims that the town possessed a natural role as a Polish cultural center were also supported by more practical arguments. In addition to emphasizing the geographical constraints placed on the town, Bonkowicz-Sittauer stressed the positive aspects of its location—the train connections with Warsaw, Lwów, and other towns in Volhynia, not to mention its "fertile and rich surroundings." Economic arguments were also included—taxes needed to be raised from the surrounding regions, which, after all, had a "remarkably suburban character."[98]

In his letter to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Józef Śleszyński stressed both the need for rational economic development and the importance of making the town more Polish. He began his letter by emphasizing how the physical location of the town had limited urban development and led to building restrictions. Indeed, as a consequence of the lack of space within the town itself, the colony for state bureaucrats and several government buildings, including the regional land office, the chamber of the treasury, and the spirit monopoly building, had been constructed

[96] Letter from Poddębce District Office to the head of Łuck County (December 16, 1926), AAN MSW (Part I) 299.
[97] "Uzasadnienie projektu rozszerzenia granic m. Łucka" (J. Bonkowicz-Sittauer), AAN MSW (Part I) 299.
[98] Ibid.

beyond the town's borders.[99] But his arguments were also based on the perceived necessity of transforming the ethnic composition of Łuck's town council, which was made up of 24 councilors, nineteen of whom were Jewish. Śleszyński argued that the proposed expansion of the town boundaries would increase Christian representation. Indeed, it was stated that one of the reasons why the town council had opposed the expansion of the town into the demographically non-Jewish hinterland was a "concern about the loss of a certain number of seats to Christians."[100] While there was resistance from the villagers, who argued that they were rural folk who could not cope with the economic demands of the town, a decree from the Council of Ministers in Warsaw officially extended the borders. Interestingly, the formal justification that was issued with the decree cited economic (rather than ethnic or religious) reasons for the decision.[101]

Local state officials and journalists praised the effects of urban expansion in Łuck, using them to press for similar developments across the province. According to the *Volhynian Review*, incorporating the semi-urban areas around Łuck had almost immediately improved urban aesthetics and contributed to the "Europeanization" of the town. "After the widening of the town borders, the town authorities intensively got down to the regulation and building of streets, which up until that point were in a deplorable state," one article read, "Thanks to the considerable work of the managers of the town, Łuck is coming to assume a more and more 'Western European' look."[102] Yet Łuck was just one of 22 towns in Volhynia that required central government decrees to establish their administrative borders. In 1932, Józewski reported that only Łuck had received such a decree, and recommended that the county heads undertake energetic action to ensure that the central government issue decrees for the remaining

[99] Letter from Józef Śleszyński to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (February 11, 1930), AAN MSW (Part I) 299. In another letter, this one to the court of appeal in Lublin, Śleszyński emphasized the blurred nature of the rural-urban divide around Łuck by describing the "urban way" in which the colony of Kraśne and the villages of Jarowica and Dworzec had been built, and stating that their populations were already connected to the life of the town. See Letter from Śleszyński to the President of the Court of Appeal in Lublin (March 3, 1930), AAN MSW (Part I) 299.
[100] Letter from Józef Śleszyński to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (February 11, 1930), AAN MSW (Part I) 299.
[101] "Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia…1930 o rozszerzeniu granic miasta Łucka w powiecie łuckim, woj. Wołyńskiego," AAN MSW (Part I) 299.
[102] "Z gospodarki miasta Łucka," *Przegląd Wołyński*, December 14, 1930, 4.

towns, particularly in light of the upcoming town council elections. By the end of the year, the county authorities had recommended the expansion of urban administrative limits in a series of towns. It was proposed, for example, that Dubno would grow in size from 395.5 to 1,465 hectares, and that its population would increase from 12,702 to 15,199; Równe's area would increase from 288 to 838 hectares, and its population from 32,474 to 41,040; Włodzimierz would grow from 5,602 to 7,078 hectares, and its population from 24,581 to 25,595.[103]

Some of the most drastic expansions occurred in small towns (*miasteczka*), whose demographic and economic profiles were similar to their larger counterparts, despite the fact that they physically resembled villages. The material culture of these smaller urban settlements gave the provincial authorities cause for concern, since the district (*gmina*) authorities were chaotically run, leading to confusion about the applicability of building regulations. As one 1927 article from the *Volhynian Technical News* argued, the fast-paced construction in the period immediately after the First World War created a whole range of buildings that clashed with property rights, safety considerations, and "the most primitive levels of hygiene and aesthetics."[104] Such terrible conditions, the article went on, could not help but have a destructive influence upon "the psychology of those living in the alleyways of the small towns."[105] Jews generally constituted a large majority in these settlements—which were also known by their Yiddish name, *shtetl*—and engaged in a range of occupations, as tradesmen, factory owners, lawyers, rabbis, teachers, peddlers, tailors, and shoemakers.[106] A close reading of the documents in a couple of cases indicates how plans to expand the borders of these towns intersected with ideas about their "Jewish" character.

Take the example of Rożyszcze, a smaller town located 32 kilometers north of Łuck up the River Styr. The town's population was mainly composed of Jews (3,788), with significantly smaller numbers of Poles (420), Germans (206), Ukrainians (67),

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[103] "Sprawozdanie Wojewody Wołyńskiego o ogólnym stanie Województwa działalności administracji państwowej w r 1932-ym i ważniejszych zamierzeniach na przyszłość," AAN MSW (Part I) 111/773.
[104] T. Rajtar, "Zabudowa Miasteczka," *Wołyńskie Wiadomości Techniczne* 3, no. 3 (March 20, 1927): 4.
[105] Ibid., 4.
[106] Yehuda Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 30.

Russians (63), Czechs (six), and Belarusians (one).[107] According to Orłowicz's guidebook, Rożyszcze had been destroyed during the war but was slowly being reconstructed. It had a synagogue as well as Orthodox, Catholic, and Evangelical churches, and was described as "one of the cleanest towns in Volhynia, possessing electric light and a cinema."[108] The issue of the town's borders had already been discussed during the late 1920s. In 1927, Józef Śleszyński (then the head of the province's local government office) had written to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, arguing that the town's limits needed to be extended in order to allow the Christian population who lived in the "suburban" areas to vote in town elections. As these populations were currently ineligible to vote, the last elections had resulted in only one Christian being voted onto the town council. "The joining up of these suburbs to the territory of the urban district [*gmina miejska*] will strengthen the Christian element," he argued, "and, through carrying out new elections in connection with the changes to the borders, will lead to the possibility of appropriate representation of the Christian population on the town council."[109]

In 1931, when the issue of expanding the town's borders once again came to the fore, the town council supported the plans for extension on the basis of future urban development, although issues of ethnicity or religion were not mentioned. At a meeting in October 1931, the municipal council stressed that the current borders of the town were simply too restrictive, and that the lack of space was forcing the authorities to locate its facilities—such as market places and slaughterhouses—on neighboring rural terrain. The council also concluded that the people of the surrounding villages of Załobów, Jurydyka, Nowe Załobów, and Wołnianka sent their children to the elementary school in the town without paying taxes, calculating that 44% of the children attending the school lived beyond the town's borders. The fact that the town was effectively divided between two administrative units (the "rural" and the "urban") also limited the municipal council's capacity to carry out necessary tasks, such as

[107] "Miasto Rożyszcze," AAN UWW (Part I) 298 [no page numbers in file].
[108] Orłowicz, *Ilustrowany Przewodnik*, 141.
[109] Letter from Volhynian Provincial Office to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (September 19, 1927), AAN MSW (Part I) 298.

laying down pavements and cleaning the streets.[110] For the council, the situation placed limits on economic progress, led to people benefitting from the town's amenities without paying taxes, and impeded the implementation of plans for development.

Urban expansion, however, was not universally supported. Indeed, the population that inhabited the areas around the town rejected the proposed annexation, appealing to both economic and ethnic factors. At a meeting held at the home of Michał Bogusław in October 1931, a group of people representing the village of Załobów and the settlement of Nowe Załobów argued against the town's expansion. These two settlements were home to 1,404 people in total, of which the vast majority (912) were classed as Ukrainians, while the remainder was made up of Poles (222), Germans (166), Jews (73), Russians (24), one Czech, and one "nomadic" person. The religious breakdown indicated that, apart from the 73 Jews, all the inhabitants were Christians of various denominations (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Evangelical, and Greek Catholic).[111] In rejecting the town's plans to annex their settlements, villagers brought up issues of ethnicity and religion, as well as the fundamental economic differences between the town and the countryside. "For a long time the town authorities of Rożyszcze have tried to join our village and the settlement of Nowe Załobów to the town of Rożyszcze," the meeting concluded, "We are exclusively farmers and have nothing in common with the inhabitants of this town, who are comprised of 95% Jewish traders, and because of this we see only future burdens and not benefits in this union."[112]

On the same day, another meeting was held in the village of Jurydyka, at the house of Nikita Szewczuk. Jurydyka was home to a total of 506 people, who consisted of 242 Poles, 160 Ukrainians, 70 Jews, and 34 Germans. A breakdown based on religion indicated that all villagers (apart from 70 Jews) were Christians—242 Roman

[110] "Wyciąg z uchwały Rady Miejskiej miasta Rożyszcze, powiatu Łuckiego, powziętej na posiedzeniu w dniu 22 października 1931 roku," AAN MSW (Part I) 298.
[111] "Wieś Załobowo i kol. Nowe Załobowo," AAN MSW (Part I) 298.
[112] "Protokół Nr. 30 zebrania gromadzkiego wsi Załobowo i kol. Nowe Załobowo, zwołanego na podstawie zarządzenia Wójt. Gminy Rożyszcze, działo się we w. Załobowo, w lokalu Michała Bogusława, w dniu 11/X.1931 roku," AAN MSW (Part I) 298.

Catholics, 160 Orthodox, 29 Evangelicals, and five Baptists.[113] The meeting, led by village leader Daniel Laskowski and attended by 28 people, concluded that the villagers were farmers who had "nothing in common with the Jewish traders of the town of Rożyszcze."[114] Joining their village to the town would not only destroy the village economy by increasing the burden of taxation, but it would bring the villagers no benefits. They claimed that the municipal authorities had kept the town in a "deplorable economic state" during the ten years of their existence and had not even constructed a building for the elementary school. State-level bureaucrats were not convinced, however, and the county head supported the town's request to have the borders extended.[115]

In October 1933, with the issue still unresolved, the county head wrote to the Volhynian provincial authorities to once again explain the need to extend the town's borders. In addition to emphasizing the improvements that the expansion would make to trade (by extending areas administrated by the town onto the eastern side of the River Styr, thereby permitting more effective use of the river for transportation), he stressed the necessity of transforming Rożyszcze from a "Jewish ghetto" to a "mixed settlement."[116] Changing the ethnic and religious composition of the town to include more Christians of various nationalities would also affect the results of the upcoming town council elections. Significantly, when speaking about the proposed increase in Christians within the town's borders, he suggested that Poles, Ukrainians, and Germans would be considered agents in the process of diluting "Jewish" influence. While this process could therefore be read as part of a more general "Polonization" of a "Jewish" town, it actually involved the use of significant non-Polish populations. The proposed transformation from a "Jewish" to a "mixed" town would also, he argued, "induce systematic, purposeful investments, the strengthening of the interests

[113] "Wieś Jurydyka, folwark Rożyszcze," AAN MSW (Part I) 298.
[114] "Protokół zebrania gromadzkiego wsi Jurydyki, zwołanego na podstawie polecenia Wójta Gminy Rożyszcze, działo się we wsi Jurydyka w lokalu Nikity Szewczuka w dniu 11 października 1931 roku," AAN MSW (Part I) 298.
[115] "Wyciąg z protokułu Wydziału Powiatowego z dnia 4 listopada 1931r. Nr. 20, § 29," AAN MSW (Part I) 298.
[116] Letter from the Head of Łuck county to the Volhynian Provincial Office (October 6, 1933), AAN MSW (Part I) 298.

of citizens in the development of the town and its culture, and so on. Joining up the suburbs would also encourage the Polish intelligentsia, artisans, and traders to build up connections with the town."[117] The town of Łuck was provided as an example of a place in which this transformation had already been achieved, since it was only after the town's expansion that "a municipal council capable of understanding the needs and obligations of the town" had come into being.[118]

The belief that Rożyszcze could only prosper through Christian influence was reiterated in a section on Jewish "backwardness." According to the head of Łuck county, the fact that the current councilors were resisting plans for expansion could be explained by their wish to preserve Jewish hegemony and prevent a drop in the value of Jewish land in the town center. He also clamed that there was an even more fundamental reason why the town council was against the plans—an inherent Jewish resistance to modernization. "The petty Jewish merchant is firmly backward [*zacofany*] and doesn't feel positive towards any reforms, and in this case is scared that it is the beginning of a range of advances, which […] may even lead to the initiation and development of non-Jewish trade."[119] As for the villagers, who remained unwilling to act as agents in the plan to alter urban demographics? They were worried about the twin burdens of extra taxation and increased supervision over sanitary standards, and had been agitated by "certain political elements" that remained undefined.[120] In 1933, the Ministry of Internal Affairs extended the borders of the town to include the villages of Jurydyka, Załobów, and Nowe Załobów.[121]

The town of Dąbrowica in Sarny county provides yet another example of the ways in which town expansion was inextricably linked to national demographics. Dąbrowica, like other larger settlements in the area, was situated near the River Horyń and surrounded on both sides by marshy forests. In 1933, the issue of expansion revolved around the planned incorporation of the so-called "Dąbrowica village" into

[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.
[121] "Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych z dnia…1933r. o rozszerzeniu granic m. Rożyszcz w powiecie Łuckim, województwie Wołyńskim," AAN MSW (Part I) 298.

"Dąbrowica town." Ironically, the inhabitants of the so-called "village" (4,356) vastly outnumbered those of the "town" (2,929). The difference between the two areas was largely based on ethnicity and religion—the town was composed of 2,778 Jews (96% of the total population), 74 Roman Catholics (2%), and 77 Orthodox believers (2%), while the village was made up of 3,756 Orthodox believers (86.3%), 325 Jews (7.4%) and 275 Roman Catholics (6.3%).[122]

Those who supported the incorporation of the rural areas into the town of Dąbrowica argued that there were no good historical reasons for their separation. In 1930, the town council had already proposed that the whole area be seen as one historical unit that would benefit as a whole if the town's borders were expanded.[123] Three years later, at a meeting held on May 4, 1933, the arguments made by the town council, led by the mayor, were more detailed. The merger of the town and village would allow the town to positively affect the sanitary conditions in the rural area, which compared badly to those in the town:

> The current terrain of the village of Dąbrowica, adjacent to the town, is significantly different from the urban area in terms of sanitation, because the urban streets, which begin in the town and run through the rural area, find themselves in a glaringly different and deplorable sanitary state in the parts belonging to the village [as compared to] those streets in the urban area. Therefore, as soon as the rural areas are joined up to the town and have urban sanitary and building regulations applied to them, there will undoubtedly be a significant improvement in the sanitary and health state of the whole area.[124]

Calls to include the rural area in the town (and not the reverse) were justified by the town's status as a center of trade, industry, administration, culture, and history.

The inhabitants of the rural areas objected to plans for their incorporation. At a meeting of the rural council, people argued that they would rather live in a rural area than have townsfolk interfere in their affairs. One man claimed that the village of

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[122] "Wyciąg z protokułu XIII-go nadzwyczajnego posiedzenia Rady Miejskiej w m.Dąbrowicy. Działo się w m. Dąbrowicy w dn. 4 maja 1933 r w lokalu Magistratu," AAN MSW (Part I) 300/433.
[123] "Protokół Nr. 45" (December 1930), AAN MSW (Part I) 300/438.
[124] "Zestawienie podwyższonych wpływów i wydatków, uwidocznionych w załączonym do uchwały projekcie niejakiego preliminarza budżetowego po przyłączeniu gromady wsi Dąbrowicy do miasta Dąbrowicy," AAN MSW (Part I) 300/436-437.

Dąbrowica had a purely rural character and should not be joined to the town, while another said that joining the town would only bring tax burdens and unrealistic sanitary and building regulations.[125] Two days earlier, a meeting of villagers had concluded that Dąbrowica village had a "rural character."[126] Although the minutes of the meetings did not include the religious or ethnic identities of the individuals who spoke, one can assume, based on the religious composition of these regions, that the vast majority of those in attendance were Orthodox peasants.

A few days later, the head of Sarny county, Franciszek Grzesik, wrote to the Volhynian governor to support the town's plans to annex the village. In doing so, he listed the investments that had been made in the town—the building of wells, the laying down of concrete pavement and over 1,700 square meters of paving stones, the construction of a concrete public toilet, the purchasing of a building for the town abattoir, and the creation of a square. However, he also claimed that the demographics of the town needed to be altered due to the fact that all the political power lay "in the hands of the Jewish population."[127] The twelve members of the town council were all Jewish and, Grzesik claimed, they were directing the town's money to fund Jewish organizations. The annexation of rural areas with their large Orthodox populations would rule out such practices "because the changes in the ethnic ratio would affect the leveling out [of influence] at this dangerous moment."[128] The objections of the people in the surrounding area were dismissed as having no basis, as their buildings would not be taxed anyway. Any objections resulted from political feelings, namely that the rural populations "did not want to join themselves with the Jews."[129] As was the case in the town of Rożyszcze, a largely non-Polish Christian population was being used to reduce "Jewish influence" in an urban settlement. In 1934, the Ministry of Internal Affairs issued a decree that joined the rural area to the town proper.

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[125] "Wyciąg z protokułu Nr. 16 posiedzenia Rady gminnej, gminy Dąbrowickiej……4.V.1933," AAN MSW (Part I) 300/439-440.
[126] "Protokuły zebrania gromady wsi Dąbrowica, gminy Dąbrowickiej, powiatu Sarneńskiego, odbytego w dniu 2 maja 1933 roku," AAN MSW (Part I) 300/441-442.
[127] Letter from Head of Sarny County to the Governor of Volhynia (May 12, 1933), AAN MSW (Part I) 300/422.
[128] Ibid., 423.
[129] Ibid., 423.

The cases of Łuck, Rożyszcze, and Dąbrowica indicate how towns were promoted as progressive places that would raise the cultural levels of the surrounding areas, and how populations on the peripheries resisted such expansion. Clearly, economic factors were important here. Those on the outskirts of the towns argued that urban expansion would bring burdens of increased taxation and force them to obey sanitary decrees unsuited to their rural ways of life; those who promoted urban expansion argued that it would lead to modernization and economic progress. But it is also clear that debates about the possibilities for urban development were tied to perceptions about the characteristics of various ethnic and religious groups. In particular, Jews were accused of hindering economic progress, resisting modernizing, and running the towns in their own interests, both by those who promoted annexation and those who resisted it. Significantly, it was the Polish county heads—the modernizing administrators appointed by Józewski—who saw urban expansion as a chance to demographically engineer Volhynia's towns.

Urban Improvements: The 1930s

In the 1930s, more optimistic voices about the futures of Volhynia's towns began to emerge. To some extent, this shift was based on actual developments in several urban centers, brought about by increased access to funds and more rational town planning. In Łuck and Równe, work on water supply and sewer systems began, leading to improved sanitary standards in both places by the end of the decade.[130] The pages of *Volhynia* (*Wołyń*), which had replaced the *Volhynian Review* as the local pro-Piłsudski newspaper in 1933, were also filled with an increasing number of articles about urban improvement. A 1933 article described the "triumph" of Polish theater in Równe, which was apparently playing to packed houses and replacing the "foreign," non-Polish productions of the past.[131] In another piece, published in 1935, the author pointed to improvements in urban aesthetics: thanks partly to the work of a local society for the beautification of the town, Równe now boasted more green spaces,

[130] On Łuck, see "Zjazd lekarzy powiatowych województwa Wołyńskiego dnia 18 i 19 marca 1938r.," AAN MOS 508/2.
[131] T. Swiszczowski, "Czy Równe jest kulturalnem miastem?," *Wołyń*, October 29, 1933, 4.

trees, and flowers.[132] There were reports about other towns too. A 1935 article featured Kowel's recent achievements, illustrated by "before" and "after" photographs of a main thoroughfare: the first, taken in 1934, depicted a swampy water-logged street in which a horse and cart struggled to make its way through the mud; the second, taken a year later, showed the same street paved and tree-lined.[133] The town of Janowa Dolina, a newly-built settlement for workers at the state quarry near Kostopol, was held up as an example of modern Polish town planning.[134] Architectural projects for future urban development were also published, such as the 1934 plans to completely redevelop Łuck's town center.[135]

Yet throughout the 1930s, concerns about Volhynia's towns did not disappear. While urban problems may have been soothed through increased investment and better governance, Volhynia's towns still lagged woefully behind their counterparts in both Western Europe and the western provinces of Poland, and complaints about town sanitation continued. In 1932, a group of citizens in Równe wrote to the provincial authorities to complain that the marshland in the center of the town had still not been drained by the town administration, and that it constituted "a center of all infectious diseases" and "a serious hazard for public health."[136] This sentiment was echoed by an article published in *Volhynia* the following year, in which the author argued that "draining the swamp is a burning necessity for the town," since it would allow for "purposeful and rational development" and "the raising of its sanitary condition."[137] Such complaints were not limited to Równe's town center. Residents of one peripheral

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[132] "Równe ma przyszłość przed sobą," *Wołyń*, June 30, 1935, 4.
[133] "Wczoraj, dzis i jutro miasta Kowla" *Wołyń,* October 27, 1935, 7.
[134] On Janowa Dolina, see "W Janowej Dolinie," *Wołyń*, June 23, 1935, 6; Jacek Maria Orlik, "Skalna Kraina nad Cichą Rzeką," *Wołyń*, September 27, 1936, 4-5. In addition to being built on a grid system and boasting a range of modern urban facilities, such as electricity, a water supply system, and a sewer network, Janowa Dolina also had an almost exclusively Polish population. For more on Janowa Dolina, see Bogusław Soboń, *Wołyński życiorys: wspomnienia i refleksje (wokół kopalni bazaltu w Janowej Dolinie pow. Kostopol)* (Warsaw: Światowy Związek Żołnierzy Armii Krajowej, Okręg Wołyński, 1999).
[135] "Życie gospodarcze: dwie próby architektonicznego rozwiązania centrum miasta Łucka," *Wołyń*, November 18, 1934, 5-6. The plans featured a large town park (the current one being no more than a "garden for dogs" that was "at odds with basic feelings about hygiene and beauty"), a theater, a community center, a town hall, and the offices of the provincial administration.
[136] Letter from citizens of Równe to the Provincial Authorities (1932, no exact date), DARO 30/7/104/9.
[137] T. Świszczowski, "Bagno rówieńskie," *Wołyń*, November 5, 1933, 6.

district even wrote to the county-level administrators to complain that garbage from the town was being dumped there, and that people could not open their windows due to the foul smell.[138]

In addition to ongoing concerns about poor sanitation, the idea that the towns were "Jewish" rather than "Polish" places persisted. According to reports on the development of the province issued in 1933 and 1934, the quest to "de-Jewify" and "de-Russify" the towns was far from over. In 1933, it was reported that the local authorities had recently "succeeded in changing the composition of town councils and town administration in a way that was good for us, and in the next stage anticipates more energetic action in the aforementioned direction."[139] Making Volhynia's urban centers more "Polish" and less "Jewish" (and indeed less "Russian") were still seen as two sides of the same coin. According to the provincial administration's report:

> It is necessary to claim that the local Jewish element negates the goals and methods of the work of local authorities, which try as far as possible to reduce the role of the Jewish element and finally eliminate the Russian element. […] Our towns in the first instance should become centers of Polish and Western culture in Volhynia.[140]

Similar sentiments were expressed in a report issued the following year, in which the town elections were described as an important factor in "the process of de-Jewifying and de-Russifying Volhynian towns."[141]

Articles in the local newspaper supported this stance. In 1933, *Volhynia* held a competition in which readers sent in their answers to the question "What do Volhynian towns lack the most?" The two best answers, which were published in the newspaper, both concluded that the towns lacked people who cared about urban development. Volhynian towns were "towns without townspeople," the winning article claimed, explaining that urban centers were without a Polish Catholic middle class and that Jews were fundamentally unsuitable for the task of urban improvement:

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[138] Letter from inhabitants of Grabnik to the Head of Równe County (July 5, 1932), DARO 30/7/104/29.
[139] "Sprawozdanie z sytuacji na Wołyniu, Wrzesień 1933r.," AAN UWwŁ 83/10.
[140] Ibid., 10.
[141] "Sprawozdanie z sytuacji na Wołyniu, Wrzesień 1934," AAN UWwŁ 83/36.

