

THE SOVIET/RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA AND THE FATE OF LEMKOS BETWEEN THE 1920^S AND THE 1940^S

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Abstract. *In the article, the author reveals the peculiarities of the ethnopolitical transformations of the ethnographic group – the Lemkos, who lived in the conditions of the Ukrainian-Polish-Slovak ethnic borders. The paper emphasizes the imposition of Soviet/Russian propaganda on the Lemkos. The Soviet/Russian factor remained an important element of ethnopolitics in the context of the aggravation of the foreign influences of the border region at the middle of 20th Century. The author reveals the method of promoting propaganda, through religious, public, informational tools, up to resettlement and later brutal deportation actions, because of which Lemkos lost their ethnic territory forever.*

Keywords: *Lemko Region, ethnographic groups, Poland, Moscovites, ethnopolitics, frontier region.*

Rezumat: *Propaganda sovietică/rusă și destinul lemkienilor în anii '20-'40 ai secolului XX. În articol, autorul dezvăluie particularitățile transformărilor etno-politice ale grupului etnografic al lemkienilor, care au viețuit în condițiile granițelor etnice ucraineano-polono-slovacă. Studiul scoate în lumină infiltrarea propagandei sovietice/rusești în rândul lemkienilor. Factorul sovietic/rus a rămas un element important al etno-politicii în contextul agravării influențelor externe asupra regiunii de graniță la mijlocul secolului XX. Autorul dezvăluie metoda de promovare a propagandei, prin instrumente religioase, publice, informaționale, până la relocare și, ulterior, acțiuni brutale de deportare, din cauza cărora lemkienii și-au pierdut pentru totdeauna teritoriul etnic.*

INTRODUCTION

As part of the western ethnic borderlands, the Lemko historical and ethnographic region, which was located on the northern and southern slopes of the Carpathians, was one of the most colourful and it formed a kind of “peninsula” with a length of 140 km and a width of 25–50 km between Polish and Slovak ethnographic territories. In the West, the ethnographic boundaries of the Lemko Region are clearly distinguished by the explorers, passing along the Poprad and Dunajec rivers, while the eastern margins of the Lemko habitat are blurred, having a vast transition zone. Primarily, the San River is still the most acceptable ethnographic border in the east of the Galician part of the Lemko Region.¹ The topic of Soviet propaganda among the Lemkos has not yet been the subject of special research. Polish researchers J. Moklak, B. Halczak, R. Drozd², Ukrainian researchers M. Lytvyn, D. Baikienich, R. Kabachii³, Canadian scientist P. R. Magocsi

¹ Ihor Lyubchuk, *Lemkos' Fates and Misfortunes*, Ivano-Frankivsk, Misto NV, 2024, p. 6.

² Jarosław Moklak, *Moskwofilstwo (moskalofilstwo) i rusofilstwo: uwagi o terminologii, w związku z artykułem A. Zięby [Łemkowie i łemkoznawstwo w historiografii polskiej, w Łemkowie i łemkoznawstwo polskie, T. 5, Kraków, 1997]*, in “Studia Historyczne” [Historical Studies], Vol. 43, 2000, no. 4, pp. 701–712; Bohdan Halczak, *Łemkowskie miejsce we wszechświecie. Refleksje o położeniu Łemków na przełomie XX i XXI wieku [Lemko’s place in the universe. Reflections on the situation of Lemkos at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries]*, in Stefan Dudra (ed.), *Łemkowie, Bojkowie, Rusini – historia, współczesność, kultura materialna i duchowa [Lemkos, Boykos, Ruthenians – History, Present Day, Material and Spiritual Culture]*, Tom IV, Cz. 1, Słupsk-Zielona Góra, 2012, pp. 113–127; Roman Drozd, *Dążenie ludności ukraińskiej do moralnego i prawnego potępienia akcji “Wisła” [The desire of the Ukrainian population to morally and legally condemn Operation “Vistula”]*, in Stefan Dudra (ed.), *Łemkowie, Bojkowie, Rusini – historia, współczesność, kultura materialna i duchowa [Lemkos, Boykos, Ruthenians – History, Present Day, Material and Spiritual Culture]*, Tom IV, Cz. 1, Słupsk-Zielona Góra, 2012, pp. 73–81.

