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THE LEMKOS' GREAT WAR: WARTIME EXPERIENCES OF THE LEMKO PEOPLE, 1914-18

Abstract

The First World War imposed a severe stigma on the Lemko people, the Ruthenian mountaineers residing on the northern mountainside of the Carpathians. Military operations, political repressions, malnutrition, and epidemics of contagious diseases caused severe damages and losses in the population and materials. In the late 1914 and early 1915, the front-line was set through the Lemko Land. The area's eastern part was occupied for several months by the Russians. The occupational authorities planned to annex the area after the war, as they recognised the Lemkos as part of the Russian nation. On the other hand, the Lemko people were generally treated by the Austro-Hungarian authorities with suspicion, as allegedly favouring Russia. They were accused of sabotage and collaboration with the occupiers. Many a Lemko was executed, often without any proof of guilt whatsoever. Some 2,000 were sent to an internment camp in Thalerhof, not far from Graz. The war facilitated the split among the Lemkos into those who considered themselves members of a Ukrainian nation and those who recognised themselves as a separate ethnic group.

Keywords: First World War, Lemko people, Thalerhof camp, political repression, occupation, Greek Catholic Church, national identity, Spanish flu

This article seeks to discuss, based on selected examples, the dimensions of the 1914-18 wartime experience of the Lemko people. The First World War painfully affected also this particular ethnic group, which formed part of the multicultural and religiously diverse population of Austrian Galicia. These Ruthenian mountaineers populated the northern mountainside of the Carpathians, from the Poprad valley in the Beskid Sądecki range, through the Low(er) Beskids, down to the Oślawa valley and Łupków Pass. Being an agricultural area without industrial hubs or an extensive railroad network, the Lemko Land formed the most westward territory of the East Slavic oecumene.

A vast majority of its dwellers, totalling an estimated 85,000–90,000,¹ professed Greek Catholicism: along with the language, the religion was the key element of the Lemkos' identity, both rendering them discernible from their Polish or Jewish neighbours. The Lemkos did not have, at the time, a crystallised ethnic identity.²

Historical research dealing with the Lemkos has focused on the people's ethnogenesis (emphasising the role of the Wallachian colonisation), their religious and political life in the twentieth century, as well as the 'Vistula Action' and its consequences.³ The First World War has tended to be mentioned in a few sentences, at the utmost.⁴ This article seeks, in contrast, to analyse the various dimensions of the Lemkos' wartime experience, which I interpret as inclusive of all sorts of experiences, events or occurrences caused, whether directly or indirectly, by the war then going on, and affecting members of the group in question to a varying extent.⁵ The narrative is to be categorised into the experiences of the military-men taking part directly in the military action and those of the civilians. It has nonetheless to be borne in mind that during the Great War, which was a total conflict, this distinction has been blurred in this region. To illustrate my argument, I will recall the major figures and events that directly affected the Lemkos, excursing at times into regions adjacent to their land.

I

THE SERVICEMEN'S EXPERIENCE

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Habsburg monarchy imposed common military service. From 1882 onwards, military units were complemented on a territorial basis, apparently

¹ Paweł Przybylski, *Rola duchowieństwa greckokatolickiego w kształtowaniu się opcji narodowych wśród Łemków w latach 1918–1947* (Toruń, 2004), 16.

² See Agnieszka Barszczewska, *Moldawscy Csángó a Rusini Karpaccy (1867–1947). Problemy rozwoju tożsamości zbiorowej w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w XIX i XX wieku* (Warszawa, 2012); Ewa Michna, *Łemkowie. Grupa etniczna czy naród?* (Kraków, 1995); Roman Reinfuss, *Śladami Łemków* (Warszawa, 1990).

³ Jerzy Czajkowski (ed.), *Łemkowie w historii i kulturze Karpat* (Rzeszów, 1992).

⁴ For the most updated review of the references, see Bohdan Halczak, *Dzieje Łemków od średniowiecza do czasów współczesnych* (Warszawa, 2014).

⁵ For more, see Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska and Robert Traba (eds.), *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci* (Warszawa, 2014), 95–9.

to accelerate their mobilisation in case a war breaks out. This mechanism facilitated to seek out units with a considerable proportion of Lemko people. Most of the latter served with the 45th Infantry Regiment based in Sanok, a unit that formed part of the 24th Infantry Division within the 10th Corps of Przemyśl. Ruthenians in general were the Regiment's most numerous members, Lemkos being some 50 per cent of the share. Between the outbreak of the war and November 1916, the formation fought at the Eastern Front (the offensive toward Lublin, the defensive battles on the bank of the San River, the Carpathian campaign, the battle of Gorlice, and the Brusilov offensive). Between November 1916 and May 1917 the Regiment stayed at the Romanian front and later on, until the end of the war, joined the Italian front.⁶

A number of Lemkos moreover served with the Infantry Regiments: the 20th of Nowy Sącz (less than 14 per cent of the cast; incl. residents of the counties [*powiats*] of Gorlice, Grybów, Nowy Sącz and Nowy Targ) and the 57th of Tarnów (less than 9 per cent; mainly dwellers of Jasło County). Both units formed part of the 12th Infantry Division of the 1st Corps of Cracow. During the war, these regiments joined the Eastern Front and supported, among other actions, the offensive on Lublin of the first weeks of the war, the fighting in the southern part of the 'Congress' Kingdom of Poland, the battles of Limanowa and Gorlice, and the restraining of the Brusilov offensive. In June 1917, these formations were moved to the Italian front where they stayed till the war's end (the battles of the Isonzo, the breakout near Caporetto, and the last offensive on the Piave River).⁷ While this short list obviously does not cover all the formations of the Habsburg army with which the Lemkos served, my estimation is that the three infantry regiments included the highest proportion of Lemkos.

The officer corps did not feature many Lemkos; in general, Ruthenians/Ukrainians accounted for a mere 0.2 per cent of the *Kaiserlich und Königlich* (k.u.k.) Army's career officers. Lieutenant Roman Sembratovych of Tylicz was probably the best-known among them. When the war was over, he took the lead of Lemko self-defence troops, and

⁶ *Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg 1914–1918. Registerband*, ed. by Österreichisches Kriegsarchiv (Wien, 1938), 199–200.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 185–6.

once the troops were dissolved, he joined the Czechoslovak army as a regular officer.⁸

The August 1914 mobilisation in Galicia took quite an efficient course, with no considerable perturbation, and even with some enthusiasm. Apart from being a school of manliness and initiation into adulthood, the service in the army in the pre-war period was pictured as being in the service to the Emperor, the Dynasty and the State, rather than any of its member nations. With four-fifths of Emperor Francis Joseph I's subjects professing Catholicism, the religion very much operated as a unifying factor.⁹ Also the Greek Catholic clergy summoned the citizens to stand up to their duty toward the Habsburg monarchy, with the Lwów/L'viv Archbishop Andrei Sheptytsky at the lead. His pastoral letter of 21 August 1914 called the faithful to struggle against the 'Muscovite Tsar' who could not abide the religious and ethnic liberties admitted by the Habsburg monarchy, and strove to turn them down.¹⁰ Another letter, much in the same spirit, came before, on 2 August (after the war against Serbia broke out, but before the campaign against Russia started), from Przemyśl-based Greek Catholic Bishop Konstantin Chechovych.¹¹

The Polish Legions soldier and poet Władysław Orkan, a native of the vicinity of Limanowa, observed in early August 1914, in his account of a train journey: "In Stróże, at a crossroads where we were supposed to wait for several hours, the station is blasting with singing. A group of young people, arranged into a circle, are singing all the Polish songs, one after another; elsewhere, a gang of grimly drunken Lemkos – which is a rare thing! – are stubbornly repeating their own stuff."¹² There are no accounts from the Lemkos themselves, but by

⁸ Bogdan Horbal, *Działalność polityczna Łemków na Łemkowszczyźnie 1918–1921* (Kraków, 1997), 42, 67.

⁹ Günter Kronenbitter, *Krieg im Frieden. Die Führung der k.u.k. Armee und die Großmachtspolitik Österreich-Ungarns 1906–1914* (München, 2003), 209 ff.