> The largest group living in Volhynian towns is the Jewish element, who are generally fidgety and uncertain, of whom the great majority do not care very much about external, communal, and common conditions of life, who are without links to the land and the seat of local government, [and] who are, as a rule, without an aptitude for local governance—in these conditions, they are not and cannot be a townsman element.[142]

But the article also explained that the ongoing problems lay not only with the "ineptitude" of the Jews. Instead, they were also caused by the fact that Christian artisans were too weak and Christian merchants too few, and that bureaucrats transplanted from beyond the region lacked feelings of belonging to the towns. As long as local Polish-speaking populations neglected their tasks in the towns, Jewish and Russian influences would continue to challenge those of Polish civilization.

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As this chapter has shown, the poorly-developed, run-down, and unsanitary towns of Volhynia did not merely form the backdrop for events, the stages upon which action occurred. Instead, the very idea of the town—what it was and what it could be—indicated the extent to which Polish urban elites adhered to wider European ideas about modernization, hygiene, and civilization. As was the case across Europe, poor sanitation was linked to wider anxieties about social control and the health of the nation. And yet in Volhynia, where the towns were not demographically Polish, urban anxieties and the policies that emerged from them were inevitably questions about the role of the Jews. Local Polish bureaucrats and members of the intelligentsia, including those who espoused more liberal ideas about membership in the Polish nation, argued that the towns needed to be transformed into explicitly Polish spaces. While their methods may have differed, Polish elites shared a sense that only Polish governance could transform the backwater towns of Volhynia into prosperous, modern places.

[142] "Czego brak najbardziej miastom Wołyńskim? (Dwie odpowiedzi)," *Wołyń*, April 23, 1933, 2.

CHAPTER FOUR:
Village Space: Civilizing Volhynia's Peasantry

In 1935, an educational officer attached to the KOP border guards in the Ludwipol district of Kostopol county issued a detailed report into local conditions. Much of his description emphasized the deep structural problems that impeded the area's development: economic connections with the towns were weak, since distances were large and transportation poor, schools were rare, and agricultural techniques and technologies remained primitive. The officer also dealt with the "primitive" characteristics of the populations that lived and worked in this underdeveloped landscape. "These people, especially the Ruthenians, are characterized by extreme laziness and slovenliness," the officer declared, "This is a result of their low level of consciousness. Very often one comes across people who live with their swine."[1] This type of description was certainly not atypical during the 1920s and 1930s. Crammed into dark huts, and unfamiliar with even the most basic tenets of modern hygiene, rural populations in Volhynia were deemed to be socially, culturally, and economically "backward" in comparison with the more enlightened peasants who resided in the western and central provinces of the state. Physical and human conditions, epitomized by the muddy swamplands of northern Volhynia and the apathetic character of the peasantry, seemed to reinforce one another—the population, like the land they farmed, was stagnant, underdeveloped, and in desperate need of modernization.

During the interwar period, concerns about the material conditions of rural populations were not limited to the poor villages of eastern Poland, but were widespread in both Western and Eastern Europe. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, urban elites from across the continent attempted to "civilize" peasant populations, inculcating them with modern principles of hygiene, transforming them into literate citizens, and weakening traditional mores and customs. In perhaps the most famous exploration of this process of "internal colonization," Eugen Weber demonstrated how the French Third Republic turned "peasants" into "Frenchmen"

[1] "Gmina Ludwipol Powiatu Kostopolskiego," in *Stosunki Społeczno-Oświatowe w 18 gminach na pograniczu Litwy, Łotwy i ZSRR w ciągu ostatnich 5 lat* (Warsaw, 1935), reprinted in Jan Widacki, *Kresy w oczach oficerów KOP* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo "Unia," 2005), 219.

through the development of roads, military conscription, and standardized schooling.[2] Although the term "civilization" was peculiarly French, the idea of "civilizing" the masses was not limited to France. At the other end of the continent, as David Hoffmann has shown, elites in imperial Russia and the Soviet Union attempted to "acculturate the masses," drawing from a European model that stressed both altruistic and economic justifications.[3] Even as they lacked a state of their own, Polish experts from the mid-nineteenth century onwards participated in schemes to improve the living conditions of the masses, most obviously through social hygiene initiatives.[4] In interwar Poland, such developments only increased, with Poles able to gain state support for efforts to improve the lives of Polish citizens.

While Poland's mission to "civilize" the peasantry living in its eastern borderlands needs to be seen within this European continental context, the demographic profile of Volhynia's inhabitants also suggests a slightly different historiographical framework. A glance at the 1921 census indicates that most villages were home to a mixture of Poles and Ukrainians (in which Poles normally constituted a minority), or else were "purely Polish" (*czysto polskie*) or "purely Ukrainian" (*czysto ukraińskie*) settlements.[5] The thirteen percent of Volhynia's Jews who lived in the countryside were dispersed throughout rural settlements and generally employed in petty trade or more rarely in agriculture.[6] Despite the persistence of a Polish

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[2] Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

[3] David L. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), particularly Chapter 1.

[4] For more on Polish public health developments under the partitions, see Magdalena Gawin, "Progressivism and Eugenic Thinking in Poland, 1905-1939," in *"Blood and Homeland": Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940*, eds. Marius Turda and Paul J. Weindling (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2007), particularly 167-174. See also Marta Aleksandra Balinska, "The National Institute of Hygiene and Public Health in Poland 1918-1939," *Social History of Medicine* 9, no. 3 (1996): 428.

[5] For more on the ethnic structure of Volhynia, see Jan Kęsik, "Struktura narodowościowa województwa wołyńskiego w okresie międzywojennym," in *Kresy Wschodnie II Rzeczypospolitej: Przekształcenie struktury narodowościowej 1931-1948*, ed. Stanisław Ciesielski (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2006), 53-92. A list of the national breakdown of all settlements in Volhynia can be found in *Skorowidz Miejscowości Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. Tom IX: Województwo Wołyńskie* (Warsaw: Nakładem Głównego Urzędu Statystycznego, 1923).

[6] Ignacy Schipero et al., *Żydzi w Polsce Odrodzonej: działalność społeczna, oświatowa i kulturalna* (Warsaw: Nakł. Wydawn. "Żydzi w Polsce odrodzonej," 1932-3), 411. According to Grzegorz Hryciuk,

landowning class, whose holdings were gradually nationalized and redistributed between the wars, most rural Polish-speaking populations—like their Ukrainian-speaking neighbors—were peasants who eked out a living through agriculture or animal husbandry.

The demographic profile of Volhynia's villages meant that their difficult material situation was not only related to economic underdevelopment. Since the vast majority of peasants spoke Ukrainian, rather than Polish, the "backwardness" of the Volhynian village also provided a way of speaking about Polish civilizational superiority over non-Polish populations. After all, while Polish-speakers constituted a demographic minority in Volhynia, their claims to be able to develop the province were based on the assumption that their civilizational value was far more powerful than sheer numbers suggested. It makes sense, therefore, to consider the ways in which Poles talked about their role in the Volhynian village within a broader colonial context. Echoing French and British discourses about populations in overseas colonies, the Poles believed that the material culture of local Ukrainian peasants indicated their position on a lower rung of the civilizational ladder—and the fact that they needed a more advanced nation to lift them out of the morass.[7] Polish elites from both the right and the left argued that improving the material culture of the Volhynian village would demonstrate that Polish culture and civilization occupied a privileged position in the East. While supporters of the National Democratic right and the pro-Piłsudski left differed in their opinions about how Polishness might best be projected into the villages, they shared the fundamental assumption that the Poles were the bearers of a superior civilization.

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less than 5% of Volhynia's Jews were employed in agriculture. See Hryciuk, *Przemiany narodowościowe*, 148.

[7] Reading Polish descriptions of Volhynia's rural populations, one is struck by the similarities with colonial accounts of the living conditions in sub-Saharan Africa. For more on the ways in which European imperial powers justified colonial rule through judgments on the material culture of native peoples, see Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997). For a comparison with the Soviet internal civilizing mission, which also stressed modernization, see David R. Shearer, "Modernity and Backwardness on the Soviet Frontier: Western Siberia in the 1930s," in *Provincial Landscapes: Local Dimensions of Soviet Power, 1917-1953*, ed. Donald J. Raleigh (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), 194-216, especially 198.

There are many ways in which the story of the village as both an imagined place and a material reality might be told. With its focus on the idea of Polishness through modernization and material culture, this chapter places less emphasis on the visions of the Roman Catholic clergy, who espoused their own "civilizing mission" in the East, and whose complex and multifaceted relationship with the Polish state during the interwar period has been explored elsewhere.[8] Instead, the chapter shows how state actors, along with personnel who were supported by the state, attempted to transform the Volhynian village in the 1920s and 1930s, and the ways in which they described and dealt with local populations. As has been the case with the other stories in this study, the voices in the chapter are not limited to one set of actors, but include a whole range of people, from local bureaucrats, teachers, settlers, and scouts to border guards and members of the intelligentsia, all of whom imported visions of Polish rural civilization into Volhynia. While their approaches differed, they espoused the idea that rural problems could only be overcome by policies orchestrated and carried out under the auspices of the Polish state. Yet the material conditions on the ground severely limited these endeavors. After all, the run-down Volhynian village was not merely a trope dreamed up by "civilizing" nationalists. Emerging from the wide-scale destruction of the First World War, inhabited by uneducated peasants, and constrained by the limited capital provided by local budgets, its existence was real enough.

Schools, Rural Culture, and the Polish Right, 1921-1926

In the early to mid-1920s, questions about material culture in the villages of the *kresy* fed into wider debates about Polish civilizational superiority in the East. Those on the right of Polish politics, who dominated the governments in Warsaw prior to Piłsudski's coup, believed that Polish civilization would lead to the natural assimilation of the less-developed, culturally inferior nations of the *kresy*.[9] Although

[8] Neal Pease, *Rome's Most Faithful Daughter: The Catholic Church and Independent Poland, 1914-1939* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009); Michał Piela, *Udział duchowieństwa w polskim życiu politycznym w latach 1914-1924* (Lublin: Red. Wydawnictwa Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1994); Maciej Mróz, *Katolicyzm na Pograniczu: Kościół katolicki wobec kwestii ukraińskiej i białoruskiej w Polsce w latach 1918-1925* (Toruń: Wydawn. Adam Marszałek, 2003); Mironowicz, *Białorusini i Ukraińcy*, Chapter 6.
[9] Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*, 182-88.

such ideas developed during the nineteenth century, interwar Polish elites—now with a state of their own—looked to (re-)Polonize populations by raising the levels of rural prosperity and culture.

The creation of so-called "rural centers of Polish culture" suggested one method for both proving and contributing towards Polish superiority. During a meeting of the provincial governors of the eastern borderlands in October 1925, the National Democrat minister of education, Stanisław Grabski, put forward a plan for the development of such centers across the formerly Russian lands of Poland, including Volhynia. In addition to developing the rural economy, he argued, the presence of these centers would raise the moral standards of the village, fight rural afflictions (including drunkenness), and encourage cultural developments, such as the organization of choirs and amateur theater groups. Indeed, such centers would constitute "a manifestation of the civilizational strength of the Polish state in the East, and would increase not only its material right, but also its moral right, in the East."[10] In conjunction with these policies, private right-wing organizations, such as the Polish Society for the Care of the *Kresy* (*Polskie Towarzystwo Opieki nad Kresami*), collected money and books from donors with the aim of raising cultural standards and preserving Polishness.[11] Activists in the more prosperous western provinces—most notably Poznań—also offered to become "patrons" in order to assist their beleaguered Polish cousins in the East.[12]

More than any other site in the village, the elementary school represented a key venue for asserting Polish culture.[13] National legislation stated that children between the ages of seven and fourteen—regardless of their ethnicity or religion—were entitled to free elementary schooling, and that public schools with a non-Polish language of instruction had to be provided in areas where a "considerable proportion" of citizens

[10] "Protokół Obrad na zjeździe Wojewodów Ziem Wschodnich w dniu 19-20 października," AAN MSW (Part IV) 10/39a.
[11] "O kresach i na kresach," *Życie Wołynia*, March 16, 1924, 7.
[12] "Łuck pod patronatem Poznania," *Przegląd Lubelsko-Kresowy*, June 1925, 3.
[13] There are parallels with the French state's attempts to reintroduce the French language through schools in Alsace, a region where the majority of people did not speak French in 1918. See Stephen L. Harp, *Learning to Be Loyal: Primary Schooling as Nation Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850-1940* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998), 196-201.

spoke that language.[14] Despite the official promulgation of these principles, however, right-wing nationalists saw multiethnic borderlands like Volhynia as prime arenas for national battles over education.[15] In doing so, they drew upon the ideas of turn-of-the-century National Democrat thinkers who emphasized that Ruthenian schools would, by definition, always be inferior to their Polish counterparts. The Poles would play the role of the older, wiser brother, assimilating Ruthenians who were of a "lower species."[16] Good quality education, provided in clean, bright schoolhouses, would prove that Polish culture was superior to that of the Ukrainian-speaking peasants.

At the 1925 meeting of the eastern governors, Grabski argued that Poland's eastern school policy was part of a national battle in which Polish culture would be "a magnetic influence" for the national minorities, whose culture was necessarily weaker.[17] In Volhynia, it was similarly asserted that Polish rural schools would attract Ukrainian peasants to Polish culture. Educational organizations, such as the Polish Education Society (*Polska Macierz Szkolna*, hereafter PMS), which was financed by Polish-speaking landowners and supported by the Roman Catholic clergy, carried out work to prove the superiority of Polish civilization.[18] In 1925, Volhynia's governor, Aleksander Dębski, organized excursions through the PMS, whereby a Roman Catholic priest escorted local peasants to the cities of Warsaw and Poznań, located in central and western Poland respectively. In line with the National Democratic approach to nationalities, the published reports emphasized that 86 of the participants (80% of the total number) were "Ruthenians" who were full of praise for Poland's eastern mission. One peasant was even quoted as saying that the excursion had

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[14] Stanislaw Mauersberg, "The Educational System and Democratisation of Society in Poland (1918-1939)," *Acta Poloniae Historica* 55 (1987): 135. See also, "The Treaty with Poland," in *Were the Minorities Treaties a Failure?*, eds. Jacob Robinson et al. (New York: Institute of Jewish affairs of the American Jewish congress and the World Jewish congress, 1943), 313-317.

[15] As historians Pieter Judson and Tara Zahra have pointed out in their studies of the Austrian Empire's Czech-German borderlands, multiethnic areas of modern states are places in which national activists have used education as a tool to strengthen the nation. In such regions, fears about denationalization intersected with the work of educational societies whose members attempted to save "vulnerable" children from being nationally "kidnapped." See Judson*, Guardians of the Nation*; Zahra*, Kidnapped Souls*.

[16] Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*, 187.

[17] "Protokół Obrad na zjeździe Wojewodów Ziem Wschodnich w dniu 19-20 października," AAN MSW (Part IV) 10/45.

[18] Mędrzecki, *Inteligencja polska*, 83.

revealed to him that Poland was "a great and powerful state," while another allegedly claimed that Polish work was "a fundamental step ahead on the civilizational and state path of our *kresy*."[19]

Yet for all the self-assured proclamations about Polish civilizational superiority, nagging doubts remained about conditions on the ground. Nationalists feared, for example, that rural exposure to Ukrainian elementary schools that had emerged during the First World War and the first few years of independence might cause Polish children to be "lost" to the nation. As was so often the case with modern nationalists, their attitudes combined outward swagger with deep-seated anxieties about the national sturdiness of borderland populations. In Volhynia, commentators constantly quoted statistics about Polish and Ukrainian schools to make their point. In 1922, when the Volhynian school board was created, there were 658 schools, of which 395 were Polish and 233 Ukrainian; by the 1923-24 school year, that number had grown dramatically to 1,086 state elementary schools—672 Polish and 289 Ukrainian.[20] Despite the fact that Ukrainian schools had not multiplied at anywhere near the rate of their Polish counterparts, right-wing nationalists worried that Polish children would be forced to attend Ukrainian schools and, as such, lose their Polishness. As the nationalist Jan Biliński put it in an article published in the right-wing *Poznań Courier* (*Kurier Poznański*) in 1924, it was important that "Polish children make use only of Polish schools. Otherwise, they are subject to the foreign influences of our national enemies, becoming indifferent and lost to the nation."[21] Reports from Volhynian scouting leaders in the mid-1920s suggested that such fears were becoming a reality, since Polish youth—whether attending school or not—was said to be living in an atmosphere of "state and national indifference, negation of faith in the fatherland, in complete moral neglect and physical infirmity."[22] In an attempt to counter such tendencies, the National Democrat Stanisław Grabski had created the

[19] *Przez Oświatę do Potęgi. Sprawozdanie Zarządu Koła Łuckiego Polskiego Macierzy Szkolnej od 1.VII.1924 do 1.VII.1925* (Łuck: Drukarnia Państwowa, 1926), 16.
[20] Mędrzecki, *Województwo Wołyńskie***,** 31.
[21] Jan Biliński, "Kresy Wschodnie–najżywotniejsze zagadnienie," reprinted in *Życie Wołynia*, February 17, 1924, 4.
[22] "Memorjał z Wołynia w sprawie Harcerstwa Kresowego" (undated, probably 1926), AAN ZHP 689.

1924 school laws (*Lex Grabski*), which effectively brought an end to state-funded Ukrainian-language schools and introduced bilingual schools in which the Polish language was prioritized. By October 1925, it was reported that there were no "purely Ruthenian" schools left in Volhynia.[23]

At a local level, the potential for state elementary schools to attract non-Polish populations seemed doubtful. While historians have viewed problems relating to education within the context of Polish-Ukrainian conflict, and while it is true that the corrupt execution of local plebiscites related to the *Lex Grabski* provided a profound source of Ukrainian discontent, fundamental problems on the ground—including the lack of buildings, inadequate teaching personnel, and low levels of sanitation—have been overlooked. As was the case across the European continent in the aftermath of the First World War, the Polish government struggled to deal with significant structural problems.[24] In the eastern borderlands in particular, large-scale wartime destruction led to a shortage of buildings that could be used as schoolhouses—even by 1925, around 900 schools in Volhynia lacked their own buildings and were forced to rent.[25] Moreover, new school building projects did not have sufficient funding from either the central government or the education budgets of local councils.[26] Despite the fact that school authorities relaxed the criteria for new teachers in order to fill positions in the *kresy*, the lack of attractions, entertainment, and elementary comforts did not make the village a particularly inviting destination.[27]

In the summer of 1924, the *Volhynian Review* published an article that painted a horrifying picture of the province's schools. In both the towns and the villages, schools were "overwhelmingly housed in low, dark, sometimes damp buildings. […] There are no lockers, toilets, or places designated for recreation. There is a lack of

[23] "Protokół Obrad na zjeździe Wojewodów Ziem Wschodnich w dniu 19-20 października," AAN MSW (Part IV) 10/44.
[24] Other European countries faced similar shortages in the post-First World War period. See Harp, *Learning to Be Loyal*, 198; Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, 35.
[25] "Protokuł spisany z przebiegu pierwszego perjodycznego zebrania Naczelników Władz II instancji na obszarze Województwa Wołyńskiego odbytego w Wołyńskim Urzędzie Wojewódzkim w dniu 27 kwietnia 1925 roku," AAN MSW (Part I) 69/17.
[26] "Oświata na kresach," *Przegląd Lubelsko-Kresowy*, April 5, 1925, 12.
[27] Ibid., 12.

ventilation, a lack of healthy water to drink, a lack of washrooms and towels."[28] Such conditions meant that pupils were at risk of contracting infectious diseases and found it impossible to learn anything at all. In the cold autumn and winter months, for instance, "the atmosphere in the school becomes heavy, the mind becomes befuddled, children are visibly nauseous and not in a position to think."[29] Polish schools were negatively compared to their counterparts in Western Europe, particularly in Sweden where schools were said to be the essence of simplicity, efficiency, and cleanliness.[30] For those on the right, the poor state of Polish schools was a worrying indictment, jeopardizing ideas of Polish civilizational superiority. Indeed, an article in the right-wing *Volhynia Life* provided details of the poor conditions in Volhynia's Polish schools, such as in one school in Kostopol county where the teacher was forced to live in the same room where she taught her pupils, or another, which constituted an "old ruin" and suffered from water damage.[31] Against this worrying backdrop, school attendance and literacy remained low, and the idea of Polish superiority appeared shaky indeed.

New Visions of Rural Prosperity: Material Culture after the Coup

Following Piłsudski's 1926 coup, the official emphasis of both the national government (which now followed the *Sanacja* program of "cleansing" politics of corruption) and Volhynia's provincial administration shifted away from an obsession with Polish national superiority over the Ukrainians. In order to overcome rural "backwardness" and win over local populations, the new administration developed a program for the countryside that aimed at fulfilling quotidian needs. As governor Mech put it in 1927, the state's task was to take economic measures in order to "draw the non-Polish population into the orbit of state interests and cooperation with governing agents."[32] The man who succeeded him in 1928, Henryk Józewski,

[28] "Nasza Szkoła," *Przegląd Wołyński*, July 16, 1924, 1.
[29] Ibid., 1-2.
[30] Ibid., 2.
[31] "O naszych szkołach na kresach," *Życie Wołynia*, no. 48 (1924), 10.
[32] "Protokół z zebrania Naczelników Władz Administracyjnych II instancji, odbytego w dniu 5 maja 1927 r. w Urzędzie Wojewódzkim Wołyńskim w Łucku," AAN MSW (Part I) 69/25.

concurred—rather than focus on the party-political slogans of which peasants were so suspicious, the state should concentrate on "responding to the real needs and complaints of everyday life."[33] These men looked at the poor conditions in Volhynia's villages through a different lens, perceiving not Polish denationalization, but an opportunity to prove that the state could provide both Polish and Ukrainian peasants with the only path towards rural prosperity. However, just as elites believed that only Polish-dominated towns could prosper, so they emphasized that only the Poles could improve peasant living standards.

Three interrelated rural issues were of particular concern to Volhynia's new administration: the modernization of agricultural land, the improvement of sanitary conditions in both public and private places, and the issue of elementary schooling. Each is worth exploring in some detail. First, farming culture in the eastern borderlands stood at a much lower level than it did in the western provinces. While southern Volhynia boasted good soils, land in the north was muddy and infertile, with some areas only accessible during the winter. Volhynia also suffered from a number of anachronistic farming practices, not least the existence of so-called "chessboard" lands, by which one person owned several small strips of territory that were a considerable distance apart.[34] During the interwar years, Polish authorities attempted to merge these lands in order to create a more rational system of farming.

Efforts to improve the productivity of Volhynia's agricultural land were linked to raising the quality of life and lifting peasants out of the misery that they had endured for centuries. As one journalist writing in the *Volhynian Review* put it in 1926, the central reason for the lack of cultivation in northern Volhynia was the fact that the land had not been drained:

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[33] "Memorandum Wojewody Wołyńskiego w sprawie wyborów do ciał ustawodawczych w roku 1928," AAN PRM (Part IV) 56/8/37.

[34] One memoirist recalled that in the village of Rudniki in Łuck county there were "strips of land lying often great distances from one another that belonged to one owner. As a rule, there were no farmers who had all of their land in one place." KARTA Institute Archive AWII/1462/4. The "chessboard" lands were a problem across the Polish state. See Polonsky, *Politics in Independent Poland*, 14; Witold Staniewicz, "The Agrarian Problem in Poland between the Two World Wars," *Slavonic and East European Review* 43, no. 100 (1964): 23.

> The mud negatively affects the health of the inhabitants, the possibilities for communications within the province and with other areas, the lowering of the yield from the fields, meadows, forests, and livestock, and the possibility of transporting natural resources and importing products that have been created elsewhere. In short, it completely slows down the development of life in this part of Volhynia.[35]

Those who supported draining the land argued that the process would boost farming productivity, by both increasing the land available for farming and raising the output of existing agricultural lands.