³ Mykola Lytvyn, *Deportatsiia ukraintsiv z Nadsiania, Lemkivshchyny, kholmshchyny i pidliashshia 1944 - 1951 rr.: osnovni etapy ta etnopolitychni naslidky [Deportation of Ukrainians from Nadsian, Lemko Region, Kholmshchyna, and Pidlyaschy 1944–1951: main stages and ethnopolitical consequences]*, in “Halychyna. Naukovyi i kulturno-prosvitnii kraieznavchyi chasopys” [Scientific and Cultural-Educational Local Lore Journal], 2012, no. 20–21, pp. 311 – 318; Dmytro Baikienich, *Vtrata etnichno-kulturnoi identychnosti ukrainskykh pereselentsiv iz Polshchi rozselenykh u skhidnykh oblastiakh URSR u 1945–1947 rr. [Loss of ethnic and cultural identity of Ukrainian emigrants from*

briefly touched on certain aspects of the issue.⁴

From the beginning of the modern period, the territory of the Ukrainian-Polish-Slovak ethnic adjacency was in the conditions of permanent struggle of states over the administrative border. The region was dominated by a plurality of self-identifications, considering that ethnic policy towards the local population came from different state centres. Their formation and establishment in separate stages had external influences, internal barriers and dominant regional peculiarities.

On the eve of the First World War, part of Russia's imperialist policy was to send activists and newcomers of the Orthodox-Muscovite movement to the Lemko Region, which by their activity would contribute to the establishment of Russian identity in the region. At the same time, new priests received considerable material support from the Russian government for the acquisition of housing "so that they could not be expelled by administrative order"⁵.

The arrests at the Thalerhof internment camp were the tragic consequences for the Lemkos during the First World War, where about 5,000 people appeared to be incarcerated⁶. Thalerhof is a part of Ukrainian history that vividly demonstrates the entire political situation in Galicia in general, and in the Lemko Region in particular, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, which were under the

Poland resettled in the eastern regions of the Ukrainian SSR], in "Naukovi zapysky. Serriia Kulturolohiia" [Proceedings. Culturology Series], 2010, Vol. 5, pp. 147–150; Dmytro Baikienich, *Ukrainski pereselentsi z Polshchi na terytorii Voroshylovhradskoi oblasti v 1944–1945 rr.: planuvannia, kilkist i heohrafiia rozselennia* [Ukrainian immigrants from Poland in the territory of the Voroshilovograd region in 1944–1945: planning, number and geography of resettlement], in "Visnyk LNU imeni Tarasa Shevchenka" [Visnyk LNU Named after Taras Shevchenko], 2010, no. 23, pp. 170 – 178; Roman Kabachii, *Vyhnani na stepy. Povernennia istorychnoi pamiaty pro ukraintsiv Zakerzonnia* [Expelled to the Steppes. The Return of Historical Memory about the Ukrainians of the Trans-Curzon Territory], Kyiv, Liuta sprava, 2019, 624 p.

⁴ Paul-Robert Magocsi, *Carpathian Rus': Interethnic Coexistence without Violence*, in Gerhard Besier, Katarzyna Stoklosa (Hgg.), *Geschichtsbilder in den postdiktatorischen Ländern Europas. Auf der Suche nach historisch-politischen Identitäten*, Berlin, 2009, SS. 137-154.

⁵ *Moskvofilstvo: Dokumenty i materialy*. Vstupna stattia, komentari ta dobirka dokumentiv Oleksiya Sukhoho [Moscophilism: Documents and Materials. Introductory Article, Comments and Selection of Documents by O. Sukhyi], Lviv, Vydavnychiy tsentr LNU im. Ivana Franka, 2001, p. 106.

⁶ Vasyl Kurylo, *Spysok Talerhoftsov z Lemkovyny* [List of Talherhof people from the Lemko Region], in "Karpatorusskyi Kalendar Lemko-Soiuza" [Carpatho-Russian Calendar Lemko-Union], 1964, p. 60.

control of the Austrian Empire.