¹⁰ Christoph Mick, *Kriegserfahrungen in einer multiethnischen Stadt. Lemberg 1914–1947* (Wiesbaden, 2010), 71.

¹¹ Anna Krochmal, 'Społeczność greckokatolicka w Galicji w okresie inwazji rosyjskiej (1914–1915)', *Miscellanea Historico-Archivistica*, xxi (2014), 237–8. See also Jerzy Z. Pająk, *Od autonomii do niepodległości. Kształtowanie się postaw politycznych i narodowych społeczeństwa Galicji w warunkach Wielkiej Wojny 1914–1918* (Kielce, 2012), 76–81.

¹² Władysław Orkan, *Droga czwartaków i inne wspomnienia wojenne* (Kraków, 1972), 129.

analogy with other peasant regions of Austria-Hungary, it may be assumed with a high degree of probability that they were joining the army ranks without objection – and without enthusiasm, either: they did it out of a sense of duty, concerned about the fact that they had happened to leave their homes and homesteads before the harvest could be completed. Indeed, the war came over in the days of an intense farming season. A mere thirty Lemkos are reported to have been drafted with the Sich Riflers, a Ukrainian volunteer unit within the Habsburg army.¹³

II

THE CIVILIANS' EXPERIENCE

The Lemko Land became a territory of war operations in as early as late September 1914. Later in the autumn of that year, the area was penetrated by Cossack patrols down to its western outskirts, as far as the Pieniny mountain range.¹⁴ As the warfront got stabilised in December 1914, it was set through the Lemko Land roughly along the line of Gorlice–Wysowa Pass. The eastern area of the Land were situated very closely to the warfront zone in the winter and early spring of 1915. This situation caused losses among local civilians, migrations of people, and material destruction. To give an example, the 1915 registry office records for the villages of Gładyszów and Wirchne recorded twenty-five and seventeen deaths, respectively. The annual death toll for Wirchne was normally three to five on average; the clergyman who drew up the records as for 1915 clearly remarked that the Russians were the perpetrators in several of the cases.¹⁵ A similar increase in the death rate was recorded for the nearby Nowica (as many as forty-one in 1915, with a dozen-or-so locals deceased as an annual average).¹⁶

¹³ Tadeusz A. Olszański, 'Austriackie represje w Galicji i obóz w Thalerhofie', <<http://www.cmentarze.gorlice.net.pl/talerhofstrona.htm>> [Accessed: Dec. 29, 2015].

¹⁴ Robert Kowalski, 'Kozacy w Ochotnicy, Tylmanowej i Krościenku w świetle doniesień "Gazety Podhalańskiej"', in Robert Kowalski (ed.), *Małopolska i Podhale w latach Wielkiej Wojny 1914–1915* (Nowy Targ, 2009), 249–58.

¹⁵ Rzeszów, State Archives, Sanok Branch [Polish: *Archiwum Państwowe w Rzeszowie. Oddział w Sanoku* (hereinafter: APR-OS)], Registry office records of the Greek Catholic parish in Gładyszów, Fund 1151, file no. 7, 69–70, 84.

¹⁶ APR-OS, Registry office records of the Greek Catholic parish in Nowica, Fund 1101, file no. 8, 54–6.

The figure for Przysłop was twenty-seven (whereof ten died of smallpox, four of typhus; in the other years of the war, more than six people per annum died locally),¹⁷ the one for Uście Ruskie [today, Uście Gorlickie] being forty-four (for the most part, the priest clerk remarked “*Belii causa sepulta est sine caeremonis*”).¹⁸ In Kwiatoń, a few miles away, with the pre-war average death rate of several per year, sixteen demises were recorded for both 1915 and 1916, the main causes having been smallpox, typhus, and pulmonary diseases.¹⁹ Some would directly fall victims of the hostilities. An eleven-year old girl dwelling in Konieczna was shot and died on 23 March 1915.²⁰ Thirty days later, a fifty-year-old female resident of Męcina Wielka was torn apart by an artillery shell.²¹ In Regietów Wyżny, a village that was temporarily embedded in the front-line in 1915, at least five dwellers fell shot by a gun or struck by a shrapnel.²²

Many a Lemko village was completely or partly destroyed at that time; these included: Blechnarka, Bodaki, Ciechania, Czeremcha, Gładyszów, Jaśliska, Konieczna, Krzywa, Lipowiec, Małastów, Polany (near Dukla), Regietów Niżny, Regietów Wyżny, Radocyna, Ropica Ruska, Smerekowiec, Świątkowa Wielka, Świerzowa Ruska, Tylawa, Wysowa, Zdynia, Zydranowa, to name but these.²³

III UNDER THE RUSSIAN OCCUPATION

Russians believed they would stay in Galicia not just for a while. Once it crossed the border, the Russian army declared it was ready to

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 66–8.

¹⁸ APR-OS, Registry office records of the Greek Catholic parish in Uście Ruskie, Fund 1127, file no. 9, 68–73.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, 18–22.

²⁰ APR-OS, Registry office records of the Greek Catholic parish in Zdynia, Fund 1154, file no. 8, 54.

²¹ APR-OS, Registry office records of the Greek Catholic parish in Męcina Wielka, Fund 1149, file no. 12, 73.

²² APR-OS, Registry office records of the Greek Catholic parish in Regietów, Fund 1099, file no. 7, 123.

²³ Horbal, *Działalność polityczna*, 37; Witold Grzesik and Tomasz Traczyk, *Beskid Niski. Przewodnik krajoznawczy. Od Komańczy do Bartnego* (Warszawa, 1992), 239–40; Tomasz Kargol, *Odbudowa Galicji ze zniszczeń wojennych w latach 1914–1918* (Kraków, 2012), 177.

liberate the Slavic people from the German and Jewish rule, and have all the Russians united within their 'natural limits', from the Carpathians up to the coast of the Pacific. The annexation of Galicia and Bukovina was meant to crown the effort to 'gather the Ruthenian lands together', as initiated in the fourteenth century by Ivan I Danilovich Kalita, Prince of Moscow and Vladimir.²⁴ On 8 August 1914, the tsar proclaimed in an address to the State Council that the Russian army had not only acted in defence of its own honour and dignity but fought also for the brethren Slavs, united with the Russians, in the emperor's words, through blood and faith.²⁵

This was one of the reasons why the commander of the Russian South-Western front, General Nikolai Ivanov, stated in an order to his troops operating in Eastern Galicia in mid-August 1914 that a majority of the population in that Habsburg province was 'Ruthenian' and spoke a 'Little-Russian dialect'; consequently, he encouraged his troops to treat those people well.²⁶ As the Russian governor of Galicia, General Georgi Alexandrovich Bobrinsky, declared in a speech he held on 13 October 1914 to delegate councillors of the city of L'viv: "In the first place, the eastern Galicia and the Lemko Land is a long-time part of the Great Russia. In those lands, the native populations have always been Russian: the administration of these lands ought, therefore, to be [re-established] upon the Russian principles. I shall introduce in here the Russian language, the Russian law, and constitutional system."²⁷

²⁴ Mark von Hagen, *War in a European Borderland. Occupations Plans in Galicia and Ukraine 1914–1918* (Washington, 2007), 19–28.

²⁵ Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge MA and London, 2011), 88.

²⁶ Krochmal, 'Społeczność greckokatolicka', 244.