However, proponents of land drainage schemes also argued that they provided a way of improving Polish and Ukrainian attitudes towards the state.[36] In June 1929, a special issue of the *Volhynian Review*, celebrating ten years of Polish rule, claimed that improvements made to rural life were a direct result of post-1926 policies.[37] In a pamphlet published a few years later, a local supporter of Józewski argued that state policies to consolidate "chessboard" lands and improve land quality through drainage programs provided evidence of the great progress that the Polish authorities had brought to the war-damaged region.[38] Articles in the press also emphasized Ukrainian support for state policies. When the minister of farming reform visited Volhynia in 1926, the *Volhynian Review* described how he witnessed "the spontaneous intensification" of the movement for the merging of lands, commenting that people of all ethnicities understood the benefits that it brought to their village.[39] In Wielka-Horodnica in Dubno county, the minister was even greeted with traditional bread and salt by representatives of six Ruthenian villages in which "chessboard" lands had been merged, an action that "underlined what had been achieved through the benefits of the new system of farming."[40] An article in the *Volhynian Review*'s special issue of 1929—published in both Polish and Ukrainian—claimed that improvements to village

[35] "Rolnictwo a samorząd na Wołyniu," *Życie Wołynia*, February 28, 1926, 7.
[36] Kęsik, *Zaufany Komendanta,* 117.
[37] "Gdy dzwony dzwonią," *Przegląd Wołyński*, June 16, 1929, 4-5.
[38] Dec, *Dobrzy Sąsiedzi*, 10.
[39] "Z Podróży ministra reform rolnych na Wołyniu," *Przegląd Wołyński,* November 14, 1926, 2.
[40] Ibid., 2.

life had led to the fading away of "artificially-fabricated partitions" between Poles and Ukrainians.[41]

Official provincial reports and newspaper articles also described the transformation of the physical environment as part of a wider narrative about Poland's Europeanizing role in the East. In the context of Volhynia's "backwardness" and relatively small Polish-speaking population, improvements to the countryside might prove that the land would only become prosperous under Polish stewardship. In this vein, a 1933 official report stated that farming developments not only brought the Volhynian population into the orbit of the Polish state, but also positively shaped economic and cultural relations, which became "more and more distinct from the typical eastern system and clearly gravitates to the western type."[42] An article in the newspaper *Volhynia* similarly claimed that farming work in the *kresy* linked the region with the rest of the Polish state and with "Western culture" more generally.[43]

Yet despite the rhetoric of progress and development, land drainage programs were hampered by the sheer scale of the task and the lack of financial resources. While other states in Europe, and indeed other areas of Poland, engaged in drainage schemes, northern Volhynia continued to suffer from the consequences of its undrained marshland.[44] Since the state could not afford to execute large-scale land drainage work, such schemes were often carried out by landowners on a local level only. As a 1928 report sent to the Kostopol county regional assembly (*sejmik*) emphasized, small-scale land drainage was largely ineffective because land improvement in one village was dependent on the management of "a whole complex of marshes amounting to thousands and tens of thousands of hectares."[45]

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[41] "Gdy dzwony dzwonią," 5. Significantly, the article was written by a Ukrainian activist who supported the Polish state.
[42] "Sprawozdanie z sytuacji na Wołyniu, Wrzesień 1933," AAN UWwŁ 83/5.
[43] "Przebudowa wsi wołyńskiej," *Wołyń*, February 19, 1933, 1.
[44] For more on European-wide land drainage schemes, see *League of Nations European Conference on Rural Life. Land Reclamation and Improvement in Europe*, No. 4 (Geneva, 1939); John Bowers "Inter-War Land Drainage and Policy in England and Wales," *Agricultural History Review* 46, no. 1 (1998): 64-80.
[45] Letter to the Department of the Regional Assembly in Kostopol County (April 28, 1928), DARO 26/1/57/25od.

Proponents of land drainage (and indeed other agricultural policies) also discovered that local people failed to recognize the benefits of such schemes.[46] In Kostopol county, where 50% of the land was not used for agriculture, one of the largest obstacles was "the weak culture and lack of consciousness of the population about the benefits and profitability of land improvement."[47] To counter this reluctance, propaganda was to be carried out "through running lectures and tours of the regions where land had already been drained."[48] Local newspapers similarly commented on the seemingly conservative attitudes of rural populations. In one article, entitled "A Letter from the Countryside of Dubno county," a journalist noted that local people "do not want to manage this evil at all," despite the fact that "not only horse and cattle, but even children" were sinking into the mud.[49] In another article, Józef Sienkiewicz, a local engineer who worked on land drainage, argued that "the rural population, with some minor exceptions, is not conscious of the need for land drainage and is not able to organize or undertake this type of work."[50] Since local land offices did not have the funds to pay workers, Sienkiewicz suggested that a law be passed to raise a corvée, obligating peasants to work on drainage programs. "It may offend our feelings of democratic freedom," he wrote, "but is it really worse than forcing children to attend school, obligatory military service, tax obligations, and so on?" After all, land drainage benefited "the populations themselves" and not somebody else.[51] In fact, despite the lack of legislation, two-thirds of drainage work between 1928 and 1935 was carried out through the corvée.[52]

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[46] Attempts to liquidate the so-called "servitudes" (private estate land—usually meadows, pastures, and forests—from which peasants could benefit) were also resisted by peasants, since they structurally undercut the traditional economic system of northern Volhynia's countryside. Because the areas available for raising cattle decreased in size, people kept fewer cows and therefore had less fertilizer to use on their fields (which in turn led to a fall in the harvest); they also lost opportunities to supplement grain harvests with plants, fish, and game from the forest. See Mędrzecki, *Województwo Wołyńskie*, 82-83. Comparisons might also be drawn here with the situation of Pomerelian peasants in late nineteenth-century Prussian forests. See Wilson, "Environmental Chauvinsim in the Prussian East," particularly 39-47.
[47] Ibid., 27.
[48] Ibid., 27od.
[49] "List ze wsi pow. Dubieńskiego," *Przegląd Wołyński,* March 1, 1931, 3.
[50] Józef Sienkiewicz, "O sposobach wykonania prac melioracyjnych w Polsce," *Przegląd Wołyński*, September 6, 1931, 4.
[51] Ibid., 4.
[52] "Inwestycje na Wołyniu: Melioracje (ciąg dalszy)," *Wołyń*, November 15, 1936, 5.

The second problem that provincial administrators faced in the village related to unhygienic conditions. Such problems were, of course, not limited to Volhynia, but posed fundamental challenges for Polish state authorities that sought to spread modern European ideas about sanitation throughout the country. During the interwar period, Polish medical elites in Warsaw were deeply engaged with Western ideas about public health, as articles in the journal *Health* indicate. Polish health officials attended, and sometimes hosted, European-wide public health conferences, while the National Institute of Hygiene in Warsaw, which was founded in 1918, was supported by the American Rockefeller Foundation.[53] Improving the health and sanitary conditions of peasants in far-flung villages was also seen as a way in which the authorities might tie people to the state. In Volhynia, populations that generally had little access to healthcare were regularly subjected to outbreaks of infectious diseases associated with poor living standards, such as dysentery and tuberculosis.[54]

As was the case with land reform, however, local conditions in Volhynia hampered the state's efforts. For one, Volhynia's health department was chronically understaffed: in 1929, there was only one doctor for every 47,000 people in Włodzimierz county, while the few doctors that did exist across the province rarely ventured into the villages due to the awful state of rural roads.[55] The authorities were also forced to battle against what they perceived as the ignorance and conservatism of rural people. At a meeting of state workers in Luboml county in 1929, for instance, the school inspector commented that local schools were "devoid of the most primitive sanitation and hygiene" and were housed in inadequate, overcrowded buildings that

[53] Balinska, "The National Institute of Hygiene and Public Health in Poland 1918-1939," 427-444.
[54] "Sprawozdanie Wojewody Wołyńskiego o ogólnym stanie Województwa, działalności administracji państwowej w r.1932-ym i ważniejszych zamierzeniach na przyszłość," AAN MSW (Part I) 111/828-830. See also "Stan Szpitalnictwa w RZPP w 1926/27r.," AAN MSW (Part IV) 70. Significantly, however, in his 1929 report on Volhynia, Joachim Wołoszynowski argued that Volhynians were less likely to die of infectious diseases than the average citizen of Poland. See Wołoszynowski, *Województwo Wołyńskie w świetle liczb i faktów*, 162.
[55] Even a well-respected Dubno county doctor who was familiar with local conditions after forty years on the job only rarely ventured into the countryside. "Sprawozdanie Dr. W. Hryszkiewicza, Inspektora Państwowej Służby Zdrowia, z inspekcji władz administracyjnych sanitarnych Województwa Wołyńskiego w dn. 22-26 lutego 1927r," AAN MOS 825/16.

made the work of teachers difficult."[56] The county head laid the blame on local district councils, arguing that their disregard for sanitary standards served only to underline the importance of changing the deep-rooted attitudes of village inhabitants. "The transformation of the psychology of local people," he argued, "is one of the most important activities in the life of the county, which is overflowing with the listless conservatism of the rural population."[57]

The peasantry's belief in witchcraft and its unwillingness to accept the tenets of modern hygiene also made life difficult for local health officials.[58] In a 1927-28 report, for example, health inspectors in Zdołbunów county stated that rural people still allowed older village women to carry out the delivery of babies, but did not have confidence in qualified midwives.[59] In response, the regional assembly organized a course to bring basic hygiene practices (such as the washing of hands) into the villages, although certificates issued to rural nurses meant little to local residents who did not understand Polish.[60] Similarly, in the village of Nowostaw, which lay in the Klewań district of Równe county, a group of vacationers complained about the dreadful living conditions they encountered in the summer of 1931. The backyards, they claimed, were "polluted with the feces of people and horses," so much so that an outbreak of epidemic disease seemed likely. Additionally, Nowostaw's inhabitants, due to their "savage practices," were building without permission and violating construction codes.[61] One peasant, a certain Barowski, apparently constructed a bridge across the river and ran an illegal public bath that endangered public health and in which a child had already drowned.[62] In dealing with these complaints, the sanitary commission concluded that the village was unhygienic, citing the fact that areas next

[56] "Protokuł zebrania perjodycznego Kierowników Władz I Instancji, odbytego w dniu 16.II.1929 r. o godz. 12 w lokalu Starostwa Lubomelskiego," AAN MSW (Part I) 87/58.
[57] Ibid., 58.
[58] On superstitious beliefs, see "Osadnictwo Cywilne i Wojskowe," BUW Manuscript Collection MS 1174/9. See also Anastazy Ryszard Garczyński, *Wołyń Naszą Ojczyzną* (Lublin: Lubelskie Centrum Marketingu, 1999), 63.
[59] "Sprawozdanie Dr. W. Hryszkiewicza, Inspektora Państwowej Służby Zdrowia, z inspekcji władz administracyjnych sanitarnych Województwa Wołyńskiego w dn. 22-26 lutego 1927r," AAN MOS 825/7-9.
[60] Ibid., 9.
[61] Letter to the Head of Równe county (1931), DARO 30/7/103/43.
[62] Ibid., 43.

to some of the houses became dumping grounds for garbage, including "papers, eggshells, feathers, and other kitchen waste."[63]

Even when villagers implemented changes, health inspectors were suspicious about their motives. In February 1931, the head of the health department reported that the population in one village had increased the number of toilets only in order to impress the sanitary commission, but did not accustom itself to the use of these facilities, leaving their backyards dirty and full of excrement. The only answer to the problem, he argued, lay in convincing rural people that using the toilet had economic benefits, since pigs protected from human feces would have a lower risk of disease and a higher market value.[64] As one interwar memoirist recalled, Volhynian villagers tended to see toilets as unnecessary—only in the 1930s, did they become more commonly used as a consequence of "administrative orders and police measures."[65]

A Return to the Schoolhouse

In addition to issues of land usage and rural sanitation, the question of rural schooling continued to plague Volhynia's administration. In 1927, the province still had the second highest illiteracy rates in the entire Polish state—38.3% in the towns and a staggering 78.1% in the countryside.[66] As had been the case prior to 1926, the village elementary school was seen as a key arena for spreading rural prosperity, ameliorating living conditions, and proving that the Polish state brought civilization from the West. In addition to instructing children in schools, teachers were encouraged to lend their skills to local farming cooperatives and to spread modern hygienic practices such as the washing of hands and the maintenance of bodily cleanliness.[67] But while the post-1926 administration shared the National Democratic view that the rural elementary school should raise literacy rates and cultural standards, it envisaged

[63] "Protokuł" (Nowostaw, July 21, 1931), DARO 30/7/103/44.
[64] Letter from Dr. W. Habich, the Head of the Health Department (February 16, 1931), DARO 30/7/103/1.
[65] Garczyński, *Wołyń Naszą Ojczyzną*, 66.
[66] J. Kornecki, "Stan kultury Polski w świetle cyfr," *Oświata Polska: Organ Wydziału Wykonawczego Zjednoczenia Polskich Tow. Oświatowych* 2-3 (1927): 88.
[67] On the role of teachers in cooperatives, see Jan Dec, "Udział Nauczycielstwa w pracach organizacji społecznych na wsi," *Dziennik Urzędowy Kuratorium Okręgu Szkolnego Wołyńskiego* 6, no. 2 (February 1929): 63-65.

the schoolhouse as a space in which Poles and non-Poles might be convinced of the value of the state. This approach drew on Piłsudski's idea that civic-state education (*wychowanie obywatelsko-państwowe*) would encourage cooperation between national groups and lead to collective defense against external and internal enemies.[68]

In November 1926, a decree from the Ministry of Religion and Public Education, which was sent to the education departments in the four formerly Russian provinces of the *kresy*, indicated this shift in direction. In accordance with the ministry's instructions, Volhynian schools were to be organized "without frictions [and] discontent, for the benefit of all citizens, regardless of their religion, nationality, or heritage."[69] According to the decree, the brutal state-led imposition of exterior characteristics of Polishness, as well as attempts to eradicate the native languages of non-Polish populations, had led to feelings of hatred and hostility. While children were still required to have a good grasp of the Polish language and a healthy knowledge of Poland's history, geography, writers, and political system, teachers and school inspectors were expected to acquire an "accurate knowledge of the local language."[70] For the Third of May (Constitution Day) celebrations in 1927, the Volhynian school board issued instructions that called upon teachers to encourage the involvement of local people. In particular, speeches, declarations, and choruses in the local language would achieve "the closer, more animated and sincere attitudes of this population to the appointed celebrations."[71] Personnel changes—particularly the dismissal of the province's school curator, Wincenty Sikora—also reflected the administration's new approach.[72]

Elementary education offered a way of cementing relationships among the province's national groups and between all populations and the state. Schools were environments in which children from ethnically-diverse households might be

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[68] Janusz Tomiak, "Education of the Non-Dominant Ethnic Groups in the Polish Republic, 1918-1939," in *Schooling, Educational Policy and Ethnic Identity*, ed. Janusz Tomiak (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 189.
[69] Circular from the Ministry of Religion and Public Education (November 19, 1926) in *Dziennik Urzędowy Kuratorium Okręgu Szkolnego Wołyńskiego* 4, no. 1 (January 15, 1927): 2.
[70] Ibid., 2.
[71] Volhynian School Board to School Inspectors and Elementary School Teachers (April 7, 1927), *Dziennik Urzędowy Kuratorium Okręgu Szkolnego Wołyńskiego* 4, no. 3 (April 15, 1927): 75.
[72] Mędrzecki, *Inteligencja polska*, 101.

physically brought together, since the overwhelming majority of rural children who attended school went to ethnically-mixed elementary schools, where a range of different languages, including Polish, Ukrainian, Czech, and German, were either taught as subjects or provided a linguistic medium for instruction (along with Polish).[73] Governor Józewski and members of the Volhynian branch of the pro-Piłsudski Union of Polish Teachers (*Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego,* hereafter ZNP) envisaged schools as places of Polish-Ukrainian rapprochement. At a 1932 regional meeting of the ZNP in Równe, for example, Józewski emphasized the importance of having Ukrainian members of the union.[74] At another meeting, he spoke in more detail about the ways in which Polish and Ukrainian cooperation in the classroom might foster mutual understanding. "In shaping the psyche of the Polish child, it is necessary to take the existence of the Ukrainian child into account, and vice versa," he told delegates, "In the future, the relation of these two psyches should provide a common base for further understanding, feelings of closeness, and cooperation within the framework of common ideas."[75] The school board also organized adult education courses for the vast number of illiterate peasants who had never received a formal education, in order to raise literacy rates, modernize farming methods, and improve the local economy. During the 1929-1930 school year, courses were organized for mainly Ukrainian peasants who lived in 316 localities across the province.[76]

In the Volhynian borderlands, education also had a geopolitical significance. Local pro-Piłsudski activists believed that a well-educated, prosperous peasantry would be in a better position to resist political agitation—both communist and Ukrainian nationalist—that was gaining momentum in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In the 1928 elections (the last reasonably free elections to be held in interwar Poland),

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[73] By the mid-1930s, less than three percent of rural elementary school pupils attended the province's 107 rural private schools, which almost always had a single language of instruction, either Polish, German, Hebrew, or Czech. Statistic extrapolated from data in *Statystyka Szkolnictwa 1936/37* (Warsaw: Nakładem Głównego Urzędu Statystycznego, 1938), 16.

[74] "Protokół VII Zgromadzenia Okręgowego Związku Nauczycielstwa Polskiego Województwa Wołyńskiego odbytego w dniach 15-16 maja 1932 r. w Równem," DARO 184/1/6/145.

[75] "Wyciąg z protokołu plenarnego posiedzenia Zarządu Związku N.P., w dniu 25 września 1932 roku, w Równem," DARO 184/1/15/6.

[76] Jakub Hoffman, "Oświata pozaszkolna i samorządy," *Przegląd Wołyński*, May 25, 1930, 5.

communist front parties in Volhynia received 48% of the vote, a worrying sign for the authorities.[77] The Ukrainian Socialist Peasant-Workers Union (known in interwar Poland by the abbreviation *Sel-Rob*), a front organization for the Communist Party of Western Ukraine, was particularly active throughout the Volhynian countryside. In 1931, local authorities reported that *Sel-Rob Jedność* (the union's left wing) had grown and become more influential over the past year. To a large extent, this growth was attributed to the economic crisis, which resulted in shortages and discontent, and created "a psychological basis for the growth of *Sel-Rob Jedność* influences."[78] In Kowel county, where *Sel-Rob* was at its most successful, there was a county committee, 64 regional committees, and 1,173 members.[79] The early 1930s also saw an increase in the work of Ukrainian nationalist organizations. Particularly after the liquidation of *Sel-Rob* in 1932, the Galicia-based UNDO, which advocated the creation of an independent Ukrainian state, made inroads into Volhynia.[80] By infiltrating the province's existing cultural, educational and economic organizations, such as the cooperatives, UNDO sought to gain an influence over the Ukrainian-speaking population.[81] UNDO's tactics and vision came into conflict with another Galicia-based group, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, which was founded in 1929 and promoted an anti-Polish, anti-Russian, and anti-Semitic message.[82] In

[77] Himka, "Interwar Western Ukraine," 358.
[78] "Sprawozdanie z działalności partji Sel-Rob-Jedność na terenie Wołynia za czas od 1.I do 1.IX.1931 r.," DARO 30/18/1759/ 9.
[79] Ibid., 9od.
[80] Kęsik, "'Kordon sokalski'," 143.
[81] Additionally, it supported the neo-Uniate movement, which aimed to bring Greek Catholicism to the Orthodox populations of Volhynia, thereby making them more "Ukrainian." Ryszard Tomczyk, *Ukraińskie Zjednoczenie Narodowo-Demokratyczne, 1925-1939* (Szczecin: Książnica Pomorska im. Stanisława Staczica, 2006), 194.
[82] "Sprawozdanie z sytuacji na Wołyniu, Wrzesień 1933," AAN UWwŁ 83/25. In the autumn of 1932, police seized OUN leaflets that propagated a violent anti-Semitic, anti-Polish, and anti-Bolshevik message in two villages in Luboml county: "Poles and Muscovite Bolsheviks are exerting all their strength in order to destroy the Ukrainian liberation battle. Hundreds of the best Ukrainians are being arrested and put in prison every day. *Sel-Rob* helps them, intoxicated by Jewish agitators. [...] Prepare the rifles and always be prepared, because the day of the great uprising is near at hand." See "Wołyński Urząd Wojewódzki. Wydział Bezpieczeństwa. BBO-816/tjn/32," DARO 143/1/73/88. For more on the development of the OUN, see Alexander J. Motyl, "Ukrainian Nationalist Political Violence," 45-55.

dealing with all of these groups, the Volhynian authorities did not shy away from using repression.[83]

But repressive measures were twinned with attempts to curb unrest through the promotion of rural education. Polish elites emphasized that the people who inhabited Volhynia—and the eastern borderlands more generally—were especially child-like and primitive. Reporting to the British Ambassador in Poland about the possibility of agents provocateurs mingling with refugees from Soviet Ukraine in 1930, a representative from KOP referred to the "curious psychology, so often childlike and fatalistic, of the Polish border districts" that made the population particularly susceptible to external subversion.[84] Since the administration saw susceptibility to agitation as a product of ignorance, desperation, and misery, it was argued that raising literacy rates among all populations would naturally lead to an improvement in attitudes towards the state. As the Volhynian landowner and state bureaucrat Tadeusz Krzyżanowski put it, low literacy rates in the eastern borderlands created "very susceptible material for influences coming from the east, dangerous not only for our culture, but for the whole of Western civilization."[85] Similarly, the *Volhynian Review* promoted state education as the key to integrating Volhynia with both Poland and "Western European culture" and to furnishing a barrier against irredentism, hatred, and the desires of separatism that flowed from Eastern Galicia.[86] Extra-curricular work offered particular benefits. Since their cultural needs were fulfilled by instruction in their native language, young Ukrainians who took part in courses run by the school board were allegedly not susceptible to "destructive influences." While "agitators want

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[83] Before the 1930 elections, Volhynia witnessed the arrest of leaders of Ukrainian independence groups, while there were several political trials against Community Party members between 1928 and 1930. In the summer of 1932, *Sel-Rob* activists who carried out anti-state raids in the Volhynian-Polesian borderlands were also crushed by the authorities. For a more detailed exploration of these events, see Piotr Cichoracki, *Polesie nieidylliczne: zaburzenia porządku publicznego w województwie poleskim w latach trzydziestych XX w.* (Łomianki: Wydawn. LTW, 2007), 23-104; "Wołyński Urząd Wojewódzki. Wydział Bezpieczeństwa. BBO/4/17/48/32," DARO 143/1/73/85.
[84] "Russian Refugees crossing the Polish border," NAL FO 688/28/1.
[85] Tadeusz Krzyżanowski, "Zagadnienia kulturalno-oświatowe na kresach wschodnich," *Oświata Polska* 6, no. 3 (1929), 150. For more on the links between education and the Polish-Soviet border, see "Katastrofalny stan powszechnego nauczania na Wołyniu," *Przegląd Wołyński*, February 22, 1931, 5.
[86] Sabina Krasicka, "Problem wychowania państwowo-obywatelskiego na Wołyniu," *Przegląd Wołyński*, January 10, 1932, 2.

young people to break away from the courses [and] to resist them," the head of Volhynia's ZNP branch argued, "they are striking in a vacuum."[87]

Yet as was the case with land reform and health initiatives, plans to bring prosperity to the peasantry via the schoolhouse were hampered by personnel, state limitations, and the attitudes of local peasants. Polish teachers (whose proportion rose from 69.3% in 1928 to 79.8% in 1933 at the expense of their Ukrainian counterparts) were frequently ill-equipped to deal with the Ukrainian-speaking children in their classrooms.[88] The material problems of the pre-1926 years also persisted. The vast majority of rural elementary schools in Volhynia remained one- or two-class schools, often with only one teacher in charge of educating 50 children.[89] In their reports to the educational authorities, teachers continued to request more personnel so that they could carry out extra-curricular work, as well as more space in order to accommodate all their students.[90] Despite efforts to build new schools, the authorities struggled to keep up with the growth in the school-age population, a problem that was widespread across the Polish state.[91] The local district councils that helped to fund education rarely had sufficient capital to create the necessary number of schools, let alone schools of a high quality. In 1931, the *Volhynian Review* reported that since the number of children in Volhynia increased by 30,000 each year, the province faced "a complete deluge of illiteracy" if more schools were not constructed.[92] Even by the 1934-35 school year, 32.9% of school age children did not attend school "due to the excessive distance between themselves and the school and the lack of school buildings

[87] Hoffman, "Oświata pozaszkolna i samorządy," 5.
[88] Kęsik, *Zaufany Komendanta*, 82. As Timothy Snyder has pointed out, teachers who were brought to Volhynia from beyond the province after 1926 lacked knowledge of the Ukrainian language. Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations*, 149.
[89] Wołoszynowski, *Województwo Wołyńskie w świetle liczb i faktów*, 179.
[90] See the reports in DARO 252/1/3.
[91] Leszek Zasztowt, "Recent Studies of Polish Education in the Interwar Period," *History of Education Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (1990): 391; "Budowa Szkół Powszechnych," AAN MRWiOP 154/39.
[92] "Katastrofalny stan powszechnego nauczania na Wołyniu," *Przegląd Wołyński,* February 22, 1931, 5. For specific statistics on Luboml county, see "Stan szkolnictwa powszechnego w pow. Lubomelskim," *Przegląd Wołyński*, May 17, 1931, 3.

and teachers."[93] In addition to these material shortcomings, rural parents did not prioritize schooling, but rather looked upon it "as one of many vexations."[94]

Settlers, Women, Soldiers, and Scouts: Volhynia's Rural Activists

Teachers were not the only representatives of culture and civilization in the Volhynian village. As was the case across Europe, rural services in Poland were delivered by a range of organizations that were frequently in receipt of state subsidies and operated in conjunction with state representatives. This system developed partly out of necessity: the state simply could not single-handedly organize, or adequately finance, local services. It made more sense, therefore, to subsidize groups that had already established networks in the period prior to the First World War, during the war itself, and in the early 1920s. But the system was not only a practical stopgap. Piłsudski, Józewski, and their supporters also believed that the rejuvenation of the nation would only come about through the actions of a whole host of non-parliamentary organizations whose actions were "beyond politics."[95] In Volhynia, community-based efforts, promoted through a range of societies loyal to the state, were important elements in the mission to win over the peasantry. Ideally free from the infighting and ideologies of party-politics, such organizations would play a key political role in cementing the relationships between the peasants and the state, and countering the negative impressions that the Polish bureaucracy often made upon Volhynia's Ukrainians.[96] In the interwar years, these men and women—stakeholders in the state project—evoked images of rural prosperity.