The leaders of the Moscovophilic movement showed activity at the time of the most dramatic events in Western Ukrainian lands in 1918–1919. On their initiative, in November 1918, the Ruthenian Council for Nowy Sącz County was created in Krynica; for Gorlice, Jasło and Krosno counties – in Gładyszów; and for Grybów County in the village Śnietnica. The “Supreme Lemko Union” united all Councils in Gorlice, whose president was Fr. Mykhailo Yurchakevych⁷. Subsequently, in December 1918, a “Russian government” was formed in Florynka, headed by President Ya. Kachmaryk, which led the entire Moscovophilic political movement in the Lemko Region. According to the plan of its creators, he had to manage Lemko Region as part of Russia. In modern historiographic heritage, there are frequent attempts by individual authors to instil the term ‘republic’⁸ to this unofficial state formation⁹. We can note, from our side, that there was no official “republic”.¹⁰

In the recent period, the advantage in the study of the Lemko Region has always belonged to Polish scientists, who were divided into those who attributed the Lemkos to the ethnographic group of Ukrainians (R. Reinfuss¹¹, R. Drozd¹²) and those who prefer the ethnic separateness of the Lemkos (Ewa Michna¹³,

⁷ Lev Hankevych, *Lemkivska Respublika* [Republic of Lemkiv], in “Zhyttia i pravo” [Life and Law], 1934, no 2, p. 2.

⁸ Paul Robert Magocsi, *The Ukrainian question between Poland and Czechoslovakia: The Lemko Rusyn republic (1918–1920) and political thought in western Rus'-Ukraine*, in “Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity”, Vol. 21, 1993, no. 2, pp. 95–105.

⁹ Krzysztof Nowakowski, *Sytuacja polityczna na Łemkowszczyźnie w latach 1918–1939* [The Political Situation in the Lemko Region in 1918–1939], in *Łemkowie w historii i kulturze Karpat*, pod red. Jerzego Czajkowskiego [Lemkos in the History and Culture of the Carpathians, edited by Jerzy Czajkowski], Rzeszów, 1992, Tom. I, pp. 313–350.

¹⁰ Ihor Lyubchuk, *Lemkivshchyna ta lemky v novitnii istorii Tsentralno-Skhidnoi Yevropy: suspilno-politychnyi dyskurs* [Lemko Region and Lemkas in the Modern History of Central-Eastern Europe: Socio-political Discourse], Lviv, Instytut Ukrainoznavstva imeni Ivana Krypiakevycha NAN Ukrainy, 2021, p. 235.

¹¹ Roman Reinfuss, *Łemkowie w kulturze górali karpaccich* [Lemki in the Carpathian culture], in “Płaj” [Mountain Grassland], 1997, T. 15, pp. 45–54; Roman Reinfuss, *Lemkowie (Opis etnograficzny)* [Lemkos (Ethnographic description)], in “Wierchy” [On Horseback], T. XIV, 1936, pp. 1–24.

¹² Roman Drozd, *Polityka władz wobec ludności ukraińskiej w Polsce w latach 1944–1989* [The government’s Policy towards the Ukrainian Population in Poland in the Years 1944–1989], Warszawa, 2001, 380 p.

¹³ Ewa Michna, *Kwestie etniczno-narodowościowe na pograniczu Słowianczyzny Wschodniej i Zachodniej. Ruch rusynski na Słowacji, Ukrainie i w Polsce* [Ethnicity and

J. Nowak¹⁴). We can talk about two similar camps of scientists in Slovakia, where M. Mušinka¹⁵ and M. Sopolih¹⁶ belong to the former, and D. Kovač¹⁷ and S. Konečný¹⁸ to the latter.

THE SOVIET PROPAGANDA IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

In the interwar period, the propaganda of the Moscophile movement among the Lemkos, was best done through the network of the Mykhailo Kachkovskiy Society's reading rooms. According to our calculations, as of 1936, there were 64 cells in the Lemko Region¹⁹. Trying to save the situation, in the spring of 1934, the central authorities of the Mykhailo Kachkovskiy Society in Lwów appointed a special instructor for the Lemko Region, whose task was to prevent the decline of some pro-Russian reading rooms and to intensify the activities of local cells.

In general, the cultural activity of Moscophiles and Old Ruthenians focused primarily on the celebrations of the "Days of Ruska Culture" and the memorable days of the victims of Thalerhof, some of which gathered a large audience²⁰.

Nationality Issues on the Border between Eastern and Western Slavic Languages. Ruthenian Movement in Slovakia, Ukraine and Poland], Krakow, Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2004, 364 p.

¹⁴ Jacek Nowak, *Zaginiony świat? Nazywają ich Lemkami* [The Lost World? They Call Them Lemki], Kraków, Universitas, 2000, 247 p.