²⁷ *Zbiór dokumentów dotyczących sprawy polskiej. Sierpień 1914 r. – styczeń 1915 r.* (Szwajcaria, 1915), 29. For a more detailed discussion on the Russian occupation of Galicia, see, e.g., Aleksander Achmatowicz, *Polityka Rosji w kwestii polskiej w pierwszym roku Wielkiej Wojny 1914–1915* (Warszawa, 2003), 348–91; Mick, *Kriegserfahrungen*, 111–27; Aleksandra Bahturina, *Politika Rossijskoi Imperii v Vostochnoi Galitsii v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny* (Moskwa, 2000); Włodzimierz Osadczy, *Święta Ruś. Rozwój i oddziaływanie idei prawosławia w Galicji* (Lublin, 2007), 593–615; Piotr Szlanta, "Najgorsze bestie to są Honwedzy". Ewolucja stosunku polskich mieszkańców Galicji do monarchii habsburskiej podczas I wojny światowej, in Urszula Jakubowska (ed.), *Galicyjskie Spotkania 2011* (Zabrze, 2011), 161–79; Piotr Szlanta, "'Bratia-slavyane" ili "aziatskiye ordy"? Polskoe naselenie i rossiyskaya okupatsiya Galitsyi v 1914–1915 godakh', in Katja Bruisch and Nicolaus Katzer

And how did the Lemkos react to the arrival of the Russians? Let us quote a handful of excerpts from the original accounts. In a letter to his family in the United States, sent in early 1915, Andriy Wychowaniec of Pielgrzymka wrote: “Russia is on the Hungarian border now. The Austrians have been driven into Hungary again; the thing I don’t know is if they [= the Russians] will be withdrawing again. We hope that Russia will not yield our Galicia.”²⁸ Maria Tyma from Hańczowa wrote that an elderly Russian officer quartered at her home, and treated the household well. Nastiya Nanczycha of Czarne reported: “Russian troops came over not much long after: it was them who felt much pity for us [after the village was burnt by the Austrians (Bogdan Horbal’s note)]. ‘Don’t you cry’, they would tell us, ‘We will do everything for you here, build you houses and deliver the bread’. And we were waiting, but couldn’t see anything coming. Though they would share what they had with us, it was too little of it still.”²⁹

However, the practice of the relationships between the Russian authorities and the Lemko people temporarily governed by them often diverged from the propagandist declarations claiming brotherhood and liberation. The Rev. Wojciech Kumor, Tylicz-based Roman Catholic priest and informer of the Supreme National Committee, reported in February 1915 that the Russian soldiers

despised the Ruthenian people, just hated them, simply put. They were mischievous, in an unexampled way, towards these people, and this behaviour healed the Ruthenians of ‘Muscovy-philía’ [i.e., Russophilia] that had been inculcated through the years of canvassing ..., since the Ruthenian people’s sentiments had for a number of years been affected, in a Muscovy-philic spirit, by priests and academicians [i.e., students – PS’s note], as well as the firebrand peasants (all under investigation today). The Muscovites did not have to do the canvassing since everything was prepared to welcome them. The peasant Ruthenians have long threatened the Polish locals, and had a black list of Poles condemned to slaughter prepared. They welcomed the Russian army with immeasurable happiness. ... No surprise that, because the Muscovy-philic movement was a mass phenomenon. ... In the vicinity of Tylicz, in [the villages of] Powroźnik, Izby, treason occurred on a mass scale. The Muscovites were excellently informed about the positions and

(eds.), *Bolshaya voyna Rossii. Sotsyalnyi poriadok, publichnaya kommunikatsiya i nasilie na rubiezhke tsarskoi i sovetskoi epokh* (Moskva, 2014), 21–40.

²⁸ Horbal, *Działalność polityczna*, 36.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

the strength of the Austrian army. An officer quartering in Tylicz had noted down in his notebook so precise and accurate information on the dislocations of the Austro-Hungarian army that it could have only come from traitors or spies. There were no Ukrainians in the county, and no attempts were made to get them organised. Once the Muscovites receded, enormous joy overwhelmed the Poles, but was no lesser amidst the Ruthenians, who were for the most part healed of Muscovy-philia by the Russian invasion.³⁰

Franciszek Kmiotyszowicz, a physician in Krynica, recounted that

the Ruthenian people bid an enthusiastic welcome to the Russian army, receiving the troops with rich inscriptions. ... At the house of a Ruthenian priest, the leader of Muscovy-philes, Hnatyszczak [correct name, Hnatyszczak], the Russian army staff quartered for some time, along with some 100 soldiers as well as horses at the stables. The straw, hay, and oats were taken away, for which the Rev. Hnatyszczak's daughter charged a modest sum of 80 roubles, but Gen. Meller ordered that 20 roubles be paid only. When the staff departed, it turned out that everything that could have been taken away was; a barrel of paraffin oil was poured on the potatoes as a token of memory eternal. With the words "That'll learn them!", General Meller absolved his soldiers. A daughter of one of the Muscovy-phile priests was raped by the soldiers. All this had a chastening effect on the Muscovy-philes of Krynica and thereabouts.³¹

Both Kmiotyszowicz and Kumor wrote in their accounts of anti-Polish sentiments amongst the Lemkos and preparations for some crackdown of the Poles. This is, however, not confirmed by other source accounts. To my mind, both of the afore-quoted sources clearly testify that the atrocities of the war caused the ethnic/national divisions grew acuter across Europe.³²

Could the Russians have won the Lemkos over for their own, Russian, national idea? The answer would be, as it seems, 'no' – at least with respect to the short period of their occupation of the Lemko Land. Muscovy-philic sentiments – culturally, rather than politically motivated – were predominant there before 1914 indeed. The Lemkos would identify themselves as part of the East Slavonic community – a world that drew from the religious legacy of the Byzantium; they

³⁰ Pająk, *Od autonomii do niepodległości*, 124.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² Włodzimierz Borodziej and Maciej Górny, *Nasza wojna, i: Imperia 1912–1916* (Warszawa, 2014), 225–33.

would belong to a (vaguely defined) Ruthenia. Yet, they would *not* be Great-Ruthenians, that is Russians. The outcome of the State Council election confirmed this pretence. The first democratic election, of May 1907, saw a 3,046 votes cast for Andriy Čislak of the Old Ruthenian council *Russkaia Rada* in the first round and 4,881 in a bye-election for the constituency no. 49 covering Gorlice, Biecz and Jasło. The candidate won no mandate as the Poles consolidated their vote in support of the Rev. Zygmunt Męski, a Roman Catholic priest. In a 1911 election in the Lemko Land, nominees proposed by the *Russkaia Narodnaia Organizatsija* (Russian People's Organisation, RNO) received the most votes. The formation was set up in November 1909, out of a split in another Old Ruthenian party, and attracted moderately inclined activists – those who did not consider themselves members of the Russian nation. For instance, in the constituency no. 51, extending to the eastern part of Lemko Land, Vladimir Kurylovich got 8,743 votes through bye-election, his rival Zalozhets'kiy of the Ukrainian National Democratic Party (UNDP) receiving 4,215. In the constituency no. 48, encompassing western Lemko Land, a UNDP candidate got a mere 39 votes, RNO's rev. Gabriel Hantyszak winning 4,754; in the end, both were losers, winning no mandate.³³ “As demonstrated by the parliamentary election of 1907, and by the 1911 Galician parliament election, the Muscovy-philites remained predominant in Lemko Land until the First World War”, Ukrainian national activist Volodymyr Buchatskyi admitted.³⁴

It is also worth emphasising that (according to the findings of Adam Szczupak, who has studied the history of the Greek Catholic Eparchy of Przemyśl during the First World War), none of the parish communities within the Russian-occupied Lemko Land formally converted to Orthodoxy. One of the reasons was the fact that the Orthodox Church did not intensively mission the locals in the warfront zone area. The priority for the Russian military authorities was to keep peace and undisturbed supplies for the military, which fervent religious disputes might have upset.³⁵

³³ Harald Binder, *Galizien in Wien. Parteien, Wahlen, Fraktionen und Abgeordnete im Übergang zur Massenpolitik* (Wien, 2005), 481, 485, 648. Also, see Jarosław Moklak, *Łemkowszczyzna w II Rzeczypospolitej. Zagadnienia polityczne i wyznaniowe* (Kraków, 1997). 24–7.

³⁴ Horbal, *Działalność polityczna*, 27–8.

³⁵ Adam Szczupak, *Greckokatolicka diecezja przemyska w latach I wojny światowej* (Kraków, 2015), 162–7; see also Osadczy, *Święta Rus'*, 630–99.