In particular, the administration favored joint Polish-Ukrainian societies that accepted members from both national communities. By 1930, almost all organizations and societies registered with the provincial authorities (168 of 191) were nationally "mixed," while only ten were "Polish," and one "Ukrainian."[97] The Volhynian Union

[93] "Potrzeby kulturalne wsi wołyńskiej," *Wołyń*, August 9, 1936, 5.
[94] "Drugi list ze wsi wołyńskiej," *Przegląd Wołyński*, March 15, 1931, 5.
[95] Plach, *The Clash of Moral Nations*, 84.
[96] "Pro Memorja w sprawie Wołynia" (undated, but probably 1927), AAN PRM (Part IV) 56/8/50-56.
[97] "Sprawozdanie Wojewody Wołyńskiego ogólnym stanie Województwa, działalności administracji państwowej w r.1930-ym i ważniejszych zamierzeniach na przyszłość," AAN MSW (Part I) 111/522.

of Rural Youth (*Wołyński Związek Młodzieży Wiejskiej*, hereafter WZMW), one of the largest Polish-Ukrainian organizations in the province, boasted a membership of 76% Poles and 24% Ukrainians in 1930, while its journal, *The Young Village* (*Młoda Wieś, Molode Selo*), featured articles in both Polish and Ukrainian that covered "organizational-ideological themes" and practical tips for improving village life.[98] The rural services offered by the WZMW's local circles—including mobile libraries, cooperatives, amateur theatre shows, choirs, agricultural courses, reading competitions, and community centers—similarly aimed to develop the countryside and encourage friendly feelings towards the state.[99] In particular, community centers, which were modeled on similar institutions in Denmark, Germany, and Sweden, provided space for Poles and Ukrainians to organize lectures, theatrical productions, parties, and gymnastics.[100] Mixed cooperatives—"in which people of various nations, languages, and religions find the possibilities of cooperative work"—were likewise seen as "the healthy impetus of the Volhynian village towards self-help."[101]

While such mixed organizations relied on Ukrainian participation, Józewski and his circle believed that only Polish leadership could bring about rural prosperity. At a meeting of regional bureaucrats in July 1929, Józewski argued that Poles needed to recognize that no other nationality in Volhynia possessed their unique spirit and culture. Indeed, "local Poles must be fully conscious that they are borderland people, as they have been for centuries, that they have to play the role of the manager and not the occupant […]. They must be aware of where they came from and along which

[98] Kazimierz Banach, *Czasopisma w kole Młodzieży Wiejskiej* (Łuck: Wydawnictwo Wołyńskiego Związku Młodzieży Wiejskiej, 1936), 5.
[99] On reading competitions and libraries, see Jan Dec, "Książka–jako miły gość na wsi wołyńskiej," *Wołyń*, November 26, 1933, 7; Kazimierz Banach, *Konkurs Dobrego Czytania Książki* (Warsaw: Centralny Komitet do Spraw Młodzieży Wiejskiej przy Związku Izb i Organiacyj Rolnicznych R.P., 1933), 25. On community centers, see Edward Walawski, "Listy ze wsi wołyńskiej," *Przegląd Wołyński*, October 4, 1931, 2.
[100] "Sprawozdanie Wołyńskiego Związku Młodzieży Wiejskiej za rok 1930/31 t.j. od 1 kwietnia 1930 do 31 marca 1931," *Młoda Wieś, Molode Selo*, June 25, 1931.
[101] "Zdrowe Objawy," *Wołyń*, June 4, 1933, 2.

roads."[102] The progress that had been made in the province was Polish progress, he said, because only Poles could infuse Volhynia with "spiritual and material value."[103]

Such ideas permeated government reports and newspaper articles throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s. In a 1931 report on the activity of the Ukrainian minority in Równe county, for instance, the lack of "serious results" emanating from Ukrainian community work was attributed to supposed innate characteristics, including low levels of intelligence, a lack of aptitude for community work, and the fact that "generally quite passive" peasants only engaged in work that had very obvious benefits. Ukrainians were urged to take their lead from the Poles by joining mixed Polish-Ukrainian organizations that promised to "penetrate the Ukrainian population, developing in them civic and community feelings."[104] As one article in *The Young Village* put it, the role of "the pioneer and leader of coexistence" among the Slavic nations fell upon the Polish Republic.[105] Such language found echoes in a report issued by a British official, Frank Savery, who toured Volhynia in 1932. Savery, whose reports were almost always favorable towards the position of the Polish state, wrote that the Volhynian Union of Rural Youth "certainly stirs up the torpid minds of the Ukrainian peasants in a healthy way."[106]

It followed, therefore, that any Ukrainian groups espousing their own visions of rural prosperity, which did not come under the auspices of the Polish state, could not genuinely raise peasant living standards. While Galicia-based Ukrainian cooperative, welfare, and educational organizations shared the language of prosperity espoused by the Polish authorities, Józewski saw such work as a smokescreen for hidden political agendas. Ukrainian activists, he believed, were bent on deceiving people who increasingly understood that the Polish state held the key to their well-being.[107] To counter such trends, Józewski oversaw the 1931 creation of the

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[102] "Protokół zebrania Naczelników władz i urzędników podlegających bezpośrednio władzom naczelnym, odbytego w Urzędzie Wojewódzkim Wołyńskim w Łucku w dniu 16 lipca 1929," AAN MSW (Part I) 69/87.
[103] Ibid., 88.
[104] "Dział ogólny. Charakterystyka ludności Ukraińskiej," AAN MSW (Part I) 944/134-137.
[105] "Sprawy Wołynia," *Młoda Wieś, Molode Selo*, August 25, 1931, 5.
[106] "Report of Mr Savery on a Tour of Volhynia" (1932), NAL FO 417/104.
[107] "Dział ogólny. Charakterystyka ludności Ukraińskiej," AAN MSW (Part I) 944/134-137.

Volhynian Ukrainian Union (*Volynske Ukraïnske Ob'iednannia*, hereafter VUO), a Ukrainian political party that aimed to bring together all expressions of collective Ukrainian life within the framework of the Polish state. In addition to producing *Ukrainian Field* (*Ukrains'ka Nyva*), the largest Ukrainian-language newspaper in Volhynia, the party also ran a rural network of "Enlightenment Houses," of which there were 22 by 1933.[108] Like the work of the Volhynian Union of Rural Youth, initiatives created by the VUO took Ukrainian "backwardness" into account. Recognizing the vulnerability of the local Ukrainian populations, due to both their proximity to communist and nationalist agitation and their "ignorance, backwardness, and illiteracy," the organization emphasized education, the fostering of economic prosperity, and land reform.[109] Repression also played its part. Józewski crushed any cultural, cooperative, or educational societies that he believed operated as a front organization for subversive activities. In August 1932, he suspended the work of the Ukrainian cultural association Prosvita, attempting to fill its place with the VUO's Enlightenment Houses.[110] That same year, he closed 124 Ukrainian cooperatives that were deemed to be front organizations for political subversion.[111]

For all the talk of success in Józewski's annual reports, plans for Polish-Ukrainian rapprochement in the village came across very real problems at a local level. The work of the Volhynian Union of Rural Youth, for example, was limited by the fact that, in many counties, the organization struggled to recruit Ukrainian-speaking members. In 1930, in all but two of the counties (Krzemieniec and Zdołbunów) the number of Ukrainian members was very low.[112] In fact, reports indicated that most of the organization's influence was limited to settler colonies inhabited solely by Poles.[113] In Dubno county, for example, of the 168 members of the local circles, only thirteen were Ukrainian, leading to the conclusion that "no Polonization work can be carried out among Ukrainian youth," while the one circle in

[108] Mędrzecki, *Województwo Wołyńskie*, 40. See also Zaporowski, *Wołyńskie Zjednoczenie Ukraińskie*, 112-115.
[109] "Memorjał Ukraińskiej Parlamentarnej Reprezentacji Wołynia" (1937), DARO 478/1/3/3-31od.
[110] Snyder, *Sketches*, 69.
[111] "Likwidacja spółdzielności na Wołyniu" AAN MSW (Part I) 1054/2.
[112] "Wołyński Związek Młodzieży Wiejskiej" (1930), AAN UWwŁ 91/29.
[113] Ibid., 29a.

Równe county in which Ukrainian members were almost exclusively concentrated was "ruled by Ukrainian nationalist moods."[114] In June 1935, the organization's attempts to recruit new members in Zdołbunów province were largely unsuccessful, since young Ukrainians, distrustful of the instructors, were unwilling to enroll.[115] Later that year, the head of the Volhynian school board explained that youth who took part in the village-based circles, after an initial period of cooperation, diverged into separate Polish and Ukrainian groups.[116]

As well as constructing local networks of joint Polish-Ukrainian organizations, the Volhynian administration also leaned upon a range of Polish "outsiders" who arrived in Volhynia from central and western regions of the state, bringing with them European ideas about modernization and progress. Not least among them were the Polish military settlers who, despite being badly affected by the economic crisis, came to be seen in an increasingly positive light. At a settler meeting in 1932, Józewski—who had himself been a military settler in the early 1920s—commended the settlers for spreading the "Polish mission" in the *kresy* and urged them to assert their authority over non-Polish populations, particularly as communists and Ukrainian agitators "undermined Polish culture and statehood."[117]

Settlers cultivated a self-image of the culturally superior *osadnik* who improved material and moral conditions, provided an example of progress and modernity for local people, and brought enlightened ideas into the countryside. According to one sympathetic article published in the *Volhynian Review* in 1931, the province's settlers had established "a whole range of model homesteads, from which local people can take an example of rational farming."[118] Newspaper reports also emphasized the positive contributions made by settlers who had been elected to the position of district head (*wójt*). In Berezne in Kostopol county, for instance, the

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[114] Ibid., 31, 35a.
[115] "Kwartalne sprawozdanie z życia polskich związków i stowarzyszeń w II kwartale" (July 20, 1935), AAN UWwŁ 30/8 [document page no.]
[116] "Sprawozdanie z przebiegu kursu instruktorów oświaty K.O.P. w Wilnie w dniach 24, 25 i 26 września 1935 r." AAN MSW (Part I) 173/4.
[117] "Protokół walnego zebrania delegatów Związku Osadników Województwa Wołyńskiego odbytego w dniu 13 września 1932 r.," DARO 223/1/22/6.
[118] Edward Walawski, "Czwarty list ze wsi wołyńskiej," *Przegląd Wołyński*, April 19, 1931, 3.

intensive social and educational action carried out among the peasantry was attributed to the head of the village, a military settler.[119] By establishing the hallmarks of modern civilization, such as health centers and schools, settlers reiterated their role as the bearers of material prosperity in the borderlands.[120] Indeed, they even utilized their image as "a carrier of culture in the *kresy*" to request special dispensations, reduced prices for raw materials, and government financial assistance.[121]

Settlers were not the only Poles from beyond the region who worked to further the state's mission in the East. Following the 1926 coup, elite Polish women, particularly the wives of state bureaucrats, became increasingly involved in government plans to improve living conditions for populations across Poland. Of course, nominally apolitical work in rural education, housekeeping, and hygiene did not liberate Volhynia's women from traditional occupations, and women continued to play a negligible role in party politics and the provincial administration. Indeed, some commentators even suggested that educational work in the Volhynian countryside would be better left to men, considering "the difficult material and cultural conditions" that might present themselves.[122] But the villages of the *kresy* did provide women with an arena in which they could participate in wider political battles to import Polish culture and civilization.[123]

Instructing parents on how to care for their offspring constituted one of the major ways in which women contributed to civilizing work in the *kresy*, a region in

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[119] "Gmina lasów, rzek, i piasków," *Wołyń*, January 10, 1937, 6.
[120] "Spr. z wiz. w dniu 2.V.1937 roku PP w Osadzie Krechowieckiej przy ul. Bliskości Kościoła, Woj. Wołyńskie, powiat Równieński," AAN MOS 1551.
[121] In November 1934, the Union of Settlers in Zdołbunów wrote to the Krzemieniec High School to ask if they could purchase wood at a reduced price. See letter dated November 7, 1934, DARO 223/1/23/23.
[122] Quotation from Tadeusz Krzyżanowski, "Zagadniena kulturalno-oświatowe na kresach wschodnich," 158. Indeed, in the mid-1930s, the school inspectorate in Ludwipol district (Kostopol county) aimed to fill all teaching positions with men. See "Gmina Ludwipol Powiatu Kostopolskiego," in *Kresy w oczach oficerów KOP*, 224.
[123] Comparisons might be made here with the work of German women in Germany's eastern borderlands during the interwar period. See Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East*, 23-77. More generally, the notion that women should play a special role in rural healthcare was part of a wider European idea between the wars. In a document produced for the 1939 League of Nations European Conference on Rural Health, it was argued that "in the villages, even more than in the towns, the cleanliness of the household and the health of the members of the family is in the hands of the housewife." *League of Nations European Conference on Rural Life. General Survey of Medico-Social Policy in Rural Areas*, No. 13 (Geneva, 1939), 42.

which the neglect of children was apparently widespread. A 1931 article published in the *Volhynian Review*, for example, claimed that children were at risk from poor nutrition in the villages, since their parents fed them mainly on potatoes (just as they did their swine), whether baked in skins in the morning, cooked with beet soup for lunch, or with barley soup for supper. While some households had butter, eggs, and bacon, parents believed that giving such tidbits to children would be wasteful. Villagers, the article went on, "cannot understand care for children."[124] Parents were also not adequately prepared to deal with infectious diseases that spread through the Volhynian countryside. When the head of the agency of bacteriological diagnostics visited Volhynia during an outbreak of dysentery in the summer of 1934, he reported that children suffering from the disease were not put on the potty, but were allowed to simply relieve themselves; their diapers or pieces of linen were from time to time removed to be washed either in vessels filled with water or in ponds.[125] In 1936, Volhynia's county doctors argued that "hundreds of babies in the village die simply as a result of the obliviousness of mothers and their incapacity to care for children."[126]

Women's attempts to improve rural healthcare, particularly for children, led them deep into the countryside, since even by the mid-1930s most villagers lived some 20 to 30 kilometers from the nearest doctor. The flying clinics organized by Polish women thus provided "doctors and nurses to the dullest corners of Volhynia."[127] In September 1935, members of the Krzemieniec branch of the Union of Women's Citizenship Work (*Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet*), a large pro-Piłsudski women's organization that had between 30,000 and 40,000 members statewide by 1930, embarked upon their first trip around the province as part of a "Flying Clinic for Mother and Child" that lasted until the end of November. In two-and-a-half months, they visited 30 villages, hamlets, and settlements, examining 597 children, giving 28 lectures, and listening to 500 people. The circumstances in which they found themselves were far from ideal. When they arrived in villages, they discovered that the

[124] "Drugi list ze wsi wołyńskiej," *Przegląd Wołyński*, March 15, 1931, 5.
[125] Dr. F. Przesmycki, "Uwagi o obecnej epidemji czerwonki na Wołyniu," *Zdrowie* 49, no. 9 (September 1934): 843.
[126] Dr. L. Nerlich, "Drogi uzdrowotnienia wsi wołyńskiej," *Zdrowie* 51, no. 5 (May 1936): 479.
[127] Ibid., 479.

majority of rural women were "mistrustful" and "demonstrated a certain resistance," while rural localities lacked suitable rooms in which to admit people.[128] However, newspaper articles claimed that the women's work was ultimately successful—after a few hours in a given village, two or three peasant women usually arrived with their children in order to attend lectures or be instructed on how to wash their offspring. Cases were even reported in which initially hostile peasants ran to the women, carrying their ill children in their arms for several hundred meters as they cried and asked for help.[129] In the eyes of those who supported the women's work, its successes were linked to Poland's wider mission in the eastern borderlands. For Józewski, the Union of Women's Citizenship Work constituted nothing less than "an outpost representing Polish culture in the *kresy* in its best expression, benefiting all."[130]

If the work of these women was deeply gendered, favoring hygiene and childcare, so was that of another group of "outsiders"—the KOP border guards. KOP's mission promoted "masculine" tasks, including the transformation of the physical landscape, the implementation of law and order, and relief work in response to fires or other natural disasters. In the "backward" borderland of Volhynia, KOP outposts—like military settlements—were promoted as "centers of culture and education, beaming out to the immediate and far-flung areas."[131] While the Russian imperial authorities had reportedly maintained darkness and ignorance, KOP soldiers claimed to bring physical transformation and education: they would build and repair bridges and roads, surround their watchtowers with flower beds and vegetable patches, allow battalion doctors to help local people, and organize libraries and amateur theaters—all the time weakening anti-state agitation.[132] Local people were encouraged to see Volhynia's KOP stations as islands of culture within a "backward" environment, an image that was reiterated in a British report filed by Frank Savery.[133]

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[128] "W pracy nad podniesieniem zdrowotności wsi wołyńskiej," *Wołyń*, December 25, 1935, 7.
[129] Ibid., 7.
[130] "Wołyń–Czerwiec 1937," BUW Manuscript Collection MS 1549 [no page numbers in document].
[131] Stanisław Falkiewicz kpt., "Praca Oświata," in *Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza*, 28.
[132] "Strażnice Ogniskami Kultury," in *Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza*, 74-76.
[133] Savery stated that "the block-houses of the 'Kop,' with their radio and their modest libraries, are little centres of civilisation" through which the Polish state attempted to educate the "extremely

A discourse of civilization, education, and culture was certainly promoted in KOP's propaganda. In 1927, deputy commander Weisbach of the eleventh battalion of KOP's first brigade, stationed in Mizocz in Zdołbunów county, submitted an article to KOP's yearbook entitled "Building a Soldier's House in Mizocz." The article argued that amateur theater was a significant tool in the fight to eliminate ignorance and illiteracy in the *kresy*, but that it was failing due to the lack of suitable space. Since the "poor, crowded, expanded villages of Volhynia have had too little time to create and construct buildings for public use," he stated, "the KOP soldier must arrive with help."[134] He proposed the creation of a soldiers' house (*dom żołnierza*), which would transform "the bored monotony of village life" into something culturally dynamic. The language Weisbach employed in the article indicated how KOP officers conceived of their rural surroundings and how they viewed their own role as carriers of culture. Local newspaper reports in both Polish and Ukrainian also emphasized how KOP's cultural initiatives brought Polish and Ukrainian villagers closer together. The VUO's Ukrainian-language newspaper included an article on celebrations for the tenth anniversary of the formation of KOP, held in 1934. In addition to carrying out defensive work, the article claimed, KOP "also carries out educational and cultural work among the population, provides books, organizes exhibitions and parties, [and] gives money to help schoolchildren."[135] Realizing the contributions that KOP made to their lives, Ukrainian populations were said to be joining in with the celebrations.

While some articles celebrated KOP's role as civilizers, reports compiled by KOP's educational officers in 1935, including the one with which this chapter began, indicated that Volhynian villagers continued to be seen as primitive, conservative, and unhygienic, even after ten years of exposure to border guard influences. Like the "people who live with their swine" in Ludwipol, the peasants in Kisorycze in Sarny county were said to be negatively influenced by the swampy terrain in which they lived. Since people had to work on unfertile land, in an unhealthy climate, and with few fruitful results, they were "characterized by a strange melancholy, by an

primitive population." "Report on the Eastern Marches of Poland" (Mr Savery, July 1930). NAL FO 417/82.

[134] "Budowa 'Domu Żołnierza K.O.P'. w Mizoczu," ASGwS 541/71/23.