¹⁵ Mikuláš Mušinka, *Rusini-ukrajinci – jedna narodnost* [Rusyns-Ukrainians – one nationality], Prešov, Zvaz rusinov-ukraincov Slovenskej republiky, 1997, 24 p.

¹⁶ Myroslav Sopolih, *Ukrainci Slovačchyny: istoryko-etnografichnyi aspekt* [Ukrainians of Slovakia: historical and ethnographic aspect], in "Narodna tvorčist ta etnolohiia" [Folk Creativity and Ethnography], 2017, no. 3, pp. 16-23.

¹⁷ Dušan Kovač, *Národnostnè menšiny na križovatke medzi vnútornou a zahraničnou politikou* [National minorities at the crossroads between domestic and foreign politics], in Ľudovít Haraksim (zost.), *Národnosti na Slovensku* [National Minorities in Slovakia compiled by Ľudovít Haraksim], Bratislava, 1993, pp. 9-19.

¹⁸ Stanislav Konečný, *Transformácia spoločnosti a niektore sociálno-ekonomické problémy Rusinov a Ukrajincov na Slovensku* [Social transformation and some socio-economic problems of Ruthenians and Ukrainians in Slovakia], in *Narod a národnosti na Slovensku v transformujúcej* [The People and Nationalities in Slovakia in Social Transformations], Prešov, 2005, pp. 208-218.

¹⁹ *Schematyzm hreko-katolytskoho dukhovenstva Apostolskoi administratsii Lemkivshchyny 1936* [Schematism of the Greek-Catholic Clergy of the Apostolic Administration of the Lemko Region, 1936], Stanford – Connecticut, 1970, 178 p.

²⁰ Borys Lemkivskiy, *Chorna impreza v Chornim* [Black party in Black], in "Nova Zoria" [Nova Zorya], 1934, 4 zhovtnia.

However, such calls no longer found support, and therefore, the position of the Moscovophile movement weakened every year. The Voivodeship Committee for Lemko Affairs stated in 1938 that “the Mykhailo Kachkovskiy Reading Room in most cases is limited to paper posters and does not have an impact on the surrounding”²¹.

The centres of the Moscovophile movement in the Lemko Region, which in the pre-war period spread pro-Russian influences, mostly tried to develop and consolidate the Old Ruthenian ideas during the interwar period. Most of the Mykhailo Kachkovskiy’s reading rooms in the interwar period were under the influence of the Old Ruthenians²². Although, in general, the effects of these movements are so intertwined that it is difficult to separate them, Old Ruthenianism, as an offshoot of the Moscovophile movement under the influence of political conditions, acquired new ideological features. Therefore, it can be stated that it was Old Ruthenianism, and its model of identity that, in the new political realities of the interwar period, was more beneficial for the assimilation policy of Poland and Slovakia.

Realizing the gradual loss of influence of their reading rooms, Moscovophilic leaders at the beginning of the 1930s tried to expand the network of the “Zaporozhets” Society, which relied on the education of the younger generation of Lemkos based on Moscovophilic ideas. For this purpose, in April 1933, in the village of Nowa Wieś (Nowy Sącz County), a meeting of the village departments of the “Zaporozhets” Society was held. However, according to the documents, “the congress did not arouse interest among Lemkos”²³. This situation, we believe, was due, firstly, to the fact that some of the Lemkos remained inert in public activity. Secondly, there was a gradual change in their worldview, especially of the younger generation of Lemkos, which was increasingly focused on the Ukrainian national idea.

In the early 1930s, taking advantage of the difficult socio-economic situation of the population, the Moscovophiles began secret agitation among the Lemkos aimed at leaving for the USSR, where, according to sources, “agitators promised a ‘heavenly’ life”. At the beginning of 1934, several thousand signatures of those who were willing, were collected²⁴. To make more effective agitation, in

²¹ Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie (hereinafter **AAN**) [Archive of New Acts in Warsaw], Zespół Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych 1918–1939, sygn. 1058, k. 57.

²² Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie (hereinafter **ANK**) [State Archive in Krakow], Zespół, Zespół Urząd Województwa Krakowskiego sygn. 79a, k. 50.

²³ *Ibid.*, sygn. 44a, k. 190.

²⁴ Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy u Lvovi [Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Lviv], fond 348, op. 1, spr. 6809, s. 3.