Influenced by a variety of factors, such as distribution of foods by the Russians,³⁶ some of the Lemko people resolved to convert on their own. As goes Józef Białynia-Chołoddecki's description of the evacuation of L'viv in the last weeks of the Russian troops' stay there:

The first transports of refugees were supplied by whole Lemko families, displaced from their Carpathian settlements ..., who, having assumed Orthodoxy under the Russian pressure, fled out of fear of the returning Austro-Hungarian troops, with all of their movable goods-and-chattels, into the depths of Russia. The charitable committees of L'viv took care to relieve these runaways. Their travelling ... to their new dwellings, afforded by the Russian court-of-law, lasted over the whole of the summer and involved not only loitering-about but also unusual mortality, particularly amongst the lesser brood whose corpses were many a time pulled down, without a coffin, to roadside mass graves.³⁷

The Deanery of Biecz area was voluntarily deserted by as many as 616 Lemkos, including 156 from Bartne and 207 from Świątkowa. Another 308 Greek Catholics from the same deanery were driven away by force by the Russians. In the Jasło Deanery, a total of 463 Greek Catholics left their homesteads voluntarily; twenty-three more were abducted enforcedly. As many as 1,342 refugees (a record-breaking number, including 198 residents of a village named Krempna) came from the Deanery of Dukla.³⁸ All in all, the escape of Lemkos into the Russian Empire did not appear massive. Out of the twenty-four deaneries within the Przemyśl Diocese, less than one percent of the local population left on a voluntary basis, and even less were carried away by force.³⁹ Of the clergy in this particular Church unit, nine priests were arrested by the Russians, with twenty-one clergymen leaving of their own volition, to accompany the others.⁴⁰ In the Lemko Land area, the Rev. Klemens Kopystiański of Regietów was among

³⁶ Krochmal, 'Społeczność greckokatolicka', 249.

³⁷ Józef Białynia-Chołoddecki, *Lwów w czasie okupacji rosyjskiej (3 września 1914 – 22 czerwca 1915). Z własnych przeżyć i wspomnień* (Lwów, 1930), 150–1.

³⁸ Szczupak, *Grekokatolicka diecezja*, 164–6. According to Anna Krochmal's findings, the county of Jasło was left by merely 11 people, the figure for the *powiat* of Krosno being 183. See *eadem*, 'Społeczność greckokatolicka', 250.

³⁹ Krochmal, 'Społeczność greckokatolicka', 250.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, 247.

the former; Daniel Połoszynowicz, a priest from the village of Krzywa near Gorlice, was one of the latter group.⁴¹

As the Greek Catholic Dean of Sanok told the Przemyśl Curia in November 1915, the Russians promised a paradise to his entrusted faithful, once in Russia, and threatened that the Germans would burn down their villages, conscript their men and have them sent to the head front-line, slaughtering their elderly and children and raping the women. Russian soldiers were reported to have knocked at the doors of every single hut, persuading the peasants to leave. Impressed by this agitation, many decided to flee away as far as possible, not thinking much of what was going to happen next.⁴² As a k.u.k. Army officer named Szczepan Pilecki noted down in his diary, on 9 May 1915: “We reached the village Polany in the afternoon. The village had been partly burnt by our troops for their Russophilic manifestations. Many a local peasant had escaped along with the withdrawing Russians – the reason having been the stories told them by the Russians about our army murdering the residents, raping the women, and so on.”⁴³ Three days later, he added,

[t]he Russian invasion did not affect or injure those villages, either. The Ruthenians, those who were patronised by the Russians, and *vice versa*, paid back with a great friendliness towards them. ... For example, in the vicinity of Rymanów, the Polish peasants say, the Ruthenians demanded from the Russians to divide up the lands of the Polish lords. Cattle was taken off from the Polish peasants and offered to the Ruthenians; and they [i.e., Polish peasants] had to work for the Ruthenian peasants on the field. ... Instances of treason are very frequent too. With the coming of our army, the Russophilic Ruthenians organised outright a civil look-out guard, in order to notify the Russians of the movements of our troops. In Tyrawa Solna, the village we are stationed at today, the civilians assisted the Russians in the digging of the trenches: they would bring along milk, eggs, and the like [for them to eat]. ... There are few men visible in the Russophilic villages: all this [= of them] have escaped with the Russians.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Vienna, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv, Mdi, Praesidiale, Rusoph. Propag. und Suedslav. Prop., fasz. 22 in gen 1915–1918, kt. 2088 (rusof.), ‘Ausweis über die politisch bedenklichen gr.kat. Geistlichen’; quoted after: Szczupak, *Grecko-katolicka diecezja*, 112.

⁴² Krochmal, ‘Społeczność greckokatolicka’, 250.

⁴³ Rafał Skapski (ed.), *Na frontach I wojny światowej. Pamiętniki* (Warszawa, 2015), 61.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 62–3.

Apart from the fear of repression, what was the driver behind these expatriates' behaviour? Some, simply put, escaped poverty. Their living basis was destroyed resulting from the warfare and the other related actions; now that the occupational authorities dispensed financial assistance to them, they expected that this will somehow continue also in the case they move deeper into Russia. Some certainly did not want to put their own life and the lives of their loved ones at risk as the front would move through their villages. Moreover, the young men sought to evade conscription for the Austrian-Hungarian army.⁴⁵

The fate of the refugees from Galicia was not enviable at all, especially once they got merged into the wave of hundreds of thousands of people leaving the western governorates (*guberniyas*) of the Romanov empire, seized, as they were, in the summer of 1915 by the Central Powers' armies.⁴⁶ The Galicians were mainly streamed to rural areas in the south of Russia, in the vicinities of Kharkov and Zhytomyr as well as towards Rostov-on-the-Don and Odessa. The refugees from the village of Wapienne ended up in, among others, Bila Tserkva in Ukraine or in Uralsk,⁴⁷ oftentimes confronted with the local bureaucrats' indifference about their vagabond condition. They were even less cared about with the subsequent defeats of the tsarist army and the increasing internal problems the ever-less-efficient Russian machine-of-state was facing and struggling with. As the Rev. Laurenty Diakowski wrote in 1916 to Dmitry Vergun, a Russian journalist and politician, himself a pre-war émigré from Galicia:

I know Rus' [i.e., Russia – Włodzimierz Osadczy's note] based on the books, newspapers or journals I read. She is so beautiful, so charming there. The Halychans [i.e., Galicians] bore sufferings for her. ... And here [in Russia – Włodzimierz Osadczy's note], there's nothing of her. There is no courteousness, no compassion, no sensitivity or gratitude; not a good or kind word. There is no-one to know us, or willing to know us; nobody to understand us, or take interest in us – say, in why we have left our hearths behind. We expected we would be there amidst our relatives, whilst now we feel totally alien, a burden wanted by nobody.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Szczupak, *Greckokatolicka diecezja*, 166–7.

⁴⁶ For more on this point, see Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking. Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington, 2005).

⁴⁷ APR-OS, Registry office records of the Greek Catholic parish in Męcina Wielka, Fund 1149, file no. 12, 111.

⁴⁸ Osadczy, *Święta Ruś*, 705.

Many a Lemko would no doubt have endorsed this bitter observation. To find how many of those émigrés returned to their homeland or home village after the war is impossible.

A not-quite-enviable lot was the case with the Ruthenian soldiers with the Austro-Hungarian army whose views were Muscovy-philic and who were taken prisoners. They were harassed by the other POWs who charged them with treason and intimidated them with sanctions they apparently were to suffer when the war be over. Those men received no assistance from the Russian authorities whatsoever, and no understanding for their attitude, either.⁴⁹

IV REPRESSIONS IMPOSED BY AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN AUTHORITIES

Before 1914, the Austrian authorities attentively watched the political and religious developments in Galicia: the province had become a special focus for the Russian intelligence service.⁵⁰ The missionary activities of Orthodox clergy and the conversion of several villages to Orthodoxy was traced with concern, such occurrences being approached as a threat to the Austrian *raison d'état* and evidence of increasingly pro-Russian attitudes amongst the Galician Ruthenians. It was resolved that the process be counteracted through legal action. Journalist Semen Bednasiuk was brought before the court on 9 March 1914, together with a few other 'Muscovy-philic' activists, two Orthodox priests among them; their trial lasted till 6 June. The defendants were charged of espionage for Russia and high treason, the priests being accused of illegal ministry. Their guilt was not proved and the accused were eventually released.⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, 708–11. For more on Austro-Hungarian POWs in Russia, see also Reinhard Nachtigal, *Rußland und seine österreichisch-ungarischen Kriegsgefangenen (1914–1918)* (Remshalden, 2003).