[135] "Prosvitians'ki khaty VUO y sviati 10-littia KOP-u," *Ukraïns'ka Nyva*, November 25, 1934, 2.

endurance and physical toughness, with a stubbornness and deeply-rooted conservatism."[136] This mindset was reflected in the material conditions of peasant houses, in the dirty, disease-prone huts with their small windows and accumulations of bugs, smoke, and foul smells.[137] As was the case in Ludwipol, Kisorycze's Ukrainian-speaking Orthodox peasants were shown to be on a lower educational level than Polish-speaking Catholics; according to the officer's figures, 80% of all Orthodox populations were illiterate compared with only 33% of Catholics.[138]

Border guards were instructed to change such bad habits and to transform local people into good citizens who exhibited cultured behavior. An official publication from 1933 issued a list of KOP's cultural obligations, which included instructing people about farming, vegetable gardens, and orchards; teaching local populations to be thrifty; providing an example of respect for elders; and spreading ideas of bodily and material cleanliness.[139] Border guards were also told to discourage peasants from committing crimes that might damage the state's economy and security at the border, such as growing tobacco, distilling homemade vodka, and consuming saccharine rather than sugar.[140] By the end of the decade, a published guide for all KOP soldiers provided precise guidelines on their role in the *kresy*, encouraging them to lead by example and to chat with peasants as they walked around the village.[141] Such efforts to modernize the local economy and turn peasants into prosperous, hygienic citizens were even promoted through a free exhibition—entitled "The Border Protection Corps in Educational-Social Work"—which toured the *kresy* in 1936, presenting information about education, propaganda, and cooperation with the population.[142] A newspaper report from Volhynia stated that when the exhibition was displayed at an elementary

[136] "Gmina Kisorycze Powiatu Kostopolskiego," in *Kresy w oczach oficerów KOP*, 207.
[137] Ibid., 208.
[138] Ibid., 210.
[139] "Dlaczego służymy w korpusie ochrony pogranicza?," *Kalendarzyk KOP* (1933), 29.
[140] "O czem musi wiedzieć żołnierz KOP?," *Kalendarzyk KOP* (1933), 31-37.
[141] Ludwik Gocel, *O czym mówić z sąsiadami: Wskazówki dla żołnierzy K. O. P.* (Warsaw: Salezjańska Szkoła Rzemiosł. Dział Grafiki, 1938), 5.
[142] Letter from KOP at the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Warsaw to the editors of *Przegląd Piechoty.* (April 21, 1936), ASGwS 541/515/143.

school in Kostopol, it allowed members of local society "to acquaint themselves with the totality of the Border Protection Corps's pioneering civilizational acts."[143]

Each summer from the mid-1920s onwards, the border guard's "civilizing" activities were bolstered by the arrival of scout troops from other parts of Poland, whose members spent around a month camping at KOP outposts. Scouting was serious business in interwar Poland, providing young boys and girls with a source of recreation and equipping them with the skills of modern citizens. The schedules provided for scout camps suggested a tightly-controlled regime, rather than a care-free vacation, with participants getting up each day at an early hour and carrying out a variety of tasks on a military schedule. In the eastern borderlands, scouting work was part of a broader attempt to convince local people, including non-Poles, that their best interests lay with the Polish state. Describing the role of the camps, scouting leaders declared that "every scout well knows that the eastern borderlands are the part of the country with the lowest levels of cultural development, and that's why the obligation of our camps is to help local elements in the battle against this evil."[144] Moreover, the *kresy* constituted an area in which Polishness was particularly endangered.[145]

As such, instructions issued from scouting headquarters in Warsaw in June 1932 stated that the main aim of the camps was to bolster the image of Poland in these far-flung provinces and to convey a love of country in a place where populations were "exposed to foreign, often hostile Bolshevik influences."[146] In addition to organizing reading rooms, amateur theaters, sport for young people, and campfires at which Polish songs and legends were recounted, scouts aimed to help people with their work in the fields, allow them access to camp medicine, and spread values of hygiene. As part of their everyday schedule, scouts were urged to carry out individual good deeds, which included running sanitary clinics for villagers and repairing local roads.[147] Since KOP scout camps in Volhynia were run for both boys and girls, their "civilizing" work was often divided along gender lines. In a report by the main female scouting council

[143] "Graniczni pionierzy cywilizacji," *Janowa Dolina* (no date given), located in ASGwS 541/515/43.
[144] Tadeusz Maresz, *Letnie Obozy i Kolonie Harcerskie* (Warsaw, 1930), 28-29.
[145] Ibid., 17.
[146] "Instrukcja w sprawie pracy społecznej na obozach K.O.P.-u" (June 16, 1932), AAN ZHP 1658/69.
[147] Ibid., 69-70.

for 1928, the work of boy scouts was linked to sporting exercises and physical labor, while girl scouts washed, nursed, and played with local children, instructed mothers about hygiene, and toiled in the fields to help old, weak farmers.[148]

Once the camp was over, scout troops compiled reports that detailed their experiences and interactions with the local community. The head of one troop that visited Malinów (Krzemieniec county) in July 1933, for instance, described how young people from the nearby village had come to the campfire to sing and dance.[149] Participants in a female scout camp that had taken place in Hoszcza the previous July had similarly interacted with local people, taking embroidery patterns to the village women, who had in turn recounted stories about the history of Hoszcza and the legends relating to the construction of the Orthodox church. Around a campfire on the River Horyń, camp participants sang scouting and folk songs, danced Silesian dances in traditional costumes, and distributed brochures and postcards advertising sugar, which the state wanted to promote.[150]

As outsiders, however, scouts often found it difficult to acclimatize to local circumstances. Participants in the female scout camp in Hoszcza recorded that older members of the community put up some resistance, since they didn't understand what the scouts were trying to do, although local children helped to initiate conversations between scouts and adults.[151] The muddy, inhospitable environment also meant that the "civilizing" work of the scouts had to be curtailed. The third troop of scouts from Skierniewice in central Poland filed a negative report detailing their experiences at a camp near Malinów. "The locality is not fit for camping," the scouts claimed on their return home, "There is a lack of water, which has to be carried 150 meters uphill. It is 38 kilometers to the train station. When it rains, the terrain becomes a swamp. After the rains, the road cannot be traveled upon."[152] As was the case with many attempts to

[148] "Sprawozdanie Naczelnej Rady Harcerskiej za rok 1928," AAN ZHP 381/8.
[149] "Raport poobozowy," AAN ZHP 1661/180-184.
[150] "Raport powakacyjny" (Warsaw, October 6, 1932), AAN ZHP 2134/287.
[151] Ibid., 287.
[152] "Raport poobozowy (załącznik do raportu powakacyjnego)" (September 5, 1933), AAN ZHP 1661/168-174.

transform the region, deep-seated problems associated with the physical landscape made scouting work difficult.

Alternative Visions of the Volhynian Village

Before concluding, it is worth exploring one more aspect of the rural project in Volhynia—the fact that Józewski's vision of the village was not the only one promoted by Polish elites. Indeed, significant tensions existed at a local level among Poles who espoused different visions of what Polishness meant. In the case of Volhynia, the post-1926 period also saw the continuation of National Democrat-inspired ideas that emphasized Polish denationalization and the negative role of the Jews. In addition to battling against Ukrainian nationalism, communism, and environmental problems, the Polish administration also had to contend with rival concepts of Polishness, particularly those held by local Roman Catholic priests and border guards. For example, archival documents indicate that local Catholic clergymen and the societies they patronized often expressed hostility toward pro-Piłsudski organizations. In Ludwipol, a priest associated with the Society for Catholic Youth (*Stowarzyszenie Młodzieży Katolickiej*) reportedly complained about the "un-Catholic" Riflemen's Union—one of the organizations favored by Józewski—whose "capers" in military uniform had a "demoralizing" effect on local populations.[153]

However, it was the village schoolhouse that constituted the main site of contestation between state authorities and some members of the Roman Catholic clergy. In the early spring of 1932, local Polish educational and cultural activists loyal to Józewski wrote to the authorities to complain about the work of two Roman Catholic priests in Sarny county, one of whom, a certain Michał Żukowski, was the prefect of elementary schools in the town of Sarny and president of the Christian-National Society of Teachers (*Stowarzyszenie Chrześcijańsko-Narodowe Nauczycielstwa*). According to a letter that was sent by the local branch of the Riflemen's Union to Józewski, Żukowski was spreading a spirit of dissatisfaction

[153] "Gmina Ludwipol Powiatu Kostopolskiego," in *Kresy w oczach oficerów KOP*, 227.

among teachers, as well as anti-state feelings among the population.[154] Other local organizations, including the Polish White Cross and the Maritime and Colonial League also complained about the priest, the latter stating that he should be removed since he was "harmful for the state and for Polish society in the *kresy*."[155]

Żukowski's case was not an isolated occurrence. In 1934, the head of Kostopol county wrote to the Volhynian provincial administration to complain about the actions of Konstanty Turzański, another priest whose behavior challenged the authority of the state school system. Turzański had made himself unpopular with local teachers (to the point where they refused to shake his hand when he arrived to teach religious education) and with the local Riflemen's Union (from which he had allegedly embezzled money). He was also charged with undermining the authority of teachers, whom he accused of ungodliness, and with inciting people to target teachers by smashing their windows.[156] Even after his dismissal, Turzański continued his attacks, exhorting people from the pulpit not to send their children to school and arguing that only the priest had the right to teach religion. Children began to flee from religious education classes, while mothers went into school during lessons to remove their children.[157]

There was also evidence of right-wing currents within KOP, an organization that nominally emphasized inclusivity, regardless of ethnicity or religion. In February 1930, the head of one KOP outpost wrote to complain that Polish schools in Volhynia had been transformed into "bilingual" Polish-Ukrainian schools, meaning that Polish peasants and settlers were treated as "second class citizens."[158] The author of the letter also alleged that the school inspector for Krzemieniec county had answered these complaints by telling the Polish population that if they wanted their children to be

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[154] Letter from the County Administration of the Riflemen's Association in Sarny to the Governor (March 21, 1932), AAN UWwŁ 56/7.
[155] Letter from the Maritime and Colonial League branch in Sarny to the organization's headquarters (March 24, 1932), AAN UWwŁ 56/11.
[156] Letter from the Head of Kostopol county to the Office of the Provincial Administration in Łuck (June 23, 1934), AAN UWwŁ 56/57.
[157] "ks. rz.-kat – Konstanty Turzański, ur. 1899r., wyświęcony w 1932 r., prob. Par. Wyrka, gm. Stepań, pow. Kostopolskiego, katecheta szkół powszechnych," AAN UWwŁ 56/75. Włodzimierz Mędrzecki discusses these sources on Roman Catholic priests in *Inteligencja polska*, 208-211.
[158] Letter from KOP Intelligence Outpost Nr. 8 in Równe (February 22, 1930), AAN UWwŁ 65.

educated in Polish, then they should "go to Poland."[159] In response, the head of the school board stated that the KOP officer had come under the influence of an article published in the National Democrat daily, the *Warsaw Gazette* (*Gazeta Warszawska*), which claimed to reveal that the Poles were disproportionately suffering as a consequence of the Volhynian school system. The allegations, he claimed, were nonsensical—it was the Ukrainians, not the Poles, who continued to be deprived.[160]

There is also evidence that KOP soldiers used the Jews as a way to bolster their position in the eyes of the peasantry. As was discussed in the previous chapter, most discussions about Volhynia's Jews centered on their position in the towns, while Józewski's reports and policies on rural spaces rarely referred to the Jews at all. But attempts to bring "civilized" economic practices to the peasantry often led to the stigmatization of rural-dwelling Jews, exploiting a long tradition in which Jews were viewed as the persecutors of "poor" Polish peasants.[161] In 1927, for example, KOP's second battalion, stationed in Berezno, decided to garner the support of a civilian population that was "naturally mistrustful and suspicious" by buying their produce.[162] Importantly, however, in convincing them to sell to the army, the KOP officials persuaded them not to sell to the Jews. Peasants might similarly be won over by the creation of cooperatives, a particularly important institution in the Volhynian village, where there was "normally one Jewish store which simply imposes and dictates the prices completely of its own free will, not fearing any competition."[163] The promotion of cooperatives was therefore not only a way of uniting the peasant with the state and of raising the levels of rural prosperity; it was also deemed to be a useful method through which to "remove the Jews from the borderland" (*ruguje z pogranicza*

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[159] Ibid.
[160] Letter from the Volhynian School Board in Równe to the Governor of Volhynia in Łuck (November 17, 1930), AAN UWwŁ 65.
[161] See, for example, an article in *Kurier Warszawski* from May 1924, which made the argument that the Jews provided the "simple Volhynian peasant" with damaging "advice." In this way, the article went on, Jews worked on behalf of communism against the forces of order and civilization. For a summary of the article see, "O kresach i na kresach," *Życie Wołynia*, May 18, 1924, 6. See, also, "Klewań: Gdzie prawda?" *Lud Boży,* November 4, 1923, located in AAN MRiRR 732/208-215. In the latter article the author described how "Jews in Poland do what they want, and the poor Pole must as quiet as a mouse in his own fatherland."
[162] "Stosunek Oddziałów K.O.P. do ludności cywilnej" (Berezno, September 5, 1927), ASGwS 541/71/9.
[163] Ibid., 9.

żydów).[164] In this case, the joining together of KOP soldiers and local people would squeeze the Jews out of local trade and demonstrate that the Polish state provided a better deal for the peasant. The reports compiled by KOP in 1935 continued to mention Jewish traders in a negative light. In Nowomalin in Zdołbunów county, for instance, KOP's educational instructor stated that "too many of the farming products that are sold are caught up in the hands of the Jews," while in Ludwipol, his local counterpart explained that KOP bought foodstuffs from the local population in order to protect them from "the exploitation of dishonest buyers who prey upon the unconscious population."[165]

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By the late 1930s, parts of the Volhynian countryside had been altered by the Polish state's policies, in terms of both human and physical geography. Optimists pointed to improvements made in healthcare and land reform, relaying stories about the cultured behavior of villagers. Those who held a less sanguine view emphasized ongoing deficiencies—such as the isolation of villages from transportation and communication routes, the lack of post offices, and high illiteracy rates—that caused villagers to become trapped in a primitive lifestyle, unable to "lift themselves out of their backwardness without outside help."[166] One British observer who traveled to eastern Poland just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War commented that "had Poland been vouchsafed fifty years of peace a satisfying degree of comfortable life would have been attained; not great material riches, but something much more valuable; good standards of culture and civilization."[167] While the tone was optimistic, 50 years was a long time.

However, this chapter has not concerned itself with objectively measuring the

[164] Ibid., 9.
[165] "Gmina Nowomalin powiatu zdołbunowskiego," 242; "Gmina Ludwipol Powiatu Kostopolskiego," 222-223, both in *Kresy w oczach oficerów KOP*.
[166] "Potrzeby kulturalne wsi wołyńskiej," 5.
[167] John Russell, "Reconstruction and Development in Eastern Poland, 1930-39," *Geographical Journal* 98, no. 5/6 (1941): 289-290.

improvements made to the Volhynian countryside. Rather, it has shown how Volhynia's villages, like the towns discussed in the previous chapter, existed as both imagined and material spaces where a range of state and non-state actors aimed to spread Polish culture among neglected, poor, and "backward" populations. Plans to improve the material culture of the village were thus framed within a wider discourse of Polish civilizational superiority. At the same time, however, their task was severely hampered by the very local conditions they wished to transform. While studies of the countryside have focused on battles along national lines, this chapter suggests a far more complicated story, one in which environmental problems, peasant intransigence, and rival visions of Polishness all played important roles.

CHAPTER FIVE:
Ordered Space: Categorizing the Land and Its People

In the early 1920s, most Poles knew remarkably little about Volhynia or about the eastern lands more generally. There were virtually no scientific monographs on the *kresy,* while the occasional references to the area in the national press almost always recounted lurid stories of banditry and unrest.[1] The execution of Poland's first national census in 1921—an attempt to demographically map the new state—had resulted in the compilation of inaccurate data, particularly in the formerly Russian territories that were just emerging from military conflict. Defective methodologies employed by census-takers, along with the influx of people into the *kresy* after the data had been collected, meant that the 1921 statistics were quickly outdated.[2] The categories used on the census also left space for misinterpretation, a phenomenon that was echoed on the other side of the border, where Soviet census-takers struggled to ascertain the nationality of borderland peasants.[3] According to the chief of Poland's census bureau, the category of "nationality" had caused mass confusion among the "backward" inhabitants of the eastern provinces, who had mistakenly equated nationality and citizenship, leading to overblown numbers of "Poles."[4] Volhynia's administrators, who often hailed from beyond the province, were thus plagued by ignorance.

By the late 1920s, programs to build up regional knowledge, drawing inspiration from other European schemes, began to take shape on Polish soil.[5] In the autumn of 1927, the central government decided to form Provincial Regional Committees (*Wojewódzkie Komitety Regionalne*) across the Polish state, a process instigated by Henryk Józewski, who was temporarily based at the Council of Ministers. The aim of such committees was not only to strengthen the development of

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[1] Bartoszewicz, *Znaczenie Polityczne Kresów Wschodnich dla Polski*, 37.
[2] In the mid-1920s, the mayor of Ostróg asked the Ministry of Internal Affairs for a population recount, arguing that the 1921 data on the town's population was wrong by almost 6,000. Letter from Mayor of Ostróg to MSW (Dep. Samorząd Miejski), DARO 239/2/51/41. On a similar situation in Dubno, see Mędrzecki, *Województwo Wołyńskie*, 68.
[3] Brown, *A Biography of No Place*, 38-47.
[4] *The Polish and Non-Polish Populations of Poland: Results of the Population Census of 1931* (Warsaw: Institute for the Study of Minority Problems, 1932), 3.
[5] Władysław Deszczka, "Regionalizm," *Przegląd Geograficzny* 10 (1930): 261-267.

Poland's various regions (particularly those in which non-Polish populations constituted a large percentage of the population), but also to carry out research so that bureaucrats might become better acquainted with the regions in which they worked. Volhynia's committee (the first to be created) was made up of men appointed by Józewski himself, including the governor, the vice-governor, the head of the school board, the new school inspector of the Krzemieniec High School, and the editor of the *Volhynian Review*.[6] Research carried out under the auspices of the regional committee was deemed to be of vital importance for local bureaucrats, providing them with their "own image" of the province, and allowing them to push society "in a certain direction."[7] In 1929, Volhynia's committee published an almanac, *The Volhynian Province in the Light of Numbers and Facts*, while future monographs on farming and tax policies were also planned. At a 1929 provincial meeting, it was decided that all participants would receive three copies of the books in order to familiarize themselves with conditions in Volhynia.[8] For Józewski and his supporters, knowing the region—its land and its people—was a prerequisite for effective governance.

Collecting information about Volhynia could be read as part of a wider story in which states gain information about previously unknown, or at least under-researched, regions. Virtually all modern states have attempted to map their territories, quantify resources, enumerate populations, and categorize people based on any number of national, ethnic, religious, social, and political criteria. European empires—both continental and overseas—utilized so-called "cultural technologies of rule" to survey their possessions and strengthen state power.[9] The interwar Polish state similarly carried out national censuses (in 1921 and 1931), produced maps, sponsored ethnographic expeditions, and created scientific and academic organizations in order to gain information about the eastern borderlands.

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[6] Mędrzecki, *Województwo Wołyńskie*, 145.
[7] "Protokół zebrania Naczelników władz i urzędników podlegających bezpośrednio władzom naczelnym, odbytego w Urzędzie Wojewódzkim Wołyńskim w Łucku w dniu 16 lipca 1929," AAN MSW (Part I) 69/90.
[8] Ibid., 90.
[9] Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*: *Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 12-15.

However, Polish elites were not simply aping their European counterparts. Rather, the collection of knowledge about Volhynia and the *kresy*—and, specifically, the way that knowledge was subsequently presented—served specific political purposes in the interwar Polish state. Like their counterparts in Germany, who utilized so-called "East Research" (*Ostforschung*) to bolster revisionist claims, Polish academics launched "scientific" investigations that supported government policies.[10] Their research should therefore be analyzed as both a source and a product of the changing visions of the *kresy*.

This chapter examines the two main lenses through which Volhynia was viewed from the late 1920s through the outbreak of the Second World War. The first was regional, its origins dating to the 1927 creation of the Volhynian regional committee. Local members of the pro-Józewski intelligentsia celebrated Volhynia as a regional unit, attempting to cultivate a sense of provincial and state patriotism among Volhynia's multiethnic inhabitants. Bureaucrats and members of the intelligentsia were involved in setting up museums, journals, and exhibitions through which they sought to transmit knowledge about Volhynia to both the province's populations and a statewide audience. The second lens, which originated in Warsaw and in the Polish Army during the early to mid-1930s, filtered Volhynia and the *kresy* through more scientific language, focusing on national demographics and attempting to dismantle the multiethnic unit of Volhynia that was celebrated by the regionalists. Its main propagators, who came from the upper echelons of the Polish Army, increasingly called for a more radical solution to the economic, political, and national problems of the East. While these lenses overlapped chronologically and even in terms of personnel, tracing their evolution reveals a stark shift in the political visions and mental re-ordering of the eastern lands by the late 1930s.

Volhynian Patriotism: Promoting Volhynia to Its Inhabitants

In the first week of September 1928, residents of Łuck peeped through the cracks in a fence on Józef Piłsudski Street. On the other side was a collection of

[10] On German research initiatives, see Burleigh*, Germany Turns Eastwards*; Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East*, 158.

buildings that made up the inaugural Volhynian Exhibition (*Wystawa Wołyńska*). The exhibition's four-and-a-half hectare site featured a total of 666 exhibitors that focused on all aspects of Volhynia's rural life. The list of sections was long indeed: the production of seeds and grains, the raising of horses and cattle (with 227 cattle and 226 horses on display), horticulture, poultry farming, beekeeping, health and hygiene, hunting, history and ethnography, forestry, electricity and cars, cooperatives, sugar refining, tobacco, brewing, and distilling.[11] The image of the peeping crowds, which was distributed on postcards (Figure 8) and in the local press, suggested a certain curiosity among townsfolk about the province in which they lived.

To be sure, the Volhynian Exhibition attracted considerable crowds, boasting "a huge, even unexpected" number of attendees.[12] According to official figures, 50,000 people pushed through its gates, dwarfing the 12,000-strong crowd that had flocked to a similar show in the town of Włodzimierz two years earlier. Significantly, almost all the visitors, as well as the vast majority of the exhibitors (619 of the 666), were themselves from Volhynia. Prior to the exhibition, county committees had traveled to villages and rural settlements, encouraging the participation of local farmers, while 10,000 leaflets in Ukrainian and 3,000 posters in Polish had also been distributed. To attract visitors from counties beyond Łuck, scouts, firemen's associations, and village youth societies organized excursions that brought almost 15,500 people to the exhibition. Even in those localities where people "did not understand" or were "fearful" of such events, the exhibition led to "significant breakthroughs in the conservatism and passivity of our countryside."[13]

By presenting the exhibits to a diverse audience, the organizers aimed to convince Volhynia's inhabitants that the Polish state was a force for good. Articles in the Polish national press certainly alluded to the exhibition's positive impact on local populations. In one piece dedicated to the exhibition in the newspaper *Polish Day* (*Dzień Polski*), it was declared that "generally the inhabitants of the counties bordering Soviet Russia see that even though Poland received the poorer part of Volhynia in

[11] "Plon Wystawy Wołyńskiej," *Przegląd Wołyński*, October 14, 1928, 7.
[12] Ibid., 6.
[13] Ibid., 9.

terms of soils and industry, Polish Volhynia stands on a significantly higher economic level than Soviet Russia, or rather Soviet Russian Ukraine ."[14] In particular, this message needed to reach those non-Poles who held "a grim image of contemporary Poland" and were convinced of the "misery of the region."[15] The exhibition instead offered a positive vision of local identity to the ethnically, religiously, and linguistically diverse populations who lived within the province's borders.

Figure 8: Postcard from the Volhynian Exhibition, Łuck (September 1928). Source: CBN (Eastern Borderlands Collection). Poczt.16305.

Beyond organizing exhibitions like the one held in Łuck, members of Józewski's circle focused on other ways in which information about Volhynia could be collected, ordered, and presented to a local audience. The most obvious place to start was the Volhynian provincial museum, which was established in Łuck in June 1929 and based its collections on the ethnographic and historic displays that had been

[14] Ibid., 25.
[15] Ibid., 4.

on show at the Volhynian Exhibition the previous year. Józewski helped to obtain a subsidy from the state education budget, while Aleksander Prusiewicz, an expert in folklore and a former professor at the university in Kamieniec Podolski, became the museum's first director. The provincial museum's displays filled the gaps in public knowledge about Volhynia. The collections of a museum near Równe had been stolen during the First World War, while the artwork at Ostróg's museum, which had been rescued from pillaging soldiers during the Russian Revolution, had subsequently been returned to its owners[16] Łuck's new museum boasted an ethnographic section that featured old wall-hangings and embroidery, collections of antiques from prehistoric times, portraits of the Ostrogski princes, and a collection of historical documents, manuscripts, and printed matter that dated from the sixteenth century.[17] Each day, the museum opened its doors from 10am to 2pm and from 4pm to 8pm, charging an entrance fee of one złoty for adults, 50 groszy for young people and soldiers, and 20 groszy for people in larger groups.

Supporters of the museum claimed that it would play a didactic role within the community, reflecting a larger European ideal about local museums, of which the German *Heimatmuseum* was perhaps the most highly-praised model.[18] According to one article published in the *Volhynian School Board Bulletin* at the end of 1929, local museums needed to avoid so-called "collectors' items" (*białe kruki*) that possessed limited didactic value for local people.[19] In keeping with this idea, the Łuck museum catered to local needs, displaying objects of regional, rather than national, significance. As one article in the *Volhynian Review* explained a month after the museum opened its doors:

> This is not the Louvre, nor the Hermitage, nor even the National Museum in Kraków, where one is entranced by elegant porcelain vases, clothes, costumes,

[16] Jakub Hoffman, "Dzieje 'Rocznika Wołyńskiego'," PISMA KOL 18/12/13.
[17] "Muzeum Wołyńskie," *Przegląd Wołyński*, July 14, 1929, 3.
[18] On rural museums during the interwar period, see *League of Nations European Conference on Rural Life. Intellectual Aspects of Rural Life*, No. 16 (Geneva, 1939), 7. For more on local museums in Germany, see Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 93-103.
[19] K. Przemyski, "W sprawie muzeów powiatowych," *Dziennik Urzędowy Kuratorium Okręgu Szkolnego Wołyńskiego* 6, no. 11 (December 1929): 376.