August 1934, S. Zynin's brochure *Lemkovyna – Siberia* was prepared. The publication had a propagandistic character in the authorship of the Moscovophile, who wrote that "Lemkos are a Russian tribe".²⁵ As if rebuking the decline in Europe and America, he praised the Soviet system, the collective farm system, where everybody works as many days as they want. The author tried to support his manipulative text with the letters of the Soviet peasants, in which they praised the Soviet system. Such rhetoric shows how false, insidious, but loyal without an element of coercion the policy of Moscovilic agitators for the resettlement of Lemkos to the USSR was.

Active work on the propaganda of Russianism among the Lemkos was carried out by the emigrant environment, where, especially in 1927–1946, D. Vyslotskyi, known in creative circles as P. Hunianka, distinguished himself by his activity. Describing his influence, one of the newspapers wrote: "He leads a solid agitation work. Its power of persuasion is tremendous"²⁶. His false warnings best evidence the character of his worldview: "We must remember that the salvation of Lemkovyna is in emigration, and the emigration of Lemkos cannot be to any other country than the Soviet Union"²⁷. It is known that in 1934 he even went to Moscow in case of the resettlement of Lemkos to the USSR.

Lemko Region became the object of not only political but also religious experimentation. The latter included the so-called "Lemko schism" – the spread of Moscovilic-Orthodox agitation among the Lemkos and Lemkos transition from Greek Catholicism to Orthodoxy. Active spread of Moscovilic-Orthodox agitation among the Lemkos was observed in the early second half of the 1920s, when in November 1926, the first Orthodox agitation gathering took place in the village Tylawa (Krosno County), where N. Serebrenikov, the member of Warsaw Sejm, A. Filipovskiy, Orthodox Bishop from the US, M. Kopchak, teacher of Tylawa village, and some Greek-Catholic priests were present²⁸. The political nature of such Orthodox actions had such pronounced signs that it was emphasised by the authorities.

Violent agitation for Russian Orthodoxy has provoked many cases of acute conflicts between Lemkos. In July 1927, a group of 200, mostly women, attacked the home of a Greek Catholic parish priest to expel him. Giving due consideration to such development of events, the starosta of Krosno County issued a decree on

²⁵ Serhij Zynin, *Lemkovyna-Sybir* [Lemko Region – Siberia], Lviv, Nakladom avtora, 1934, p. 12.

²⁶ Ihor Lyubchych, *Lemkos' Fates and Misfortunes*, Ivano-Frankivsk, Misto NV, 2024, p. 84.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Mykola Oliinyk, *Piznavaimo ridni oseli* [Let's get to know our native homes], "Nash Lemko" [Our Lemko], 1938, 15 lystopada, p. 9.

permanent supervision of the village of Tylawa after 9 pm²⁹.

Religious themes became relevant in the periodicals with the participation of representatives of both the clergy and lay leaders. One of the priests – a contributor to the magazine “Nyva” noted: “When asked about the reasons for their transition to Orthodoxy, the Lemkos answer diversely. The most important reason is the lack of education of the Lemkos. Lemkos have been told to believe they are ‘Russian’ and Orthodox. They are infused with hatred towards Ukrainians”³⁰.

In general, the “Lemko schism” generated significant misunderstandings in the national self-awareness of Lemkos. In many cases, the concepts of faith and ethnicity replaced each other. Lemkos, who were Greek Catholics, called themselves Ukrainians, and those who became Orthodox were called Moscals. However, it can be argued that the attempts of Moscophilic agitators to impose the Lemkos’ Russian identity through the Orthodox rite failed because, at the beginning of the 1930s, the Orthodox movement among the Lemkos began to decline and later ceased altogether. In November 1935, the Russian-language monthly “Voskresenie” (Resurrection) appeared in Lwów, dedicated to the revival of Orthodoxy in the Lemko Region³¹, which was generously funded by the Russian authorities.

Summing up the analysed material, it is important to argue that, while giving the Russian character to the Orthodox agitation, the leaders of Moscophilism did not achieve the desired result. Despite the assistance in changing the creed, only an insignificant portion of the Lemkos converted to Orthodoxy – about the seventh part. Namely, Orthodoxy did not become the foundation of “Russianism” in the Lemko Region.