⁵⁰ For more, cf. Klaus Bachman, "Ein Herd der Feindschaft gegen Russland". *Galizien als Krisenherd in den Beziehungen der Donaumonarchie mit Russland (1907–1914)* (Wien, 2001).

⁵¹ Bernadetta Wójtowicz-Huber, "Ojcowie narodu". *Duchowieństwo grekokatolickie w ruchu narodowym Rusinów galicyjskich 1867–1918* (Warszawa, 2008), 198 ff.; Osadczy, *Święta Rus'*, 565–9.

Still, from the first days of the war, Austro-Hungarian soldiers shared a strong anxiety about an internal enemy and the conviction that this enemy ought to be cracked down on in a resolute manner. Officers did remember the year 1848 and the threat that the country may be decomposed along the lines of ethnic or national criteria. Especially the Ruthenians (Ukrainians) were perceived as dubious, and treated quite suspiciously. The stance taken by the Polish-controlled autonomous authorities in Galicia reinforced this approach.⁵² As per the 1910 estimates of the Austrian authorities, as many as a half of the Greek Catholic clergy in the Przemyśl Diocese were reported to favour the conversion to Orthodoxy.⁵³ The army had had lists of the 'politically uncertain' or disloyal prepared since 1913, at least. In 1914, the Austro-Hungarian army's supreme commanding staff opined that "Lemkos are, for the most part, Russophilic, which is particularly true for the rural clergy. The repatriates from America bring along Russophilia at its strongest. The peasant youth in their student years are educated at Russophilic educational centres to be traitors of their Homeland. Jasło, Gorlice are regarded as the particularly Russophilic counties."⁵⁴

At the very onset of the war, before the large-scale warfare began, activities of all Muscovy-philic organisations were paralysed in Galicia, and a wave of preventive detentions followed. 8 August 1914 saw the Governorship issue a circular letter to the heads of the county's administration and police directors ordering them to eradicate the Muscovy-philic propaganda with use of any and all means available;⁵⁵ preparations to this end had been going on for several months. Members of Muscovy-philic organisations or subscribers of the like press, among others, were approached as suspect.

Clergymen, the natural leaders of peasant communities, were particularly suspect, and for this reason many of them were preventively interned. The Lemko Land was not an exception in this respect: in the Greek Catholic Deanery of Dukla, considered to be particularly prone

⁵² Vienna, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv [hereinafter: HHStA], 1064, PA I, Vertreter des Min. d. Äussern beim AOK 1914–1915: a letter from Leopold von Andrianto Alexander von Hoyos, dated 24 Feb. 1915.

⁵³ Krochmal, 'Społeczność greckokatolicka', 232.

⁵⁴ Tadeusz A. Olszański, "Ruscy mieszkańcy gór..." – instrukcja wojskowa z 1914 r., *Magury* (1985), 98; stressed as in the original edition.

⁵⁵ Krochmal, 'Społeczność greckokatolicka', 239.

to Orthodox influence, only three out of sixteen of the priests working for their parishes remained – all the others were taken to a camp near Graz.⁵⁶ In the Deanery of Krosno, literally all the priests were arrested, and no Greek Catholic clergyman held his service there until June 1915.⁵⁷ Moreover, some of the clergy had their freedom to move administratively restricted. As of January 1916, the restriction was imposed on Teofil Kaczmarczyk of Bińczarowa, Vladimir Mochnacki of Czyrna, Dionis Mochnacki of Mochnaczka Niżna, Iwan Hordecki of Nowica, Michał Sobolewski of Nowa Wieś near Nowy Sącz, and Stefan Wolański of Smerekowiec.⁵⁸

Being a civil servant or government official did not protect one from being arbitrarily detained. Such was the lot of Józef Wańczyk, Michał Danyluk, and Wasyl Hładnio, all court clerks from Zakliczyn.⁵⁹ On order of the military commander of Tarnów, they were arrested on 25 September 1914 and transferred to the Division Court in Cracow. The following month, they were put in the internment camp in Thalerhof. The camp authorities were not aware what they were actually charged with. They were all kept at Thalerhof between 14 October 1914 and 23 February 1916, and finally exonerated in November 1916. As we can read in the court files, “These court-clerks are not aware of the actual reason for why they have been detained; never have they dealt with politics; they are of Ruthenian nationality but have family relations associating them with Poles; they have never subscribed for any Ruthenian newspapers, nor have they ever joined any of the Ruthenian associations.”⁶⁰ While referring to the judicature, let us mention Orest Hnatyszak from Krynica and Demeter Osip from Gorlice, the two trainee solicitors who also were taken to the camp near Graz.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Szczupak, *Greckokatolicka diecezja*, 119.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, 44.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, quoting ‘Ausweis über die politisch bedenklichen gr.kat. Geistlichen’.

⁵⁹ The available sources would tell us nothing about the background of the accused. As they were low-rank employees, I would be inclined to assume that they had not arrived in Zakliczyn from Eastern Galicia but rather from Lemko Land, which was situated closer to the town.

⁶⁰ Warsaw, Central Archives of Historical Records [Polish: *Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych* (hereinafter: AGAD)], C.K. Ministerstwo Sprawiedliwości [k.u.k. Ministry of Justice], no. 322.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*.

The arrests and internments were not infrequently thoroughly arbitrary, accidental and completely groundless. To give an example: Greek Catholic priest Grzegorz Hlibowicki, a provost from Stary Sambor, was arrested on 4 August 1914. The reason was that when he saw his sister to a railway station, he chatted up a soldier doing his guard duty there and offered him a pack of cigarettes. He was unaware of an instruction banning any talking to soldiers on guard duty, issued out of obsessive fear of spies, infiltrators or fifth-columnists. This was why the priest did not feel embarrassed by the presence of the officers. The man he talked to was his own former carter, a certain Dymytr Jarema. As Hlibowicki was listed as a politically suspect person, he got interned and transported deeply into Austria.⁶²

There was a number of factors that contributed to the range of wrongs done to many completely innocent people at that time and place. The number of military judges was simply insufficient, and those who were put on duty did not sufficiently know the civil law or the local specificities, oftentimes not even the language the accused used. They would pass verdicts even for banal 'transgressions' such as "deriding and dispraising the government at drinking-houses" or "expressing unfavourable opinions on the Austrian army and its armed force".⁶³ Drunken witnesses and mere suspicions of gendarmes were trusted. Personal reckonings were settled on the occasion of court trials. For instance, Jan Hoduńka, an apparitor from Krościenko, was arrested for Muscovy-philialia, based on a denunciation from Baruch Mendel Stöger, a Jew. As it turned up in the investigation, Stöger wanted to take revenge as Hoduńka had sometime before then deposed against him at court.⁶⁴

Aleksander Wołoszynowicz, an articulated clerk from Sanok, was arrested pursuant to a personal appraisal issued by a local gendarme. Prior to the war, he was involved in the setting up of a Kaczkowski reading room and the organisation's treasury. He was reported to have read out at the opening ceremony of one of the reading-rooms a letter from Wladimir Kuryłowicz, deputy with the Vienna-based State Council. He stressed in his address that the Ukrainian party strove to Polishise the Ruthenians. He also criticised a parish priest

⁶² *Ibidem.*

⁶³ *Ibidem.*

⁶⁴ *Ibidem.*

of Wolica named Wolański (who was dead then) for his apparent Polonisation of the church services by using a surplice. After the mobilisation was announced, he reportedly hid at the house of his acquaintance, Wasyl Antonycz, a priest in Lipowiec.⁶⁵ Another priest, Iwan Rusiniak of the village Królowa Ruska, was accused of espionage, as were the dwellers of Mochnaczka.⁶⁶ Since the respective files are inaccessible, I cannot tell what the outcomes were. Another known fact is that the provost of Myscowa named Volodymyr Durkot was accused of ‘Muscovy-philias’ and interned on 21 September 1914.⁶⁷

The best-known victim of the repressions was the Rev. Maksym Sandowycz, who was shot dead in Gorlice on 6 September 1914 without a court verdict. He was later made a saint of the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church. Pelazja Sandowycz from Zdynia, Iwan Jądłowski from Smerekowiec and a student named Wisłocki, living in Gładyszów, were among the witnesses to his execution.⁶⁸ After a verdict produced following a precipitous hearing at a Nowy Sącz court on 28 September 1914, the priest Petro Sandowycz, Dean of Muszyna, was executed by a firing squad, together with his twenty-seven-year-old son Antoni.⁶⁹ On 18 November 1914, in Piwniczna, six residents of Wierchomla Wielka were hanged. A few Lemkos were hanged in Radoszyce, although the local head of the village administration Josyf Łencio tried to persuade the soldiers that there were no sympathisers of Russia in his village. In Jasło, on 15 January 1915, a fresh middle-school graduate named Teofil Mochnacki was executed.⁷⁰ “We left Siołkowa at noon, travelling again via Grybów, where several death sentences were executed by hanging in the recent days. A few hours ago, the son of a Ruthenian pope (priest) was taken off from the halter, his father also having been hanged for espionage.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁶ AGAD, C.K. sądy wojskowe w Krakowie [k.u.k. Court-Martials in Cracow], 416, no. 142, 128.