> historical armor, and so on. At the Volhynian museum, which has only just come into existence, it is not possible to permit such things for understandable reasons. Here there are fragments of whole vessels, parts of fabrics instead of whole costumes, and so on, but they are so very interesting and enlightening because everything comes from Volhynia or is about Volhynia.[20]

The museum's aim, therefore, was to acquaint people with their region, so that they might see "with their own eyes" the great cultural monuments of this "ancient land."[21]

Rather than merely relying on historical artifacts, the management of the museum also periodically sought information from the public. In 1931, during the run-up to the one hundred year anniversary of the November Uprising, the museum issued an appeal to local people—especially members of the older generation—requesting information about the names of Volhynia's "hitherto unknown heroes" of 1831.[22] By the mid-1930s, the museum even claimed that it had quickly amassed materials in its ethnographic section, due to "the unusual generosity of Volhynian society, which sends in donations, and—like the museum administration—wants the Volhynian museum in Łuck to soon become a proud picture of the folk culture of Volhynia."[23]

As the example of the museum implies, state authorities relied on members of the local intelligentsia to collect information from ordinary people and present it to the wider public. In Volhynia, perhaps the most important activist in the regional movement was Jakub Hoffman, a man who also (not insignificantly) happened to be the head of the Volhynian branch of the Union of Polish Teachers. Hoffman's interest in Volhynia stretched far beyond his work as a teacher: during the interwar years, he was involved in the development of the Volhynian museum, headed the local committee for the statewide Polish Biographical Dictionary, and recorded old Polish-Ukrainian folk songs.[24] He also used his position as a local delegate for a state archeological organization to collect evidence of Volhynia's history and contemporary folklore. In September 1928, for instance, Hoffman traveled to Horochów county to

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[20] "Muzeum Wołyńskie," 3.
[21] Ibid., 3.
[22] "Odezwa Dyrekcji Muzeum Wołyńskiego," *Przegląd Wołyński*, January 19, 1930, 4.
[23] "Prace etnograficzne Wołyńskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk," *Wołyń*, May 3, 1936, 3.
[24] For more on the collection of Volhynian folk songs, see "Protokół z posiedzenia Komisji oceny wołyńskich pieśni ludowych, odbytego w Równem w gmachu Kuratorjum Okręgu Szkolnego Łuckiego w dniu 8 marca 1935 r.," PISMA KOL 18/23a [no page numbers in file].

carry out an archeological dig in an area that belonged to the village of Chołoniów. On arriving in the area, Hoffman was intrigued by local folklore about a site that was "surrounded by secrecy."[25] Peasants who lived in nearby settlements, he reported, did not like to venture to the site of the dig, even during the daytime. Indeed, the situation was so severe that the former landowner had encountered serious difficulties when he tried to sell the land, while Hoffman himself struggled to find people who would help him carry out the excavation.[26] The legends perpetuated by local people, along with the fact that witchdoctors collected herbs from the area every May, led Hoffman to conclude that a temple had once stood on the site.[27] Hoffman's interest in the stories of individual localities was similarly underlined in his report on the discovery of old coins—from the Roman, Greek, Lithuanian, Polish, and Russian eras—in the village of Stadniki in Zdołbunów county. As he chatted to the cart driver who drove him from the village, Hoffman discovered that a saber and rifles had also been ploughed up before the First World War, only to be subsequently looted from the museum in Równe.[28]

Local knowledge was also collected through the distribution of questionnaires, the texts for which were devised by the Union of Polish Teachers and targeted literate members of the rural intelligentsia, such as teachers, village heads, and foresters. In 1931, one questionnaire that was issued in the *Volhynian School Board Bulletin* claimed that teachers needed to know more about contemporary social and economic life in Volhynia in order to record the "transformations that are taking place in front of our eyes."[29] The questions enquired about patterns of grazing animals, the nature of animal shelters and their distance from the village, and the ownership of land upon which cattle grazed.[30] Another survey, entitled "A Questionnaire on Pastoral Life," asked people to provide details of the natural environment in which their village was

[25] "Sprawozdanie z dokonanych wykopalisk na polach "Zamczyska" w powiecie horochowskim," DARO 160/1/77/48.
[26] Ibid., 48.
[27] Ibid., 49-50.
[28] Letter to the Director of the State Archeological Museum in Warsaw (April 26, 1930), DARO 160/1/77/81.
[29] "Odezwa Zarządu Związku N.P. Okręgu Wołyńskiego," *Dziennik Urzędowy Kuratorium Okręgu Szkolnego Wołyńskiego* 8, no. 10 (November 1931): 298.
[30] Ibid., 299-300.

located. “Are there any particularly beautiful natural places?,” Question One read, while Question Fifteen asked “Are there any rare types of animals?” and suggested a list of possible answers that included bears, lynx, elk, beavers, and eagles.[31] Archival records show that villagers returned their surveys with handwritten or typed answers inserted next to the appropriate questions. In the district of Białokrynica in Krzemieniec county, the local clerk who completed the survey included information about the one hundred hectares of pine trees and the old oak trees around his village.[32] From the district of Wiśniowiec, also in Krzemieniec county, the survey was returned with notes about the ways in which people used flowers to treat disease.[33]

In addition to collecting information, Hoffman sought avenues through which local history and an attachment to place might be relayed back to the villages, enabling far-flung communities to become connected. To this end, he created a regional journal that would provide material for Volhynia’s teachers and allow them to instruct students about their local community and its attachment to Poland.[34] In a history of the journal that he compiled after the Second World War, Hoffman recalled how the idea originated at a meeting of the Volhynian branch of the Union of Polish Elementary School Teachers in the mid-1920s. The call for a journal, he asserted, came as a response to the realization that teachers lacked the materials they needed to acquaint pupils with their immediate surroundings and Volhynian history more broadly. After consulting with the head of the Volhynian school district and Józewski, Hoffman created an editorial committee for the publication of a popular-scientific journal.[35] The first issue, published under the title *Volhynian Yearbook* (*Rocznik Wołyński*), rolled off the press in 1930, and featured an eclectic selection of articles on Volhynia’s physical

[31] “Kwestionariusz w sprawie pasterstwa,” DARO 184/1/3/10-10od.
[32] Questionaire response from Józef Hubicki, a village clerk from Białokrynica district, Krzemieniec county, DARO 184/1/3/26.
[33] Questionaire response from Borys Romanow-Głowacki, a farmer from Wiśniowiec district, Krzemieniec county, DARO 184/1/3/32.
[34] The idea of students identifying both the local and the national communities was enshrined in the curriculum. While it did not provide specific guidelines as to the topics covered in class, it specified that by the end of their first year of school, children should be able to define their local community and the community of Poland. See Dorota Wojtas, “Learning to Become Polish: Education, National Identity and Citizenship in Interwar Poland, 1918-1939” (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 2003), 112.
[35] “Dzieje ‘Rocznika Wołyńskiego’,” PISMA KOL 18/12/1-2. The committee was made up of people sympathetic to Józewski’s approach; beyond the governor himself, it featured vice-governor Śleszyński, the school board curator Szelagowski, Joachim Wołoszynowski, and Hoffman (as secretary).

geography, economics, vegetation, rural housing, Christmas and Easter customs, and peasant families.

Like those of the museum, the contents of the *Volhynian Yearbook* emerged from an event that had taken place the previous year. The articles featured in the inaugural issue were written by scholars who had participated in a regional course, held in 1929 and organized by Hoffman and the Union of Polish Teachers. A total of 22 teachers, fourteen of whom were from Volhynia, had been taken on a tour of the province and instructed by a group of academics whose expertise ranged from ethnography to the natural sciences. Since Volhynia lacked an institution of higher education, all academic participants were based at universities beyond the province, most notably at the famous Jagiellonian University in Kraków. The aim of the course was to help teachers "get to know the surroundings and the psychology of the people."[36] As such, the course organizers wanted participants to become acquainted with the various regions of Volhynia, and chose to base the course in two places—Kowel in the north, and Krzemieniec in the south. During lectures and on excursions from these two bases, the academics sought to enlighten teachers with local Volhynian knowledge. Kazimierz Nitsch, a professor at the Jagiellonian University, for instance, told participants about the influence of Ukrainian on the Polish language, detailing recent changes in word pronunciations in one particular village. On an excursion to the town of Luboml, Professor Wiktor Ormicki used the opportunity to carry out research into dialects, although he found, much to his chagrin, that peasants did not speak in their "native" tongue, since they "wanted to show off their knowledge of the Polish language, which they had learned from military service."[37]

Since so few teachers actually participated in the course, others relied on the *Volhynian Yearbook* for their information. While the tone of some articles was conservative, emphasizing the fact that peasants had begun to neglect their "native,

[36] Jakub Hoffman, "Sprawozdanie z Wołyńskiego Kursu Regjonalnego zorganizowanego przez Komisję Wołyńską Zarządu Głównego Związku Polskiego Nauczycielstwa Szkół Powszechnych subwencjonowanego przez Ministerstwo W.R.i O.P., Wołyński Komitet Regjonalny, Wydziały Powiatowe Sejmiku w Kowlu i Krzemieńcu i Magistrat w Kowlu," *Polska Oświata Pozaszkolna* (January-February 1930): 45.
[37] Ibid., 50.

beautiful, and work-intensive costumes" for "small town" fashions—the main emphasis was on progress driven by the Polish state.[38] Articles stressed how knowledge about the local region, whether historical, economic, or ethnographic, provided evidence for the importance of integrating Volhynia into the rest of Poland.[39] In his article on the economic geography of Volhynia, Wiktor Ormicki promoted the symbiotic relationship between province and state. "We need Volhynia," Ormicki declared, "We need it as a producer of many raw materials, we need it also as a consumer. On the other hand, Volhynia needs Poland. From Poland, Volhynia draws—aside from many necessary material goods—a lot of spiritual resources."[40] Other articles sought the historical roots of Polish rule in Volhynia. The joining of Volhynia to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1569 (whose anniversary had been celebrated by the Borderland Guard in 1919) was the subject of a 1931 article, which argued that "the Volhynian land from that time onwards became part of the Polish state, to share in both its bad and good fate."[41] In the same issue, both Jakub Hoffman and his wife Jadwiga wrote about Volhynia's participation in the November Uprising of 1831 and the Kościuszko Rising of 1794 respectively.[42] Polish-Ukrainian coexistence was emphasized throughout, with the journal providing practical examples of how "the two nations can live freely—loving one another—side by side, and work towards a shared goal."[43]

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[38] Angielina Guzowska, "Stoje ludowe w powiecie zdołbunowskim na Wołyniu," *Rocznik Wołyński* (1934): 443. This sentiment echoed appeals made by the Union of Rural Youth, which suggested that urban influences were erasing Volhynia's traditions, and that tango and urban songs were making their way into settlements where "folk songs should be the first songs on the lips of villagers." See "Odezwa do zespołów teatrów i chórów ludowych amatorskich i szkolnych na Wołyniu," *Młoda Wieś, Molode Selo,* October, 5, 1931, 2. For comments on the decline of folk dress in the Volhynian countryside, see also Garczyński, *Wołyń Naszą Ojczyzną*, 42.

[39] The idea of regionalism as a force bolstering rather than resisting the power of the state can be traced in other European contexts, most notably that of Germany. See Applegate, "A Europe of Regions," 1177; Katharine D. Kennedy, "Regionalism and Nationalism in South German History Lessons, 1871-1914," *German Studies Review* 12, no. 1 (1989): 11-33.

[40] Wiktor Ormicki, "Z geografii gospodarczej Wołynia," *Rocznik Wołyński* (1930): 125.

[41] Stanisław Zajaczkowski, "Wołyń pod panowaniem Litwy," *Rocznik Wołyński* (1931): 24.

[42] Jadwiga Hoffman, "Udział Wołynia w powstaniu Kościuszkowskim," *Rocznik Wołyński* (1931): 67-87; Jakub Hoffman, "Wołyń w walce 1831," *Rocznik Wołyński* (1931): 149-192.

[43] "Od Wydawców," *Rocznik Wołyński* 2 (1931): iii.

In the 1931 edition, Hoffman stated that the first issue of the *Volhynian Yearbook* met with positive responses from local intelligentsia and peasants alike.[44] In his postwar reflections, he also claimed that the yearbook had provided the province's teachers—who were subject to "pauperization"—with a means of resisting potentially harmful influences. Some teachers were even encouraged to pursue scholarly work, meaning that the journal could boast that it was not merely an organ through which elite scholarly knowledge was transferred to the peasantry, but that it provided an opportunity for villagers to contribute to the collective expertise about Volhynia.[45] The *Geographical Review*, a statewide journal, praised the *Volhynian Yearbook* as "a valuable contribution" that enlightened readers about the "little-known" province of Volhynia.[46] But the journal was not an unmitigated success: some articles were too scholarly for their intended readership, while financial difficulties meant that there was a three-year gap between the publication of the second issue in 1931 and the third in 1934. Throughout, the journal was published only in Polish—despite requests for articles in the Ukrainian language—which limited its use for those who did not have a good grasp of the language.[47] While its actual impact may be difficult to assess, the *Volhynian Yearbook* was perhaps the clearest expression of a regionalist trend that sought to integrate the province with the rest of the state.

A Place of Leisure: Volhynian Tourism

The early to mid-1930s also witnessed initial attempts to promote Volhynia to populations living in the rest of the Polish state. Perhaps the most obvious sign of this trend was the establishment of the Society for the Development of the Eastern Lands (*Towarzystwo Rozwoju Ziem Wschodnich*, hereafter TRZW) in 1933. A private Warsaw-based organization that received subsidies from the government, the TRZW aimed to bring the eastern lands into the economic, social, and cultural domain of the Polish state through an ambitious scheme of modernization, state intervention, and economic investment. Its leadership featured well-known politicians and statesmen,

[44] Ibid., iii.
[45] "Dzieje 'Rocznika Wołyńskiego'," PISMA KOL 18/12/25.
[46] Deszczka, "Regionalizm," 267.
[47] Ibid., 6.

who frequently came from military backgrounds and who believed that underdevelopment explained local susceptibility to political agitation.[48]

For the men at the top of the TRZW, accruing accurate information about the *kresy* was the first step towards economic development. A 1935 article in the society's journal, the 400-page long *Calendar of the Eastern Lands* (whose edition for 1935 had a print run of 10,000 copies), declared that the development of tighter cooperation between people in the *kresy* and those in the rest of the state relied upon "the familiarization of Polish society with the past [and] with the cultural and economic condition of the eastern lands."[49] Unfortunately, it claimed, a resident of central or western Poland knew these lands only from books and newspapers, meaning that "for him, a journey to the east is a risky excursion into the unknown."[50] The TRZW attempted to gather information by asking local people in the *kresy* to send in "comprehensive data about the condition, needs, and social life of particular counties."[51] Although the appeal did not meet with universal success, the journal's 1936 edition featured articles by renowned experts on certain eastern provinces, including a description of Volhynia by Jakub Hoffman.[52] From 1934 onwards, the organization also organized courses for young people interested in the social and economic problems of the *kresy* under the title "Studies on the Eastern Lands." The schedule featured several lectures about Volhynia that focused on the development of towns, military and civilian settlement, industry and crafts, and economic problems.[53]

As a way of boosting economic development and further exposing people to the *kresy*'s attractions, the TRZW encouraged people from other parts of Poland to head eastwards for their vacations. To aid this work, it developed a program entitled "Summer in the Eastern Lands" and worked alongside the Ministry of Communications to provide subsidized travel to the *kresy*—in 1935, summer train

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[48] On economic backwardness, see "Towarzystwo Rozwoju Ziem Wschodnich," *Kalendarz Ziem Wschodnich* (1936): 144-145. The head of the TRZW was Aleksander Prystor, a Polish politician, activist, and soldier, who had been prime minister between 1931 and 1933 and was the marshal of the Polish parliament from 1935 to 1939. Kacprzak, *Towarzystwo Rozwoju Ziem Wschodnich,* 120-121.
[49] "Ziemie Wschodnie," *Kalendarz Ziem Wschodnich* (1935): 160.
[50] Ibid., 160.
[51] Ibid., 160.
[52] Jakub Hoffman, "Województwo Wołyńskie," *Kalendarz Ziem Wschodnich* (1936): 278-296
[53] Kacprzak, *Towarzystwo Rozwoju Ziem Wschodnich,* 84-7.

tickets to the eastern provinces were sold at around half price.[54] In Volhynia, the TRZW prioritized regions that had particular significance for the Polish nation, indicating how tourism allowed nationalists to "create a territorial vision of their nation."[55] In Łuck, Kowel, and Sarny counties, the TRZW organized a "route of the legions," which focused on sites of battles between Piłsudski's legionnaires and Russian forces in 1915-1916.[56] Another region that covered the whole of Kostopol county and parts of Łuck, Równe, and Sarny counties was said to feature beautiful forests, fields of azaleas, and a number of monuments and health resorts.[57]

The province's intelligentsia also contributed to the external promotion of Volhynia. On March 30, 1935, an exhibition was opened in Warsaw to familiarize Polish society with the Volhynian lands and their value as a tourist destination. Entitled "Volhynia and its Developmental Opportunities" and organized by local members of the intelligentsia with the help of governor Józewski, the exhibition featured displays on historical monuments, geology, archeology, flora, industry, the development of schools, and folk art.[58] Articles celebrating Volhynia's attractions also made their way into the local press. In the newspaper *Volhynia*, Jerzy Bonkowicz-Sittauer argued that the lakes in Luboml county in the northwest corner of the province offered potential for the development of water sports.[59] Other articles proposed Volhynia's future as a tourist center on account of its ancient culture, fertile land, and historic and artistic monuments. Since people from beyond the province still knew little about such attractions, the so-called *Targi Wołyńskie* (Volhynian Fairs), which drew tens of thousands of visitors to Równe every September, were proposed as a venue for spreading the word.[60] Tourists, one article claimed, would be fascinated by the Luboml lakes, old Łuck with its castle and rare synagogue, and the bustling trading

[54] "Towarzystwo Rozwoju Ziem Wschodnich," 145. For more on the society's efforts to promote tourism in eastern Poland, see Kacprzak, *Towarzystwo Rozwoju Ziem Wschodnich,* 69-72.
[55] Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*, 150.
[56] Mieczysław Węgrzecki, "Potrzeby Turystyczne Polesia," *Rocznik Ziem Wschodnich* (1937): 206.
[57] Ibid., 206, 209.
[58] "Otwarcie Wystawy Wołyńskiej," *Wołyń*, April 7, 1935, 3.
[59] "Jeziora lubomelskie," *Wołyń*, June 28, 1936, 8.
[60] In 1936, the fair attracted 96,000 visitors. See Mędrzecki, *Województwo Wołyńskie*, 55.

center of Równe.[61] By 1938, the local branch of the Polish Sightseeing Society was organizing excursions so that people attending the Volhynian Fairs could visit the forested plains of northern Volhynia, the hills of the south, old towns, and—for the more patriotic tourist—battlefields "abundantly steeped in the blood of the defenders of Volhynia and the whole of the Republic."[62] After all, Volhynia was at its best in the autumn, which was characterized by "a great number of sunny and pleasant days."[63]

Polish-language guidebooks about the region were increasingly produced. In 1937, Równe's municipal authorities issued a guide to the town that listed the numerous improvements in the fields of sanitation, municipal facilities, and cultural work, and claimed that local authorities' economic policies had "brought a gradual renaissance to Równe."[64] According to the book, progress had been made in many areas of urban life: "paving and sidewalks, water supply and sewer systems, lighting, improving sanitary conditions, the expansion of outlying areas—in every field, changes for the better are felt."[65] The guide also featured suggested walks around the town and pictures of its architectural highlights, including the old orangery, Saint Joseph's church, and local government buildings.

The success of Volhynia's tourist trade was certainly limited. In 1938, some 26,617 people (less than one percent of the state's population) took part in the "Summer in the Eastern Borderlands" program, although the figures do not indicate the exact destinations to which tourists traveled.[66] Volhynia no doubt attracted far fewer people than the enticing resorts of the southeast, while the poor quality of transportation networks hampered efforts to develop tourism.[67] Regardless of how many tourists actually made it to the province, however, the emphasis on tourism implied the increasing importance of gathering information about Volhynia for an

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[61] "Regjon Wołyński–kraina wielkich możliwości turystycznych," *Wołyń,* June 14, 1936, 6.
[62] "Wrzesień na Wołyniu," *Wołyń,* September 25, 1938, 7.
[63] Ibid., 7.
[64] *Ilustrowany Przewodnik Po Mieście Równem* (Równe: Nakładem "Wiadmości Urzędowych" Zarządu Miejskiego w Równem, 1937), 8.
[65] Ibid., 8.
[66] Kacprzak, *Towarzystwo Rozwoju Ziem Wschodnich*, 70.
[67] Articles in interwar Poland's two tourist trade journals, *Turystyka* (Tourism) and *Turysta w Polsce* (Tourist in Poland), suggest that these more southerly regions—with their wine-growing areas, mountains, traditional Hutsul folk festivals, and enviable climate—were more attractive to tourists.

external as well as an internal audience. Having so often been depicted as an underdeveloped backwater, lacking the basic hallmarks of modern civilization, Volhynia was now promoted as a land of leisure that combined exotic attractions with national history.

Lost Poles? Reawakened Poles? Scientific Answers to Decline in the East

For all the celebrations of Volhynia and the *kresy*, collecting information had a darker side too. From the mid-1930s onwards, Polish politicians, academics, and military men used scientific knowledge about the eastern lands to push for a reconfiguration of *kresy* space into something more rational, scientific, and ordered. These developments corresponded with wider trends in Polish politics, not least of which was the growth of the Polish Army as a powerful political force, particularly after the death of Piłsudski in May 1935. In the *kresy*, Piłsudski's epigones increasingly emphasized the need for an interventionist and military approach that prioritized Polonization over state assimilation. The upper echelons of the army saw the *kresy*'s ethnic, national, and religious diversity as a security threat, one that only became more intense as the fragile post-1918 European order broke down, and military speeches increasingly emphasized Polish civilizational superiority over the Ukrainians.[68] In Volhynia, where conflicts between the military and civilian administration had long existed, the army's patience with Józewski's regional policies ran out.[69] In this context, the scientific discipline of demography suggested both new threats to Polishness and new sets of solutions.

By the middle of the decade, government-sanctioned reports by economists, demographers, and the army argued that something very worrying was occurring in the *kresy*: Polish populations were losing ground to their non-Polish counterparts in the battle over national demographics. Reports focused on the proportional "losses" of Polish populations, referring to so-called national "elements" (*elementy, żywioły*) and introducing scientific language in order to talk about eastern populations. A 1935

[68] Piotr Stawecki, *Następcy Komendanta: Wojsko a Polityka Wewnętrzna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1935-1939* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1969), 165-168.
[69] On the deteriorating relationship between the Polish Army's Lublin Field Command no. 2 and Józewski, see Snyder, *Sketches*, 156-161.

internal report from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, written by an unnamed bureaucrat, recorded losses in the Polish national group by comparing statistics from the 1921 and 1931 censuses. While some counties in Volhynia experienced only a small decrease (0.6% in Równe county, for instance), others were more worrying, such as the 14.3% decrease in Luboml county, where the percentage of Poles allegedly fell from 27.6% to 13.3%.[70]

In another paper published two years later by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the economist Wiktor Ormicki (who was one of the members of the first Volhynian regional course in 1929) argued that the state needed to "stabilize the dominance of the Polish element" through an internal settlement program, and he divided up the *kresy* into regions that would exhibit lesser or greater resistance to Polish domination.[71] Other studies indicated that Volhynia's Orthodox population was growing at a faster rate than its Roman Catholic and Jewish counterparts. A 1936 article in the *Volhynian Yearbook* stated that while the towns in Kowel county had become more Polish, the overall percentage of Ukrainians in the county had increased by almost two percent—from 71.1% to 72.9%.[72] The Army's Lublin Field Command, under whose jurisdiction Volhynia fell, also noted that the Ukrainian population in the province was growing at a faster rate than that of other nationalities.[73] Such arguments about the relatively weak growth of Poles in the *kresy* had political currency. In an undated memorandum to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the leaders of the TRZW justified the organization's mission by showing how "the Polish population demonstrates weaker rates of natural growth than the Slavic minorities."[74]

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[70] "Zagadnienie Ziem Wschodnich w świetle bezpośrednej obserwacji terenu," AAN MSW (Part I) 946/7. For a close reading of the report, see also Mironowicz, *Białorusini i Ukraińcy*, 216-224.
[71] According to his findings, the southern areas of the borderlands would present the strongest resistance, while Sarny county would offer up the least resistance, and the "in-between" counties—which included Luboml, Włodzimierz, Kowel, Kostopol, and Łuck—would offer a medium amount of resistance. See Wiktor Ormicki, "Perspektywy osadnictwa wewnętrznego," AAN MSW (Part I) 955A/5.
[72] Rühle, "Studium powiatu kowelskiego," 349.
[73] "Meldunek Dowódcy Okręgu Korpusu Nr. II Do I Wiceministra Spraw Wojskowych w sprawie konferencji z wojewodą wołyńskim z 10 kwietnia 1935 roku," reprinted in "Materiały z Konferencji dowódcy Okręgu Korpusu nr II Lublin z wojewodą wołyńskim w sprawach bezpieczeństwa województwa wołyńskiego," ed. Zdzisław G. Kowalski, *Biuletyn Nr. 25 Wojskowej Służby Archiwalnej* (2002) [no page numbers].
[74] "Memorjał Towarzystwa Rozwoju Ziem Wschodnich," AAN MSW (dopływ) 1113/1.