Moscophilic propaganda in the interwar period became common in the diaspora community, whose representatives attempted to spread their influence directly to the Lemkos through their publications. An example is the “Carpatho-Russian Calendar”, the tendentiousness of which is evidenced by the content, where the Lemkos were interpreted as: “the Russian tribe, which is pushed to the very West and cut in half by the Czechoslovak–Polish border”³². In one of the issues, we find an article by an anonymous author called “Lemky”, using Russian

²⁹ Derzhavnyi arkhiv v Ivano-Frankivskii oblasti (hereinafter **DAIFO**) [State Archive in Ivano-Frankivsk Region], fond. 2, op.1, spr. 500, s. 25.

³⁰ Yuri Savchuk, *Pravoslaviie na Lemkivshchyni* [Orthodoxy in the Lemko Region], in “Nyva” [Cornfield], 1931, no. 5, p. 4.

³¹ AAN, Zespół Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych 1918–1939, sygn. 963, k. 121.

³² *Karpatorusskii Kalendar Lemko* [Carpathian Calendar Lemko], Sostavyl Vano Hunianka, New-York – Passaic – Philadelphia, Lemko-Soiuz, 1928, p. 45.

imperial terminology like “Velykoros” and “Maloros”. Trying to justify the idea of the “Russian world”, the author writes that “Shevchenko and Franco, as Dukhnovych and Pavlovysh, though they tried to form something for the entire Ruski people in the literary all-Russian language – they could not, because they did not have that great talent of genius, like Pushkin and Gogol. And they became local poets”³³.

The diaspora environment, with similar distorted manipulative texts, through the distribution of their periodicals in the Lemko Region for free, not to a small extent, helped the spread and approval of Moscovilism.

THE SOVIET PROPAGANDA IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The next phase of Russian propaganda among the Lemkos started at the beginning of the Second World War. After the signing of the Soviet–German Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact in August 1939, the Galician part of the Lemko Region appeared in the zone of special Soviet interests, although according to the Treaty it was to become a zone of German occupation. Referring to the Soviet occupiers of 1939, the native of the Lemko Region Yu. Tarnovych pointed out their cruel methods of establishing power, “half-wild behaviour, reduced to the lowest form of primitivism, disruptive and deceitful propaganda, bullying in their pseudo-supreme culture”³⁴.

Soviet propaganda for the resettlement to the USSR began quite quickly all over the territory of the Galician part of the Lemko Region. In the city of Nowy Sącz, a resettlement centre was opened for western Lemko counties, and the Soviet mission with special agitators and the Commission for Resettlement began to work, the chief of which was General Yegorov. According to all the agreements, the resettlement had to take place on the principles of voluntariness – the Germans forbade campaigning for departure, but the Soviet mission conducted very convenient propaganda. An eyewitness recalled: “In front of the poor and battered needy Lemko, they revealed the magical picture of luxury life, where there is enough land, lots of cattle, light and well-paid work in factories”. In this regard, “Lemkos got into departure fever”³⁵, and according to the author, “it was

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

³⁴ Yuri Beskyd-Tarnovych, *Na zharyshchakh Zakerzonnia* [On the Backlashes of Trans-Curzon Territory], Toronto, Vyd-vo Lemkivshchyna, 1947, p. 42.

³⁵ Zinovii Knysh, *Pered pokhodom na skhid. Spohady y materialy do diiannia Orhanizatsii Ukrainykykh Natsionalistiv u 1939-1941* [Before the Campaign in the East. Memories

the death of tens of thousands of credulous Lemkos who got caught on the Bolshevik sticky words”³⁶. After several weeks of agitation, the date of the first departure to the USSR was determined on January 22, 1940, from the railway station Sanok to Lesko, where Soviet train cars were waiting.³⁷

During the dramatic events of the Second World War, despite the outbreak of the national liberation movement among the Lemkos, there were manifestations of political sympathies focused on the USSR. In the Western Lemko counties during the war, the communist underground supported by Moscow was active, and, along with it, the insidious Soviet propaganda was spreading.

Even though at this stage, the territory of Lemko Region was occupied by various states, Russian propaganda was evident, and its ideologists involved a wide variety of methods, which manifested in various ways (from religious agitation and public influences to populist calls for a better future), was well supported financially by the Soviet regime.