⁶⁷ HHStA, 190, PXXL, internaKorr. mit Behörden 1914; a letter of the Minister of Religious Confessions and Education to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of 4 December 1914.

⁶⁸ <<http://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=spa&datum=0022&size=45&page=1202>> [Accessed: Dec. 29, 2015].

⁶⁹ Wójtowicz-Huber, “*Ojcowie narodu*”, 219; Krochmal, ‘*Spółeczność greckokatolicka*’, 239.

⁷⁰ Horbal, *Działalność polityczna*, 33–4.

An empty hook was hanging on the pole, waiting for another spy to come over”, Wojciech Kamiński, a Polish soldier with the k.u.k. Army from Szaflary near Nowy Targ, noted down in his diary on 13 January 1915.⁷¹

The attitude amongst ordinary officers and soldiers of the k.u.k. Army towards the Ruthenian people was, largely, wary. The mobilised troops travelling to their concentration areas in Galicia were told that the country was full of spies, and were recommended far-fetched cautiousness and vigilance. To give an example: as early as 19 August, an order was issued to the group of troops under the command of General Hermann Kövess von Kövessháza. The soldiers were told that, since the outset of the warfare, they and their k.u.k. peers were being shot at by Russians dressed as civilians, or by civilians sympathising with them. Hostages were to be taken in villages suspected of Rus-sophilic sympathies, and executed by firing squad in the event of the slightest objection. Army officers and soldiers were expected to take the most resolute action possible. Court-martials were to handle gun ownership cases. The villages from which Austro-Hungarian troops would be cannonaded were to be surrounded and burnt, the guilty punished. The residents were to be made responsible for the military telegraph and telephone lines set in the vicinity of their abodes: if ruptured, the hostages should be executed by firing squad. The soldiers were told they were facing a cruel and treacherous opponent against whom ruthless action is to be taken instantaneously.⁷² This psychosis of fear was fuelled by the memory of the quite recent trials of Muscovy-phailes charged with espionage and high treason, noised abroad by the press.⁷³

The pre-war superstitions were reinforced through the unexpected course the warfare took. At the onset of the campaign, the Austrian-Hungarian army was afflicted by a series of heavy defeats, its troops being forced to retreat inwards. The guilt was partly charged on (mostly imaginary) spies and saboteurs who, it was believed, gave signals to the Russian troops by pealing the bells in Orthodox churches, placing a lamp in the window, hanging out the washing on fences, setting

⁷¹ Wojciech Kamiński, *Pamiętniki* (Rabka-Zdrój, 2014), 50.

⁷² Alex Watson, *Ring of Steel. Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I. The People's War* (New York, 2014), 151–2.

⁷³ Osadczy, *Święta Ruś*, 567–89; Krochmal, 'Społeczność greckokatolicka', 234.

fire on haystacks, lighting bonfires on fields, leaving various objects (such as a pot or a shovel) in agreed places. Giving a military patrol an erroneous reply when suddenly asked for directions, non-answering a question asked in an incomprehensible language, or breaking a field telephone line by cows going to the pasture, were all regarded as acts of sabotage.⁷⁴ A Sudeten German Joseph Schreiber, soldier with the 13th Landwehr Division, remarked in February 1915:

There are people still living in their houses in Kwiatów and Smerekowiec, for the front is far away from the village. They still have potatoes in their houses in Gładyszów and Hańczowa. Since both localities are situated in the combat zone, these people go to the regiment commander and request him for a pass, for without it they would not move anywhere. Our commander cannot understand them, nor can the aide. So, he would usually send them together with me to the field gendarme who, with his long-time service in this particular area, would normally know them personally. The soldier wrote down their request in German, adding a declaration whether they were trustworthy people or not. The latter he would tell me orally as well. Then, I would go with him to see the commander. The Colonel decided then whether they could pass or not. Caution was advisable, since Ruthenians live there. Many of them have already committed treason.⁷⁵

Many a time, repressions and accusations of treason affected the peasants who merely opposed the soldiers taking their property away. The civilians, including Lemkos, were made scapegoats for the defeats of the Habsburg troops, which were in fact caused by incompetent planning or commanding.

Soldiers of the Honvéd units – the Hungarian national defence forces also set in on the Lemkos.⁷⁶ In his travel across Russian-occupied Eastern Galicia, Stanisław Srokowski, geographer and National Democracy politician, came across a group of Greek Catholic seminary students in a train going from Tarnopol, “recounting horrible things suffered at the village of Wisłok in the borderland of Hungary. Unheard-of acts of fierce cruelty amongst the Hungarian troops,

⁷⁴ Matylda z Windisch-Graezów Sapieżyna [M. Sapieha, née Windisch-Graez], *My i nasze Siedliska* (Kraków, 2003), 236; Wojciech Kossak, *Wspomnienia* (Warszawa, 1973), 284.

⁷⁵ Joseph Scheiber, *Vier Jahre als Infanterist im I. Weltkrieg. Ein Tagebuch* (Freiberg, 1998), 44.

⁷⁶ Piotr Szlanta, ‘Madziarzy jak Tatarzy’, *Polityka*, 47 (2985) (2014), 61–3.

applied with the local Ukrainian people, the flight of those heroes to Hungary after a pogrom they afflicted from the Russians, and then on, stripping the corpses naked, all made a lasting impression on these young people.”⁷⁷

In February 1918, parliamentary deputy Wołodymyr Zahajkewycz (Zahajkiewicz) submitted a series of questions to the Minister of National Defence regarding the peasants murdered by the Honvéd units in villages around Przemyśl. One of these peasants, a certain Pawło Hałuna of Książyce, was reported to have been shot dead in the autumn of 1914 by the Hungarians out of sheer pleasure, when he was quietly working in his home garden. He left his two underage children in poverty.⁷⁸ In Zahajkewycz's words, the Hungarians “were assassinating and shooting easeful people as if they were hunting some wild animals”.⁷⁹ In their unbridled savagery, recalling the practices typical of Tatars centuries ago, they plagued the civilians in ways the greatest enemies of the Habsburg monarchy would not have done.⁸⁰ For the Magyars, the language barrier was not the least important factor: they often simply could not communicate with the locals of Galicia. Their distance toward the civilians, sense of isolation, threat, and disorientation in an environment they found new and unknown, grew larger. Many of them could not differentiate between a ‘Russian’ and a ‘Ruthenian’ and considered Ruthenians, en bloc, as potential traitors. On top of all that was a strong Hungarian nationalism, combined with poor discipline in their ranks.⁸¹ Not only the Lemkos but other Ruthenians, and Poles too, suffered from the brutality of Hungarian soldiers.

In general, the repressive measures employed by the military against the civilians in both Galicia and other territories of the Danube monarchy turned out inefficient, often misconceived, and overly draconian. They upset the delicate balance between the ethnicities populating the monarchy and discredited the authorities in the areas that had thitherto remained loyal to the Habsburg monarchy.

⁷⁷ Stanisław Srokowski, *Z dni zawieruchy dziejowej 1914–1918* (Kraków, 1932), 102.

⁷⁸ <<http://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=spa&datum=0022&size=45&page=12053>> [Accessed: Dec. 29, 2015].

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁸¹ Watson, *Ring of Steel*, 153–4.