In Volhynia, demographic fears were matched by a shift in political rhetoric, with critics of Józewski's approach suggesting that the Ukrainians were gaining the upper hand. Although there were some signs of reconciliation—most notably the 1935 "normalization" agreement between the Polish government and the Ukrainian political party UNDO—concerns about demographic imbalances gained momentum following Piłsudski's death. The reemergence of older phrases that evoked images of "Poles in a Ukrainian sea" created a worrying set of conditions for Volhynia's liberal elite.[75] Józewski himself recognized that problems of elementary education were again sparking discussions about the so-called "Ukrainianization" of schools, whereby "the Polish element in the *kresy* does not benefit from the adequate care of the state authorities" and "the Ukrainian element is privileged over the Polish element."[76] Such fears persisted until the end of the decade, with some local elites asserting that Poles remained in a weak position vis-à-vis their non-Polish counterparts.[77]

Alongside demographic fears about decreases in the percentage of Poles, the mid to late 1930s also witnessed an increased emphasis on the underdeveloped nature of national identities in the *kresy*. In 1934, the Commission for Eastern Borderland Affairs (*Komisja dla Spraw Kresów Wschodnich*), which had recently been established at the Council of Ministers to confront the political problems of the East*,* argued that while the "process of ethnic crystallization" was in full flow, many people in the eastern borderlands still lacked a developed national consciousness. In a letter from the commission to the Eastern Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the academic Władysław Wielhorski argued that:

> Apart from the individuals who have already undergone a phase of national self-determination, there are millions of others in which the component of culture of their psychology is currently, as it were, solvent. They are an

[75] "Sprawozdanie obrazujące sytuację województwa wołyńskiego" (November 1935), BUW Manuscript Collection MS 1549/50.
[76] Ibid., 27.
[77] For two examples of appeals about the weaknesses of Polishness in Volhynia, see Tadeusz Krzyżanowski, "Polskie siły społeczne na tle stosunków narodowościowych na Wołyniu" (Referat wygłoszony na Wołyńskim Zjeździe Wojewódzkim Polskiej Macierzy Szkolnej w Równem w dn. 13.III.1938r.), 7; "Plan Pracy Powiatowego Związku Osadników w Zdołbunowie na roku 1938/39," DARO 223/1/26/1-1od.

> amorphous mass in terms of ethnicity. […] This especially applies to supposed candidates for future membership of the Ukrainian and Belarusian nations, but which also can enlarge the army of Poles if they are brought up suitably […].[78]

In this analysis, both the Ukrainian and the Belarusian populations lacked biological or cultural uniformity, something that could be used to Poland's advantage.

Such conclusions were bolstered by the work of the Commission for Scientific Research into the Eastern Lands (*Komisja Naukowych Badań Ziem Wschodnich*), which acted as the scientific counterpart to the Commission for Eastern Borderland Affairs. Established in March 1934 and headed by a general in the Polish Army, Tadeusz Kasprzycki, the commission's task was to obtain "rational objective data for scientific and economic policies in the East."[79] The institutional links between scientific research and politics meant that work on the underdevelopment of national consciousness had real political implications. In the southeastern lands of the Carpathian mountains, for example, the commission demonstrated how ethnographic groups—such as the Lemkos, Boikos, and Hutsuls—were distinct from Ukrainians per se, thus providing a "scientific" justification for state-led programs to develop regional identities.[80] Looking beyond the mountainous regions of the south, Kasprzycki's commission suggested that underdeveloped national groups in the marshlands of geographical Polesie (which included northern Volhynia) were particularly intriguing.[81] Indeed northern Volhynia seemed to straddle a dividing line between various ethnographic, linguistic, cultural, demographic, and even racial distinctions.

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[78] Letter from the Commission for Eastern Borderland Affairs at the Presidium of the Council of Ministers to Minister Tadeusz Schaetzel (March 6, 1934), AAN MSZ 5219/28.

[79] Aleksander Wysocki, "Regionalizm funkcjonalny w działaniu (na Huculszczyźnie) w świetle dokumentów Centralnego Archiwum Wojskowego," *Rocznik Archiwalno-Historyczny Centralnego Archiwum Wojskowego* 2/31 (2009): 78. Kasprzycki had been a member of Piłsudski's legions and went on to hold the position of minister of military affairs between 1935 and 1939.

[80] Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 638. See also Chojnowski, *Koncepcje polityki narodowościowej*, 198-200.

[81] The commission's first congress dedicated to the eastern lands, which was held in Warsaw in September 1936, focused on Polesie. The commission's president, Leon Wasilewski, stated that linguistic research might be particularly interesting were it to focus on the awakening of ethnic consciousness. *I Zjazd Naukowy Poświęcony Ziemiom Wschodnim w Warszawie 20 i 21 Września 1936r. Polesie (Sprawozdanie i dyskusje)* (Warsaw: Nakładem Komisji Naukowych Badań Ziem Wschodnich, 1938), 35.

Neither this interest in the people who inhabited the Volhynian-Polesian borderlands nor the idea that their national identity (or lack thereof) had profound political implications was entirely new.[82] The Polish right had traditionally viewed the Ukrainian- and Belarusian-speaking populations of the East as ethnographic raw material, ripe for absorption by either the Russians or the Poles, depending on who was stronger.[83] In Volhynia, depictions of Polesians as potential Poles could be found in the pages of *Volhynia Life* during the mid-1920s. An article published in January 1925, for instance, reported from a village in Kowel county where the forest people preserved a certain type of "Slavicness" in a sparsely-populated, "almost primordial" landscape. The job of the Polish state was to improve their lives without erasing their local culture entirely, "absorbing them, grounding Polishness and the flourishing of our language."[84] Ukrainian nationalists disagreed that the people who inhabited the Volhynian–Polesian borderlands were simply proto-Poles. A 1931 article in the Lwów-based journal *Dilo* (The Deed) argued that the southern part of Polesie was populated by "a pure Ukrainian type, [with] Ukrainian customs and an almost completely pure Ukrainian language of the northern dialect."[85]

By the mid-1930s, ideas about indeterminate national identities had made their way into mainstream scientific accounts of northern Volhynia. In October 1934, for instance, a meeting of the Commission for Scientific Research into the Eastern Lands discussed the border between the Polesian and Volhynian dialects of the Ukrainian language, as well as research that had been carried out into lexical, morphological, and phonetic characteristics.[86] Further research from 1935 onwards included visits to villages in Sarny and Kowel counties in northern Volhynia, where researchers

[82] The ethnographer and folklorist Adam Fischer traced the ethnographic distinctions between the various types of Ruthenians in Polesie, northern Volhynia, and in the lands further south in 1928. Adam Fischer, *Rusini: Zarys Etnografii Rusi* (Lwów: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1928).
[83] Tomaszewski, *Rzeczpospolita Wielu Narodów*, 96.
[84] "Z Polesia Wołyńskiego," *Życie Wołynia*, January 18, 1925, 18.
[85] "Podil Polissia," *Dilo*, January 23, 1931, 1.
[86] "Program Badań Zagadnień Demograficzno-Narodowościowych" (Referat na posiedzeniu Komisji z dn. 8.X.34r.), AAN MSZ 5219/65.

collected data relating to the phonetics and morphology of names from a range of kinship group and localities, and recorded folk songs, fairytales, and short stories.[87]

Work was also undertaken to define an ethnographic border between Volhynia and Polesie. A 1938 article published by the ethnographer Stanisław Dworakowski in the journal *Sprawy Narodowościowe* (Ethnic Affairs) proposed that the northern part of Volhynia was more similar to Polesie than it was to the rest of Volhynia in terms of its geography, anthropology, and even language. The northern populations, he argued, belonged to "the ethnic groups of Polesie with an uncrystallized national consciousness" and were "susceptible to civilizational influences," while the people in the southern part of Volhynia were "an active type, socially complex, with a fast crystallizing national consciousness."[88] Dworakowski even explained the differences in racial terms: populations in the southern counties, such as Krzemieniec, Włodzimierz, Równe, Łuck, and Dubno were of the "Nordic" type, while people in the northern areas of Volhynian Polesie, such as Sarny, Kowel, and Luboml counties, were described as so-called "Laponoid" types, more closely related to the populations who lived in the province of Polesie.[89] Dworakowki's emphasis on racial types relegated non-Polish "national" groups to a lower level of importance.

Not all Polish elites agreed that Ukrainian-speaking populations lacked a viable national identity. Indeed, the use of the term "Ukrainian" (which implied a national group) rather than "Ruthenian" (with its ethnic connotations) was officially embraced by the government in the mid-1930s. During the parliamentary elections of 1935, the pro-government non-aligned bloc included "Ukrainian" candidates on its list, while the Ministry of Internal Affairs even issued a circular at the beginning of 1936 that urged the organs of the state administration to employ the term "Ukrainian" rather than "Ruthenian."[90] In Volhynia, supporters of Józewski and Piłsudski

[87] "Sprawozdanie z prac badawczo-naukowych Komisji Naukowych Badań Ziem Wschodnich za czas od 1 października do 31 marca 1935r.," AAN MSZ 5219/140-141.
[88] Dworakowski, "Rubież Polesko-Wołyńska," 222.
[89] Ibid., 225.
[90] Mironowicz, *Białorusini i Ukraińcy*, 225.

continued to stress that Volhynia's Ukrainians no longer constituted "indifferent ethnic material," but were a "tight-knit mass, conscious of national separateness."[91]

However, the idea that there were still populations that did not possess a developed national conscious persisted into the late 1930s, much to the chagrin of Ukrainian parliamentarians.[92] In a speech to the Polish parliament in 1936, the minister of education declared that in Volhynia "the only correct road [for the Ukrainians] is full assimilation."[93] By the beginning of 1939, the new provincial governor of Volhynia, Aleksander Haute-Nowak, who had replaced Józewski the previous year, stated that it was necessary to avoid the term "Ukrainian" when describing Orthodox populations, since it "strongly emphasizes national separateness."[94]

Ethnographic data was also used to support more radical proposals to demographically transform Volhynia into a Polish province. Because of the perceived national indifference of peasant populations, Polesie and northern Volhynia were seen as prime sites for internal Polish colonization in a state where population growth hit 12.3% in 1933. Unlike Western European imperial powers, Poland had no external colonies to which it could send surplus populations (small-scale attempts to set up a colony in Brazil notwithstanding), and instead devised internal colonization schemes in the sparsely-populated territories of the *kresy*.[95] As the anonymously written 1935 Ministry of Internal Affairs paper discussed above indicated, the most suitable sites would be found in regions where national consciousness was apparently at its lowest. Volhynia's northern counties—namely Sarny, Kostopol, Kowel, and Luboml—were included in this future zone of colonization, since their "Polesian" populations were supposedly less likely to resist colonization. In arguing that these people were "an unconscious element in terms of ethnicity," the report's author openly contradicted the

[91] Joachim Wołoszynowski, *Nasz Wołyń (obserwacje i rozważania)* (Łuck: [s.n.], 1937), 15.
[92] Ukrainian parliamentary representatives from Volhynia complained about the ongoing use of the term "Ruthenian" in school textbooks. See "Memorjał Ukraińskiej Parlamentarnej Reprezentacji Wołynia" (1937), DARO 478/1/3/13.
[93] Cited in Giennadij Matwiejew, "Akcja 'Rewindykacja' na Wołyniu w końcu lat 30-ch XX wieku," *Przegląd Wschodni* 5, no. 4 (1999): 684.
[94] Ibid., 688.
[95] For more on Polish attempts to gain colonies during the interwar period, see Taras Hunczak, "Polish Colonial Ambitions in the Inter-War Period," *Slavic Review* 26, no. 4 (1967): 648-656.

results of the 1931 census, which stated that 70% of the population of Sarny and Kowel counties was Ukrainian.[96]

The report also indicated how people who had lost their Polishness might be brought back into the national fold. One idea was to develop the consciousness of the so-called *szlachta zagrodowa* or *szlachta zaściankowa* (petty nobles) who had allegedly been denationalized as a consequence of Russian imperial policies during the nineteenth century. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs report, the majority of the petty nobles were "normal peasants who feel that they are Poles, but can easily become Ukrainians or Belarusians [if they are] left under the influence of foreign propaganda without Polish care."[97] A large proportion comprised of Orthodox "Poles," people descended from Roman Catholics who had converted to Orthodoxy. By importing Polish settlers to designated colonization zones, denationalized "Poles" might rediscover their Polishness.

Military elites certainly believed that Poles who had lost feelings of nationality might have their consciousness reawakened by Polish community work and (re-)conversion to Roman Catholicism. In Galicia, state-supported efforts to "re-Polonize" petty nobles serving in the army began in 1934 and developed into schemes for the Polonization of the wider population through the work of the Union of the Petty Nobles (*Związek Szlachty Zagrodowej*).[98] To further this national revival, the Committee for the Affairs of the Petty Nobility in Eastern Poland (*Komitet Spraw Szlachty Zagrodowej na Wschodzie Polski*) was founded in Warsaw in February 1938 as an autonomous unit within the TRZW. According to the society's estimates, there were between 800,000 and 1,000,000 people in the *kresy* who were descended from the old petty nobility. In Volhynia, where re-Polonization movements arrived relatively late, a regional committee of the Union of Petty Nobles had organized 127 circles with around 5,000 members by January 1939.[99]

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[96] "Zagadnienie Ziem Wschodnich w świetle bezpośredniej obserwacji terenu," AAN MSW (Part I) 946/50.
[97] Ibid., 25.
[98] For policies towards the petty nobles in Galicia, see Stawecki, *Następcy Komendanta*, 179-83; Hryciuk, *Przemiany narodowościowe*, 123-129; Kacprzak**,** *Towarzystwo Rozwoju Ziem Wschodnich*, 98-104.
[99] Stawecki, *Następcy Komendanta*, 185.

Working out who was genuinely "Polish" (or, more accurately, whose ancestors had been Polish) was a critical part of the process. The Polish state lacked the manpower and knowledge to accurately calculate the number of people who were descended from the old nobility, while ideas of national, religious, and social identity were themselves slippery and undefined.[100] Despite this, ethnographers working in the eastern borderlands lent a scientific, academic tone to what was essentially a political scheme. Indeed, the scientific section of the Committee for the Affairs of the Petty Nobility featured an army of some 150 scholars who were coaxed with stipends of 500 złoty.[101] Notable scholars such as Ludwik Grodzicki, Stanisław Dworakowski, and Józef Obrębski researched the issue in geographical Polesie, creating card indexes of localities and indicating the percentage of petty nobles in relation to the general inhabitants.[102] By the end of 1938, Dworakowski had even become the head of the scientific section, carrying out research into the history of localities, settlements, and families in the eastern counties of both Polesie and Volhynia and making emotional appeals on behalf of the "former Poles" who were "waiting today for sincere hands, which help to return them to the fatherland."[103] Volhynia's Polish elites also collaborated in efforts to collect information. Members of the Volhynian Society for Friends of Science in Łuck passed on their knowledge about Polish noble tribes, settlements, and parishes.[104] Even Jakub Hoffman offered his scientific assistance, although only on the basis that his name be excluded from the list of members, since he did not support policies to convert people to Catholicism.[105]

As Hoffman's objection suggested, the goal of re-Polonizing the petty nobles was accompanied by an army-orchestrated campaign to convert Orthodox populations to Roman Catholicism, guided by a belief that only Polish Roman Catholics could be

[100] Matwiejew, "Akcja 'Rewindykacja'," 685.
[101] Mironowicz, *Białorusini i Ukraińcy*, 201. See also Stawecki, *Następcy Komendanta*, 183.
[102] Katarzyna Wrzesińska and Jacek Serwański "Józef Obrębski w Instytucie Badań Spraw Narodowościowych w latach 1934-1939," *Sprawy Narodowościowe* 29 (2006): 87.
[103] Jolanta Czajkowska, *Stanisław Dworakowski – etnograf* (Łomża : Łomżyńskie Tow. Naukowe im. Wagów, 2003), 37.
[104] "Komunikat Nr. 2" (July 1938), DARO 160/1/69/20od-21.
[105] Letter from Jakub Hoffman to the Committee for the Affairs of the Petty Nobility in Eastern Poland (June 20, 1938), DARO 160/1/69/14.

considered loyal citizens.[106] While the policies pursued in Volhynia were aggressive and largely determined by the army's security demands, they were couched in terms of the historical injustices inflicted upon the Polish nation during the period of Russian rule. The people to be converted were not Ukrainians, local supporters of the scheme maintained, but "Russified Poles" who needed to be reconverted to Roman Catholicism, the religion of their ancestors. In a March 1938 letter to an Orthodox priest in the district of Dederkały in Krzemieniec county, a colonel involved in the conversions (referred to as "revindications") asserted that the army aimed to "return to the Polish bosom all that was once Polish in order to right the painful injustice done to Poland and Polish families, the wrong inflicted by the Russian partition."[107] Since the army targeted denationalized Poles, the colonel urged the Orthodox priest not to misinterpret its work as "an action against Orthodoxy or our brother Ukrainian nation."[108] This new approach was markedly different to Józewski's religious policies, which had aimed to promote the state through the channels of Orthodoxy, create loyal Polish citizens of the Orthodox faith, and reduce Russian influence.[109]

Although conceived in the upper strata of the military, the attempt to convert people to Roman Catholicism was not merely a top-down process. Like so many of the initiatives to spread Polishness in the *kresy*, revindication actions involved alliances of local agents, each with their own priorities and motivations. In Volhynia, KOP border guards—whose leaders were now acting against Józewski—were the main protagonists in schemes to "awaken" latent Polish identities, a task that had been included in their official guidelines for community work in 1937.[110] They were

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[106] The Polish Army's idea that only Roman Catholics could be true "Poles" found expression in the Lublin Field Command's policies in the Chełm area of Lublin county (to the west of Volhynia) where churches were demolished and people forced to convert to Roman Catholicism in 1938. See Stawecki, *Następcy Komendanta,* 188-201.

[107] Letter to Orthodox priest in Dederkały district from Stanisław Gąsiorek, ppłk (March 9, 1938), DARO 160/1/69/9.

[108] Ibid., 9.

[109] Snyder, *Sketches*, 147-154.

[110] According to the guidelines, their task was not only to maintain national-state consciousness in local Poles and spread Polish culture to the national minorities, but also to "reinstate national-state consciousness in the population that was once Polish and lost its national consciousness only as a result of the partitions." See "Wytyczne Pracy Społecznej K.O.P.," ASGwS 541/551B/1. For more on KOP's attitudes towards Józewski's policies in Volhynia, see Snyder, *Sketches*, 159-160; Potocki, *Polityka państwa polskiego*, 153-4.

assisted by Roman Catholic clergymen, local authorities, National Democrat activists, participants in local Polish paramilitary societies, military settlers, members of the Union of Petty Nobles and the TRZW, local branches of Catholic societies, and some teachers.[111] Catholic priests, who were generally more favorable towards the National Democratic vision of Polishness, preached at the pulpit about the importance of revindications.[112] Some military settlers also saw an opportunity to fulfill their own goals via conversion policies, as was the case in Równe county where twenty families converted to Roman Catholicism in the summer of 1938 as a result of action carried out by the Union of Settlers and a captain from the local KOP battalion.[113] In Stary Oleksiniec in Krzemieniec county, settlers agitated for the forced revindication of the church to Roman Catholicism.[114]

Plans to reconfigure the religious (and thereby national) identities of the populations near the border took place under the threat of force. In the village of Hrynki near the Polish-Soviet border in Krzemieniec county, the site of Volhynia's first mass conversion in December 1937, KOP border guards attempted to "pacify" Orthodox populations that were deemed hostile to the Polish state. According to their reports, local people had used public KOP celebrations as an opportunity to smear excrement on the state crest, as well as on portraits of President Mościcki, Edward Rydz-Śmigły (Piłsudski's replacement as Commander-in-Chief), and KOP leaders. In addition to putting the culprits on trial and limiting the civil rights of populations in the border area, local KOP commanders, believing that 70% of the so-called

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[111] Matwiejew, "Akcja 'Rewindykacja'," 690-691.

[112] In January 1938, for example, priest Duszak from Dubno urged people, especially school-age youth, to help in the conversion campaign. "Miesięczne sprawozdanie sytuacyjne nr. 1 za m-c styczeń 1938r. z ruchu społ.-polit. i narodowościowego" (February 11, 1938), DARO 448/1/1/41od. For more on the Roman Catholic Church's attitudes towards various visions of Polishness, see Neal Pease, *Rome's Most Faithful Daughter: The Catholic Church and Independent Poland, 1914-1939* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009).

[113] "Miesięczne sprawozdanie sytuacyjne nr. 6 za m-c czerwiec 1938r. z ruchu społ.-polit. i narodowościowego" (July 9, 1938), DARO 448/1/1/205.

[114] "Miesięczne sprawozdanie sytuacyjne nr. 2 za m-c luty 1938r. z ruchu społ.-polit. i narodowościowego," (March 14, 1938), DARO 448/1/1/73-73od. Such alliances between pro-revindication Poles were not always smooth. Police reports indicate that there was discord between National Democrat activists and KOP soldiers, while Roman Catholic clergy in Volhynia performed conversion ceremonies "often without much enthusiasm." "Miesięczne sprawozdanie sytuacyjne nr. 1 za m-c styczeń 1938r. z ruchu społeczno-politycznego i narodowościowego" (February 11, 1938), AAN UWwŁ 38/6. On the lack of enthusiasm among priests, see Snyder, *Sketches*, 164.