The deposition of the local leaders (including priests and politicians) who could have mediated between the authorities and the increasingly displeased populace had a negative impact on the functioning of Austria-Hungary in the second period of the Great War.⁸²

During the war, two trials of Muscovy-philic activists accused of high treason were held in Vienna. The second case involved thirty-one accused, fifteen of them being Lemko. Death sentences were passed for Havryl Hnatyszak, a parish priest from Krynica; Roman Przysłupski, a provost from Żegiestów; Dr Aleksander Hassaj, a barrister trainee from Muszyna; Dymytr Wysłocki, a student from Łabowa; Iwan Andriejko [Ivan Andreyko], a student from Tylicz; Mykołaj Gromosiak, a farmer from Krynica, and others. The Żdynia parish priest Teofil Durkot received life imprisonment; Metody Trochanowski from Krynica and Fedor Mochnacki of Mochnaczka were sentenced to terms in prison as well. Whilst Hnatyszak died in a Vienna gaol in 1916, Przysłupski had his sentence altered to life term by Francis Joseph I, through the intervention of Tsar Nicholas II and Spanish king Alfonso XIII, but was eventually released as part of an amnesty announced for political prisoners by Emperor Charles I in March 1917.⁸³

Owing to a vast wave of arrests in Galicia, which affected some 4,000 to 10,000 people,⁸⁴ and the close distance to the warfront, it appeared necessary to get the detained evacuated upcountry. A remarkable group of Ruthenian detainees suspected of disloyalty toward the state were put in an internment camp arranged in a military training ground and airport area in Thalerhof, not far from the Styrian capital Graz. The first transport of prisoners arrived there on 4 September 1914. As of 22 September, 4,766 inmates were recorded, including a number of elderly people, women, and children.⁸⁵ On their way to the camp, which took five to seven days, the internees were beaten, thrown stones at, vituperated, and robbed. Incidents of individuals transported getting killed by the soldiers guarding them occurred.⁸⁶ The managing team of that ad-lib camp could not cope with the throng

⁸² *Ibidem*, 100–3.

⁸³ Osadczy, *Święta Ruś*, 569–70; Horbał, *Działalność polityczna*, 34–5.

⁸⁴ Pająk, *Od autonomii do niepodległości*, 84.

⁸⁵ Georg Hoffmann, Nicole-Melanie Goll, and Philipp Lesiak, *Thalerhof 1914–1936. Die Geschichte eines vergessenen Lagers und seiner Opfer* (Herne, 2010), 50.

⁸⁶ <<http://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=spa&datum=0022&size=45&page=1678>> [Accessed: Dec. 29, 2015].

of people arriving. The first inmates had to sleep on bare earth. The camp's zone was marked, simply, by four stakes stuck in the ground; passing this 'borderline', with a cordon of soldiers put on guard, was punishable with death. It was only a few days later that the prisoners were given some rotting straw. Tents in which the inmates had to stay for the night, even when it was frosty outside (about minus 20 degrees Celsius), offered the inmates a makeshift shelter. Wooden barracks built late in November 1914 were underheated inside, damp and stinky, with all sorts of insect swarming.⁸⁷ The number of inmates herded inside the barracks far exceeded the design parameters: a space meant to house 200–250 people at a time was residence to some 400 at times. The overcrowding, combined with malnutrition, insufficient number of ablutions or washing facilities, bathhouses, cleaning utilities, insect extermination facilities, clothes and footwear, or running water, all led to dissemination of contagious diseases.

It was already in autumn 1914 that incidents were reported of infectious diseases such as dysentery, cholera, spotted typhus or typhoid fever. The inmates also suffered from skin disorders, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, or rheumatism.⁸⁸ January and February 1915 saw a spotted typhus and typhoid epidemic going on at the camp. A quarantine was therefore set up as from 4 January for the whole camp area, letting nobody out and putting no new prisoners in. For the period 17 to 23 January alone, a total of 464 instances of spotted typhus were recorded, with the mortality rate of 20–30 per day. The death toll up to 6 February 1915 equalled 332 fatalities. Within the camp's first six months, as many as 15 per cent of the inmates, including many children, died. Scarcity of isolation facilities and insufficient number of doctors and nurses were among the reasons for why the communicable diseases disseminated easily.

The inmates made appeals to various authorities for help and for unbiased fast-track consideration of the suspicions hanging above them. In December 1914, request was submitted for enabling the internees' representatives an audience with the Emperor; the request was signed by more than a hundred of the prisoners, all with a tertiary education background. Six telegrams were sent a month later: to the

⁸⁷ Tomasz Kurpierz, *Zygmunt Lasocki (1867–1948). Polityk i działacz społeczny* (Toruń, 2008), 197–201.

⁸⁸ Hoffmann, Goll, and Lesiak, *Thalerhof*, 114–15.

Imperial Chancellery, Prime Minister, the Ministers of war, the interior, and religions, and (on behalf of some 400 imprisoned clergymen) to the Apostolic Nuncio in Vienna.⁸⁹ Furthermore, individuals wrote their own letters to Francis Joseph I.⁹⁰

Beginning with the middle of 1915, the living conditions of the camp's inmates improved. The sanitary infrastructure, such as washing, lavation and insect extermination facilities, was gradually redeveloped. New wells were dug up and new residential barracks and outbuildings were erected, along with a hospital pavilion, and even a church. The quality of medical care improved as well. In parallel with these changes, the number of inmates dropped. For instance, as of January 1916, there were 2,808 prisoners; the figure decreased by March 1916 to 2,271. This reduction did not erase problems. February and March 1917 saw the mortality rate increase again, undernourishment being the main cause this time: 104 people, mainly elderly, died.⁹¹ The arrested suspects were kept in the camp for months, without being investigated or charged with any specific accusation. The authorities would refrain from sharing the reasons for detention, themselves not being positive about the charges incumbent on the inmates. The gendarmerie sent people to Thalerhof lawlessly and without due grounds, often accidentally, out of an error, based on deletion or groundless suspicion.⁹² The inmates were moreover harassed, held up by the soldiers guarding them, who believed they had to do with traitors of the homeland. Colonel Stadler, the camp's commandant, shared this belief. Some of the inmates were pricked to death with bayonets.⁹³

Conscriptable males were successively assigned to service with the *Landsturm* troops. Some of the inmates were discharged from their accusations and set free. The camp was finally closed down in May 1917, based on the *Kriegsüberwachungsamt's* decision. Its facilities were

⁸⁹ <<http://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=spa&datum=0022&size=45&page=7526>> [Accessed: Dec. 29, 2015].

⁹⁰ Hoffmann, Goll, and Lesiak, *Thalerhof*, 51.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, 111.

⁹² <<http://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=spa&datum=0022&size=45&page=1677>> [Accessed: Dec. 29, 2015]; Zygmunt Lasocki, *Polacy w austrijskich obozach barakowych dla uchodźców i internowanych* (Kraków, 1929), 101–3.

⁹³ <<http://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=spa&datum=0022&size=45&page=4546>> [Accessed: Dec. 29, 2015].

used later on for a short time as a prison camp and subsequently, between September 1917 and the war's end, as a hospital for tuberculous Russian and Italian POWs.⁹⁴ The total death toll for Thalerhof civilian inmates was around 2,000 (a shrine erected in the former camp area to commemorate the victims specifies the names of 1,767). The victims were mainly Ruthenians, albeit Poles and Czechs were also kept at the camp.

Lemkos accounted for a fourth of those who passed through the camp (nearly 2,000 altogether). Lemkian inmates included thirty-three residents of Łosie, twenty-seven each of Krynica and Sanok, twenty-five of Zdynia, twenty-one of Gładyszów, nineteen of Tylicz, eighteen of Bartne, sixteen each from Regietów Wyżny and Bielanki, and seven from Nowica.⁹⁵ This overrepresentation of Lemko people, compared to other Ukrainians, was partly owed to the fact that the eastern Galician area was very soon seized by the Russian troops, which prevented the Austrian authorities from arresting and deporting those whom they might have suspected of favouring the Russians or, outright, committing high treason.

The tragedy of Thalerhof inmates and their families would not end with the death or release of the prisoner or the closing down of the camp. Those who were killed left their widows and orphans behind. And they had politicians interceding for them. To give an example, on 21 November 1917, a group of State Council deputies, led by Roman Czajkowski, interpellated to the Austrian Minister of Religious Confessions and Education, notifying him about the tough situation of Zenobia Durkot and her six children. Zenobia's husband, the Rev. Jan Chrysostom Durkot of Łabowa, was arrested on 5 August 1914 on order of the district governor's office in Nowy Sącz and put through to the local district court. He was initially interrogated and put at the disposal of the court-martial in Cracow. The latter found no evidence to charge the priest. Instead of being released, though, the clergyman was transported to Thalerhof, where he stayed from 12 November 1914 until his death on 8 August 1915. His wife and six children, aged four to nineteen, remained destitute and unprovided-for.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Hoffmann, Goll, and Lesiak, *Thalerhof*, 38.

⁹⁵ Olszański, 'Austriackie represje'.

⁹⁶ <http://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=spa&datum=0022&size=45&age=9687> [Accessed: Dec. 29, 2015].

The memory of Thalerhof and its victims became an important element of the Lemkian identity. There was virtually not a single Lemko who would not know somebody from his or her own community or closest neighbourhood who has been through the camp. The tragedy of Thalerhof has thus become the shared experience of this ethnic group, influencing its collective mental concepts and representations. In the interwar period, memory of the camp's victims was cultivated; for instance, special commemorative crosses were erected. To quote Jarosław Moklak, a Cracow-based historian: "All the same, the martyrdom myth out of which the Thalerhof legend arose had fateful consequences in the shaping of political attitudes among those Ruthenians who had not assumed a Ukrainian national consciousness before. This was very largely true for the people of Lemko Land."⁹⁷

V

LIVING PROBLEMS AND RECTIFYING WAR DAMAGES

With the warfare coming to an end in the Lemko Land in May 1915, the local population were to live in the shadow of the war for three more years. With regards to material damages, 840 km of trenches and 44,000 craters were found appearing within Gorlice county alone. The cost of covering these material remains of warfront were considerable: to cover a crater of 2–4 metre in diameter cost up to 4.5 crown, the charge for coping with 1 linear metre of trench was between 80 hellers and 2 crowns 70 hellers, depending on the type of trench and ground.⁹⁸ The counties of Gorlice and Jasło were among the most destroyed areas; the reconstruction was much obstructed by the fact that many a men served with the army whilst the cost of labour, construction materials and timber had grown significantly during the war.⁹⁹

As it was reported for the village of Izby in 1919, "[i]t was for two years [in sequence] that the crops were very poor, and in 1918 we had frost coming even in the summer ... The Spanish flu and the smallpox are raging, their victims falling one after the other."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Moklak, *Łemkowszczyzna*, 35.

⁹⁸ Marcei Handelsman (ed.), *Polska w czasie Wielkiej Wojny*, iii: *Historja ekonomiczna* (Warszawa, 1936), 238–9.

⁹⁹ Kargol, *Odbudowa Galicji*, 28, 275.

¹⁰⁰ Horbal, *Działalność polityczna*, 71.

Indeed, Spanish flu did extend to Lemko Land; at least twelve deaths of this particular epidemic were reported in 1918–19 for Hańczowa¹⁰¹ and Męcina Wielka,¹⁰² eight for Wapienne,¹⁰³ four for Izby,¹⁰⁴ another four in Uście Ruskie,¹⁰⁵ three in Łosie near Gorlice,¹⁰⁶ and two in Regietów Niżny.¹⁰⁷ These data are quite indicative, for it should be presumed that a clergyman would not in each case be able to precisely establish the reason for a death, just stating a ‘cough’ or ‘influenza’. Based on the available sources, though Spanish flu was a major reason behind the deaths of Lemko people in the late months of the Great War, it certainly was not the dominant one.

Poor health condition of the people and their weak immunity to contagious diseases were rooted also in problems with food supplies and malnourishment. The sowings in the autumn of 1917 and spring 1918 were small, owing to shortages of seeds and potato seedlings as well as deficient labour force. For a variety of reasons (the need to provide food, language barrier) peasants could not make use of the POWs who were assigned to do labour in larger landed estates.¹⁰⁸ The crops and harvests were affected by the weather conditions, with numerous and long-lasting rainfalls and hailstorms in spring and summer 1918. Owing to requisitions and reduced output of fodders, the cattle headage decreased, against increasing wasteland acreages. The Austrian authorities pursued a policy in support of great landowners in Galicia, hoping that this would contribute to produce the much demanded surpluses of foods, rather than supporting small-sized peasant farms that produced mostly to satisfy their own needs. The various benefits imposed by the state and the regulations restricting

¹⁰¹ APR-OS, Registry office records of the Greek Catholic parish in Hańczowa, Fund 1148, file no. 10, 74–6, 93–4.

¹⁰² APR-OS, Registry office records of the Greek Catholic parish in Męcina Wielka, Fund 1149, file no. 12, 75–6.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, 110–11.

¹⁰⁴ APR-OS, Registry office records of the Greek Catholic parish in Izby, Fund 1125, file no. 6, 89–90.

¹⁰⁵ APR-OS, Registry office records of the Greek Catholic parish in Uście Ruskie, Fund 1127, file no. 9, 77–8.

¹⁰⁶ APR-OS, Registry office records of the Greek Catholic parish in Klimkówka (near Gorlice), Fund 1113, file no. 8, 126–8.

¹⁰⁷ APR-OS, Akta stanu cywilnego parafii greckokatolickiej w Regietowie, Fund 1099, file no. 7, 149–50.

¹⁰⁸ Kargol, *Odbudowa Galicji*, 211.

the freedom of husbandry, such as maximum prices or state control of marketing of products were grievous and distressing for the local people.¹⁰⁹ In June 1919, Captain Merian G. Cooper, U.S. Army officer visiting Lemko Land on behalf of a charity organisation, reported a shortage of food and mentioned the sensitive issue of victual supplies.¹¹⁰ In October 1915 and in 1917, the authorities carried out forced requisition of church bells; in November 1916, a half of the bells in Greek Catholic churches were taken away in Galicia overall. Moreover, copper roofs, organ pipes and liturgical implements were requisitioned; Greek Catholic churches in Lemko Land were also affected.¹¹¹

VI SUMMARY

The Great War heavily impacted the Lemko people, both those who served with the army and civilians. The Lemkos became an object in the wrestling between the Habsburg Empire and the Romanov Empire. On the one hand, the war triggered hard-to-estimate human and material losses, enormous psychical and physical sufferings. On the other, as the conflict was nearing its end, with the influence of the idea of national sovereignty pushed by the U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, against the weakening (and, finally, collapsing) Habsburg monarchy, the Lemkos attempted at building a statehood of their own and emancipating from the Polish influence. The dramatic events of the Great War certainly contributed to a deepening of the existing splits within the Lemko community, a factor that had a bearing on their Land's political developments in 1918. The adherents of Russophilism and those supporting the Ukrainian national option accused their protagonists of responsibility for the repressions they had suffered.¹¹² According to Jarosław Moklak, the war heavily contributed to an accelerated process of crystallisation of the Lemkos' ethnic (national) identity and of polarisation of the stances, with Russophiles in the

¹⁰⁹ For a broader coverage, see *idem*, 'Gospodarka wojenna w Galicji w latach 1914–1918', in Michał Baczkowski and Kamil Ruszała (eds.), *Front wschodni I wojny światowej. Studia z dziejów militarnych i polityczno-społecznych* (Kraków, 2013), 105–17.

¹¹⁰ Horbal, *Działalność polityczna*, 70–3.

¹¹¹ Krochmal, 'Społeczność greckokatolicka', 253–4.

¹¹² Halczak, *Dzieje Łemków*, 95.

west of Lemko Land and Ukrainians in its eastern part. Tensions, furthermore, increased between those supporting the resumption of Orthodoxy and those advocating the union with Rome.¹¹³

trans. *Tristan Korecki*

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¹¹³ Moklak, *Łemkowszczyzna*, 35. Also, see Anna Krochmal, 'Stosunki między grekokatolikami i prawosławnymi na Łemkowszczyźnie w latach 1926–1939', in Jerzy Czajkowski (ed.), *Łemkowie w historii i kulturze Karpat* (Rzeszów, 1992), 287 ff.

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