"Ukrainian" inhabitants were actually descendants of Poles from Masuria, told people that they could protect themselves from Ukrainian agitation through a return to the ethnicity and religion of their ancestors.[115] People converted by the hundreds, although Volhynia's Ukrainian members of parliament asserted that the conversions were carried out under duress, since people had their passports withdrawn and their movements restricted. Alarming rumors also circulated that only Roman Catholics could remain in the border zone, retain land and banking credit, and avoid the corvée, while Orthodox peasants would be cut off from their land.[116]

Repression was twinned with material incentives for converts.[117] During the conversion of 56 people from the Lidawka colony near the Polish-Soviet border in February 1938, the KOP commander promised to help the village by providing support for the school, chapel, and cemetery. In response, the village head specifically asked for assistance with the construction of a school and with the quest to find a teacher, leading the KOP commander to declare that a 200 złoty donation would be made to fund school construction.[118] In a KOP report that documented work in Zdołbunów county during the summer of 1938, it was noted that children of converts were provided with clothes, while the converts themselves received help finding employment.[119] Ideas about the material benefits of conversion spread from village to village. The audience at the Lidawka conversion included the heads of other villages in the vicinity, who allegedly "came with the aim of acquainting themselves with the execution of Catholic action in order to carry it out in their area."[120] In the after-service feast, Orthodox leaders from other local villages declared that the "spontaneous return to the old religion by the inhabitants of the colony of Lidawka is a

[115] Matwiejew, "Akcja 'Rewindykacja'," 691. The infamous events in Hrynki are recounted in Kęsik, *Zaufany Komendanta,* 143-144.
[116] Matwiejew, "Akcja 'Rewindykacja'," 692.
[117] Snyder, *Sketches*, 163.
[118] "Posterunek Policji Państwowej w Majkowie powiatu równieńskiego: Ruch religijny" (February 22, 1938), DARO 86/2/756/60od.
[119] KOP, Pułk Zdołbunów, "Meldunek sytuacyjny – przedstawienie" (September 24, 1938), ASGwS 541/648/25.
[120] "Posterunek Policji Państwowej w Majkowie […]," DARO 86/2/756/60-60od.

valuable example for other Russified inhabitants to imitate," promising to "carry out the same action in their villages."[121]

Since only a very small percentage of the Orthodox population in Volhynia (about 0.4%, according to Snyder's estimates) converted to Catholicism through the revindication schemes of 1937-1939, it would be easy to dismiss such incidents as marginal.[122] But their repercussions were certainly not. Like the plans for military settlement in the early 1920s, the revindications stirred up ethnic and religious tensions. The Orthodox clergy, who saw their flocks taken away and their own movements restricted, reacted negatively. In May 1938, the Orthodox consistory in Krzemieniec sent a delegate to parishes in Równe county, who gave sermons urging the population to persist in their Orthodox belief.[123] Some Orthodox populations also reacted negatively to the revindications, such as in Dubno where the actions created an anti-Polish mood and strengthened the national consciousness of the Ukrainian population.[124] The Orthodox Church, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, and the Communist Party of Western Ukraine were all able to garner support as a consequence of the unpopular revindications. Police reports from the late 1930s noted a rise in the influence of Ukrainian nationalists from Eastern Galicia, while feelings of separateness between Volhynia's Ukrainian and Polish populations were triggered by news that an independent Carpathian Rus' had been declared in March 1939.[125] The Volhynian Ukrainian Union was increasingly inefficient, and other organizations that had been looked upon as potential sites for interethnic cooperation (such as circles of rural youth and volunteer fire brigades) were now viewed with suspicion by border guards.[126]

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[121] "Miesięczne sprawozdanie […] za m-c luty 1938r […]" (March 14, 1938), DARO 448/1/1/73od.
[122] Snyder, *Sketches*, 163.
[123] "Miesięczne sprawozdanie […] za m-c kwiecień 1938r [….]" (May 12, 1938), DARO 448/1/1/142od. Polish reports also alleged that Orthodox priests in Sarny and Kostopol counties threatened people who expressed an interest in converting to Catholicism in the summer of 1938, prompting KOP to assert that the removal of the priests was necessary for the "return of Russified Poles to the motherland." "Meldunek sytuacyjny," Sarny (June 30, 1938), ASGwS 541/648/35-35a.
[124] "Miesięczne sprawozdanie […] za m-c maj 1938r […]." (June 13, 1938), DARO 448/1/1/173od.
[125] "Miesięczne sprawozdanie […] za m-c luty 1939 […]" (March 15, 1939), AAN UWwŁ 40/44.
[126] On VUO, see "Miesięczne sprawozdanie […] za m-c lipiec 1938r […]." (August 12, 1938), DARO 448/1/1/231; For KOP suspicions about local organizations, see "Meldunek Sytuacyjny—przedstawienie" (Równe, March 26, 1938), ASGwS 541/648/29.

Revindication policies reveal much about the changed mindset of state and local actors towards the populations and lands of the *kresy* by the late 1930s. Indeed, they indicate that the promotion of a multiethnic identity had been replaced with a different concept, one that emphasized how Volhynia could only become secure and truly Polish through the complete reconfiguration of its demographics. By the end of the 1930s, older visions of Polish Volhynia—of an economically prosperous and "civilized" province in which Poles would raise Ukrainian living standards—had made way for a much narrower idea of what it meant to be Polish.

Territorial Reconfigurations and the End of Jewish Volhynia

Two additional factors also pointed towards the idea that the language of rational scientific planning had come to replace visions of multiethnic local identity. The first was the Polish Army's scheme to completely reconfigure Volhynia as an administrative unit and to redraw its boundaries in line with military needs. As Nick Baron has shown in his work on the demarcation of Soviet Karelia in the early 1920s, internal boundaries are crucial for a state's identity and legitimacy, since they "articulate both on the landscape and the map underlying visions of political, social and spatial order and delineate the territorial units—regions—which provide the framework for future transformations."[127] In the Polish state of the late 1930s, plans to reconfigure internal boundaries similarly reveal how state personnel envisaged the future of eastern Poland.

Schemes to transform internal boundaries were not new. Various projects aimed at reconfiguring the state—and particularly the eastern borderlands—had been put forward throughout the 1920s and 1930s, often appealing to the national identities (or lack thereof) of local people.[128] But military proposals for the eastern lands in the

[127] Nick Baron, "Nature, Nationalism and Revolutionary Regionalism: Constructing Soviet Karelia, 1920-1923," *Journal of Historical Geography* 33, no. 3 (2007): 593.

[128] In 1929, discussions on possible adjustments to the administrative border between Polesie and Volhynia highlighted the malleable ethnic identities of the "Polesians," who were, according to the Polesian governor in 1929, "without ethnicity." In his opinion, the northern parts of Luboml and Kowel counties (along with small areas of Łuck and Kostopol counties) were "Polesian," while the southern parts of Luboml and Kostopol counties, along with the northern parts of Włodzimiez, Horochów, Łuck, and Równe counties should be characterized as "Volhynian Polesie," leading him to conclude that

late 1930s indicated that the very idea of Volhynia as an administrative, political, and cultural unit was seen as a failure, and that new configurations might better serve Polish interests in the East. In December 1937, military authorities sent a letter to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, detailing plans to change the political organization of the *kresy* so that "military demands" would be connected to "the demands of ethnic politics."[129] The plans did away with the large provinces of Volhynia and Polesie as they currently stood, and instead proposed that a new set of small provinces, featuring dense administrative networks, be set up along the Polish-Soviet border. To the immediate west of these small provinces would be larger provinces with predominantly Polish populations.[130]

The plans were justified through research into the national consciousness of Volhynia's populations carried out by the Commission for Scientific Research into the Eastern Lands. Under the new arrangement, the province of Volhynia in its current form would disappear from the map of Poland. Two of its northern counties (Sarny and Kowel) along with some of the districts from several other counties would be joined with the southern Polesian county of Kamień Koszyrski in order to form a new county that would be inhabited by a purely "Polesian" population. By changing the northern borders of Volhynia, a strip "with a large percentage of Polish populations" would be brought into existence, thus creating "a belt for the penetration of the Polish element, comprising at the same time a partition against Ukrainian expansion into Polesie."[131] While some Polesians were to be isolated from Ukrainian influence by placing a Polish population between them and the south, others (namely those in Luboml county) were to be attached to the province of Lublin, which lay directly to the west of Volhynia and had a majority Polish population. The logic was that joining these "ethnically Polesian types" to "an area of Polish expansion" would ease the

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Volhynian Polesie should be joined up with the rest of Polesie. See Jan Krahelski (Wojewoda Poleski), "Projekt zmian w podziale administracyjnym ziem wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej" (1929), AAN MSW (Part I) 318/616-674.

[129] Letter from the Military Division to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on the third phase of dividing the administration (December 13, 1937), AAN MSW (Part I) 178/18.

[130] Ibid., 18.

[131] Ibid., 22.

process of assimilation.[132] An inter-ministerial commission at the Ministry of Internal Affairs agreed that Volhynia's northern counties deserved special treatment—after being annexed by Polesie, northern Volhynia would become a "purely Polesian" region with a new capital in Pińsk.[133] While the changes were not implemented before the outbreak of the Second World War, they indicated that the days of Volhynia as a multiethnic administrative unit were numbered.

The second factor pointing to the end of multiethnic Volhynia (at least as a political vision) was a change in rhetoric towards the province's Jews. While the non-Polish Slavic populations might have their "inner" Polishness and Roman Catholicism reawakened, the position of the Jews seemed less assured. This was partly demonstrated by the violent statewide political rhetoric and policies toward Jews—including boycotts of Jewish stores and businesses, limitations on Jewish access to higher education, and pogroms—that swept Poland during the late 1930s.[134] Volhynia's Jews similarly came under an increasing threat of physical violence. Local police reports indicated that there was "more and more hatred against the Jews from the Christian population," with anti-Semitic trends linked to the increased significance of National Democrat activists and their supporters among the local Catholic clergy.[135] In Dubno county in late 1937, Catholic priests aided the anti-Semitic actions of the National Democratic Party, providing rooms for meetings at which the "battle with Jewish trade" was discussed, exhorting congregations to buy only from Catholic stores, and giving permission for anti-Semitic leaflets to be distributed within the church and churchyard.[136] Reports also noted that National Democrat activists agitated

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[132] Ibid., 23.
[133] Letter from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (December 9, 1938), AAN MSW (Part I) 178/55.
[134] William W. Hagen, "Before the 'Final Solution': Toward a Comparative Analysis of Political Anti-Semitism in Interwar Germany and Poland," *Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 2 (1996): 370-377. See also Israel Cohen, "The Jews in Poland," *Contemporary Review* (July/December 1936): 716-723.
[135] AAN UWwŁ 38/95.
[136] "Miesięczne sprawozdanie sytuacyjne nr. 12 za m-c grudzień 1937r. z ruchu społ.-polit. i narodowościowego," DARO 448/1/1/11od. As the historian Konrad Sadkowski has pointed out, clerical anti-Semitism was built on more than just traditional Judeophobia, but developed out of clergymen's efforts to retain political, social, spiritual, and economic power at a local level. Konrad Sadkowski, "Clerical Nationalism and Anti-Semitism: Catholic Priests, Jews, and Orthodox Christians in the Lublin Region, 1918-1939," in *Anti-Semitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland*, ed. Robert Blobaum (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 171-188.

in Volhynian villages about the necessity of organizing Poles to "do battle" with the Jews.[137]

Anti-Semitism did not only take the form of openly violent behavior. Indeed, the Commission for Eastern Borderland Affairs presented the "Jewish question" within a rational, scientific framework. While Ukrainian- and Belarusian-speaking peasants were viewed as assimilable, Jews were increasingly presented as a group that could not be politically useful to Poland. In a 1934 letter from the commission, the 900,000 Jews who inhabited the *kresy* were described as "not analogous to other minorities," since they were "tight-knit and closed in on themselves" and more interested in their own cultural and economic goals than "political consolidation with the interests of the Polish state."[138] The hardening of the state's position towards the Jews was also enshrined in emigration plans, which justified the removal of this "alien element" through "economic necessity."[139]

While the Poles feared Ukrainian demographic gains in the *kresy*, statistics collected via the census and by Polish demographers indicated that the Polish population was growing at a faster rate than its Jewish counterpart.[140] Indeed, a decline in the proportion of Jews in Volhynia's urban settlements provided encouragement for those who wished to further develop Polish Catholic influence. In a March 1938 speech delivered at the regional meeting of the PMS, Tadeusz Krzyżanowski noted that the percentage of Poles in Volhynia's towns had doubled, from 12% in 1921 to 25% in 1931.[141] While Krzyżanowski believed that this development was not sufficient, since Jews were still dominant in certain economic sectors, he argued that

[137] "Miesięcznie sprawozdanie sytuacyjne Nr. 9 z ruchu społeczno-politycznego i narodowościowego na terenie województwa wołyńskiego za miesiąc IX 1936r.," AAN UWwŁ 33/4 [document page no.]
[138] Letter from the Commission for Eastern Borderland Affairs at the Presidium of the Council of Ministers to Minister Tadeusz Schaetzel (March 6, 1934), AAN MSZ 5219/34-35.
[139] Szymon Rudnicki, "Anti-Jewish Legislation in Interwar Poland" in *Anti-Semitism and Its Opponents*, 160.
[140] In his report on demographics in Kowel county in 1936-37, Rühle pointed out that small population growth rates were noted in districts with large percentages of Jews. See Rühle, "Studium powiatu kowelskiego," 341.
[141] Krzyżanowski, "Polskie siły społeczne na tle stosunków narodowościowych na Wołyniu," 11.

they would be removed from trade and industry through "natural economic processes," and that Poles would take their positions.[142]

As explored in Chapter 3, the idea that the Jewish element needed to be curbed, particularly in the towns, was not limited to National Democratic right. In the late 1930s, activists linked to the TRZW also emphasized that the Jews continued to present a demographic concern in the *kresy*. The TRZW's Równe branch, which began its activities in October 1936, organized material help explicitly for the town's Polish Catholic populations, including soup kitchens for the poor, courses for illiterates, summer camps for children, and the first professional Christian orchestra for the town.[143] Its members also focused on improving the living conditions of urban Poles through the development of a colony that would feature housing and allotments for several hundred families of unemployed Polish workers. Such schemes were inextricably intertwined with attempts to reduce what was perceived as "Jewish" influence. Local members of the TRZW argued, for instance, that programs to develop Polish housing would free poverty-stricken Poles from their alleged dependence on the Jews, since they were currently "vegetating on the terrain of the town, living in the most awful conditions in the basements and cellars of Jewish houses."[144] An article published in TRZW's journal in 1939 supported the emigration of Jews, arguing that it was good for the *kresy* "in terms of economics and demographics."[145] Once again, the authority of science was used to support more radical political practices.

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This chapter has focused on the ways in which information about Volhynia was collected, presented, and politically interpreted from the end of the 1920s to the eve of the Second World War. In doing so, it has revealed the stories of a range of

[142] Ibid., 12.
[143] Letter from the Równe circle of the TRZW to the County Head in Równe (September 22, 1938), DARO 182/1/2/11-11od.
[144] "Komunikat Zarządu Głównego Nr. 13/38/19," DARO 182/1/6/19. See also letter from TRZW circle in Równe to TRZW in Łuck (May 14, 1938), DARO 182/1/2/204.
[145] Remigiusz Bierzanek, "Ludność żydowska na Ziemiach Wschodnich," *Rocznik Ziem Wschodnich* (1939): 72.

actors, including members of the local intelligentsia, demographers, ethnographers, and military elites. During this period, two visions of Volhynia existed, the first giving way to the second from the mid-1930s onwards. The first vision emphasized the importance of promoting a local Volhynian identity in order to convince both the province's multiethnic inhabitants and residents of other parts of Poland that Volhynia had a history and a future as a viable part of the Polish state. Increasingly, however, these ideas came up against a newer vision of the *kresy*, one that saw diversity as something to be controlled rather than celebrated. Spurred on by their own statistics about the dwindling percentage of Poles (in an area where Poles were already in a minority), ethnographers, demographers, and army men attempted to (re-)Polonize Volhynia and its "lost" Polish populations and to carve up the *kresy* into a more manageable territorial configuration.

Tracing the evolution of the ways in which local knowledge was presented allows us to tap into a wider story whereby ideas about an inclusive Polish civilization gave way to assimilationist trends. By the late 1930s, Polishness was no longer a set of ideas to be acted out, but was rather something to be imposed through a set of demographic policies. In the end, these policies, like their predecessors, were difficult to implement on the ground. In fact, it would take a war of unanticipated proportions and drastic demographic policies to completely reconfigure Volhynia—forever.

CONCLUSION:
The Significance of Space in Eastern Europe

Nestled in the northwestern part of the present-day Ukrainian state, the lands that once constituted the interwar province of Volhynia are now divided between two administrative units—*Volyn'* (Volhynia) *oblast'*, with its capital in Luts'k (Łuck), and Rivne (Równe) *oblast'*, with its capital in Rivne. An historian working on interwar Volhynia, who has previously known the region through dusty archival documents, microfilmed newspapers, and faded photographs, would find the area today both familiar and strange. For one, Volhynia's demographic profile has been completely transformed. Between 1939 and 1947, the region's inhabitants were subjected to radical population policies orchestrated by the Soviets, Nazis, and postwar Polish government, which violently and fundamentally altered Volhynia's demographics. In 1940, local Polish elites (including settlers, policemen, border guards, teachers, bureaucrats, and members of the local intelligentsia) were deported deep into the Soviet interior; in 1942, Volhynia's Jewish population was virtually eliminated by the Nazis (who gained support from local populations and Ukrainian nationalists); from 1943 onwards, Poles and Ukrainians killed one another by the thousands; and in the immediate postwar period, when the Polish-Soviet border shifted westwards, Polish populations from the *kresy* were settled in the so-called "recovered territories" that had recently been taken from Germany, while eastern Ukrainians were imported to populate and "Sovietize" Volhynia.[1]

From 1939 onwards, demographic transformations were twinned with changes to the physical and imagined landscapes. While their street configurations are recognizable from old maps, the present-day towns of Ostroh (Ostróg), Luts'k, and Rivne have been fundamentally altered by Soviet and post-Soviet architects and town planners. Rivne's urban marshlands—which interwar commentators complained about

[1] For more on demographic policies in Volhynia during the war, see Jan T. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002); Timothy Snyder, "The Life and Death of Western Volhynian Jewry;" Timothy Snyder, "'To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem Once and for All': The Ethnic Cleansing of Ukrainians in Poland, 1943-1947," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 1, no. 2 (1999): 86-120.

so profusely—were drained in the late 1970s and early 1980s to form a pretty "hydropark," where young couples have their wedding photo shoots and families stroll among the trees.[2] Other physical spaces have lost the significance they possessed during the interwar years due to the destruction of religious and national communities. Evidence of the region's Jewish history, for instance, is largely limited to the presence of surviving synagogues, like the yellow building in the old Jewish area of Rivne, anonymously located behind the high street and now used as a gymnasium. An unkempt and neglected Jewish cemetery of crumbling headstones, just a stone's throw away from the main city archive, is unmarked on maps and might easily be missed, even by a passer-by. While all places change over time, the Volhynia we know from interwar documents—in both its physical form and the significance that communities attributed to those spaces—virtually disappeared between 1939 and 1947.

As scholars, we impose our own sense of significance on the physical and imagined spaces that we encounter. Looking to the interwar period, our perspectives are inevitably shaped by knowledge of what happened here during the Second World War. On the one hand, the interwar history of Volhynia might easily become infused with nostalgia, not least because the multiethnic Volhynian borderlands of 1918-1939 seem so much more enticing than today's ethnically homogenous region. Like the geographer Louise Boyd, who took photos and wrote descriptions of Volhynia during her visit in the 1930s, we are captivated by the cacophony of languages, the variety of religious beliefs and lifestyles, and the diverse landscapes that the interwar province had to offer. Our perspective on the interwar period has also been tainted by the mass violence that swept Volhynia during the Second World War and the immediate postwar period. We know that Józewski's Volhynian experiment failed, and that the story ended in interethnic bloodshed, rather than harmony. But, as historians, we should be wary of seeing what we want to see—a multiethnic borderland region as a more attractive alternative to the ethnically homogenous nation-state, or a world on the brink of destruction, moving steadily towards the abyss.

[2] With thanks to Petro Dolganov for this information.

In an effort to avoid such pitfalls, this dissertation has looked instead at the region through the eyes of contemporaries, focusing on the significance that these men and women attributed to Volhynia, its populations, and its natural and man-made landscapes. The actors within this story sought to understand and shape the interwar province within wider discursive frameworks, drawing on pan-European ideas about what it meant to be modern, European, and civilized. They not only lived and worked in Volhynia, but they also created ways of processing and presenting the province's spaces, utilizing a common set of ideas and images that often fell short within the context of everyday life.

While interwar Volhynia may well be dead, its experiences—and the afterlives of those experiences—continue to be relevant. For one, a study of the significance attributed to interwar Volhynia suggests parallels and connections across time and space. The language of civilization, Polonization, and modernization, for instance, reemerged in the postwar period, when the people of the *kresy* left the region they called home to be resettled in the "recovered territories" of western Poland—an area that, according to the new communist government, constituted an "age-old Polish land."[3] Polish and (to a lesser extent) Ukrainian repatriates from the "beyond the River Bug " who settled in the west were once again sneered at for their "uncivilized" habits and ways of life, this time by communist officials, native Germans, and even Poles from central Poland, suggesting that the discourse of civilization and backwardness that was so pervasive during the interwar years persisted within the postwar context.[4] Moreover, quotidian material deprivation, the proximity of an unstable border, and popular anxieties about the transience of state power challenged official claims about the inherent Polishness of the terrain, echoing interwar insecurities about the *kresy*.

Tracing the interwar rhetoric of Polish civilizational superiority in the East also allows us to place contemporary political and social developments in their proper historical context. Since the declaration of Ukrainian independence in 1991, Poland

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[3] Gregor Thum, *Uprooted: How Breslau Became Wrocław during the Century of Expulsions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 2.

[4] On the perception that the people from beyond the Bug possessed lower levels of civilization, see Czesław Osękowski, *Ziemie Odzyskane w latach 1945-2005* (Zielona Góra: Uniwersytet Zielonogórski, 2006), 45. See also Thum, *Uprooted*, 101-102.

has positioned itself as Ukraine's greatest champion, its link to Europe, NATO, and the European Union. In 2012, the two countries will even co-host the UEFA European football championship, with their choice of twin mascots—Slavek and Slavko—implying the deep genealogical and historical links between Poland and Ukraine. But popular conceptions of Ukrainians in Poland suggest that the Polish self-image as the more European, civilized partner in the relationship remains to this day. At a time when Polish migrant worker are themselves subject to racist slurs in Western Europe, there is evidence that Polish stereotypes of the poor, uncivilized, criminal Ukrainian persist. As Poland becomes increasingly prosperous and attracts larger numbers of economic migrants, particularly from the east, it is necessary to understand the deeper origins of popular Polish stereotypes of their Ukrainian neighbors.

But this work also suggests the significance of spaces far beyond the Polish context and proposes an alternative framework for exploring East European history, a field that has traditionally been dominated by a specific set of political questions (about failures of statehood, ethnic violence, and totalitarian ideologies) and limited to a fairly conservative selection of methodologies. While East European history has frequently been seen as separate from its Western European counterpart (itself heavily focused on Britain, France, and Germany), historians of Eastern Europe are today questioning the artificial nature of this East-West divide. A new generation of historians, less influenced by the Cold War politics that supported the idea of Eastern Europe as a separate field, is looking at the connections between Eastern and Western Europe, the parallels in historical experiences, and the networks and relationships that spanned the continent in its entirety.[5]

The present dissertation follows this trend by showing how Polish ideas about civilization and backwardness might be fruitfully viewed within the European contexts of empire and nation-state. While historians have recently begun to focus on the German discourse of the East (in which Poles are cast as the recipients of culture and civilization), this dissertation asks questions about the role of Europe's smaller states,

[5] For two examples of the trend towards integrating postwar histories, see Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005); Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

which projected themselves as civilizing, Europeanizing agents at a time when their own European values were in doubt. As such, I show how a small corner of Europe, one that is unlikely to make it onto the agenda of all but the most adventurous tourist, suggests new ways of looking at Eastern Europe in the twentieth century.

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ALW:	Akty Leona Wasilewskiego (Leon Wasilewski Files)
ATN:	Akty Tadeusza Nowakowskiego (Tadeusz Nowakowski Files)
DPnKP:	Delegacja Polska na Konferencję Pokojową (Polish Delegation at the Peace Conference)
KNP:	Komitet Narodowy Polski (Polish National Committee)
MOS:	Ministerstwo Opieki Społecznej (Ministry of Welfare)
MRiRR:	Ministerstwo Rolnictwa i Reform Rolnych (Ministry of Farming and Farming Reforms)
MSW:	Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrzynych (Ministry of Internal Affairs)
MSZ:	Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
MWRiOP:	Ministerstwo Wyznań Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego (Ministry of Religion and Public Education)
PRM:	Prezydium Rady Ministrów w Warszawie (Presidium of the Council of Ministers in Warsaw)
TSK:	Towarzystwo Straży Kresowej (Society of the Borderland Guard)
UWwBnB:	Urząd Wojewódzki w Brześciu nad Bugiem (Provincial Administration in Brześć)
UWwŁ:	Urząd Wojewódzki w Łucku (Provincial Administration in Łuck)
ZHP:	Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego (Union of Polish Scouting)

ASGwS: *Archiwum Straży Granicznej w Szczecinie (Archive of the Border Guard in Szczecin)*, *Szczecin*

Collection 541

BUW: *Biblioteka Uniwersytecka w Warszawie (Warsaw University Library), Warsaw*

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Microfilm Collection

CAW: *Centralny Archiwum Wojskowy (Central Military Archive), Warsaw*

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(Office of the Ministry of Military Affairs, 1918-1939)

CBN: *Cyfrowa Biblioteka Narodowa (Digital National Library), Warsaw*

Kolekcja "Kresy Wschodnie" (Eastern Borderlands Collection)

KARTA Institute Archive, Warsaw

Archiwum Wschodnie II

Ukraine

DARO: *Derzhavnyi arkhiv Rivnens'koi oblasti (State Archive of Rivne Oblast), Rivne*

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HIA: *Hoover Institution Archive, Stanford, California*

ANRC: American National Red Cross
ARA-Europe: American Relief Administration—Europe
LRCS: League of Red Cross Societies Misc. 1919-1922
PA (U.S.): Poland Ambasada (U.S.) Records, 1918-1956

United Kingdom

NAL*: National Archives, London*

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PISMA: *Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum Archive, London*

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