The Ukrainian–Polish military-political conflict at the final stage of World War II and the intentions to eliminate the ethno-demographic grounds for issuing potential territorial claims became the reasons for the Soviet and Polish leadership to resolve the long-standing inter-ethnic conflict by deporting the population from the Ukrainian–Polish border (a total of 484,000 people)³⁸. This action was intended by Moscow not only to paralyze the explosive socio-political situation on the ethnic borderland, but also to contribute to solving post-war financial and economic problems in the southeast of the Ukrainian SSR.³⁹

The action of evicting Ukrainian autochthons was carefully planned and brutally carried out by the Bolshevik-Communist regimes of Poland and the

and Materials Related to the Activities of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists in 1939–1941], Toronto, Sribna Surma, 1959, p. 161.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 146.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 155.

³⁸ Mykola Lytvyn, *Deportatsiia ukrainsiv z Nadsiania, Lemkivshchyny, Kholmshchyny i Pidliashshia 1944 - 1951 rr.: osnovni etapy ta etnopolitychni naslidky* [Deportation of Ukrainians from Upper San, Lemko Region, Chełm Region, and Podlachia in 1944–1951: Main Stages and Ethnopolitical Consequences], in “Halychyna. Naukovyi i kulturno-prosvitnii kraieznavchyi chasopys” [Galicia. Scientific and Cultural-Educational Local Lore Journal], 2012, no 20-21, p. 311.

³⁹ Ihor Tsenda, *Ukrainsko-polski vidnosyny 40 – 50 rr: etnopolitychnyi analiz* [Ukrainian-Polish Relations of the 40s and 50s of the 20th Century: Ethnopolitical Analysis], Kyiv, Instytut politychnykh i etnonatsionalnykh doslidzhen im. I. F. Kurasa NAN Ukrainy, 2009, p. 332.

USSR in advance. That is reflected in the criminal document from which the tragedy of expulsion began: "The agreement between the Government of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Polish Committee of National Liberation on the evacuation of Ukrainian population from the territory of Poland and Polish citizens from the territory of the Ukrainian SSR dated September 9, 1944. With the beginning of the eviction, the Soviet-Polish authorities cherished hopes for the so-called evacuation by the "blitzkrieg" method. Sources state that in almost every village or hamlet, there were meetings and conversations with the population, in which Soviet agitators opposed the wealthy life in the USSR to poverty in Lemko Region." ⁴⁰

Later, it became clear that the evacuation would be delayed and, therefore, the timing of its completion was postponed several times. That is evidenced by the letter of the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR N. Khrushchev to the Prime Minister of the Provisional Board of the Polish state Osóbka-Morawski in May 1945, where it was reported that earlier "the parties agreed to extend the period of evacuation until May 1, 1945. However, the evacuation was not completed. I appeal to you again to postpone the date of the end of the evacuation until August 1, 1945" ⁴¹.

Against the background of the tragic events associated with the violent, brutal eviction, we find notes in the then Ukrainian-language press abroad, which wrote that "the world is indifferently looking closely to everything that is happening now on our lands. What is happening there belongs not only to us, but also to the Ukrainian nation. Everything that is happening there beats on the principles of international morality and destroys the concept of universal ethics and justice" ⁴².

In March 1945, the Ukrainian People's Council of Prešov (UNRP) was founded as a representative body of the Ukrainian population of the region ⁴³. Since its inception, however, it has not only been pro-Soviet, but also pro-Russian. In 1949, the Communist government of Czechoslovakia eliminated UNRP. Instead, in 1951, they founded the Cultural Union of Ukrainian Workers (KSUT),

⁴⁰ *Vyselencha aktsiia na Lemkivshchyni. Pofrontove vyseleण्या* [Eviction action from Lemko Region. Front-line eviction], in "Na storozhi" [On guard], 1948, no. 5, p. 54.

⁴¹ Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromadskykh obiednan Ukrainy (hereinafter **TDHOU**) [Central State Archive of Public Associations of Ukraine], fond 1, op. 23, spr. 1467, s. 16.

⁴² Edwar Bil'skyi, *Trahediia Kholmshchyny i Pidliashshia* [The Tragedy of the Chełm Region and Podlasie], in "Nashe zhyttia", 1947, no. 29, pp. 3-4.

⁴³ Marian Gajdoš, Stanislav Konečný, Alexander Mušinka, *UNRP v dokumentoch* [UNRP in Documents], Prešov, Centrum antropologických vyskunnov 2006, p. 9

whose activities were narrowed only to the sphere of culture but in the spirit of communist ideology.

American periodicals wrote about Walter Dushnyck's book⁴⁴ in which he told the story of post-war Soviet cruelty. According to the author, when Ukrainians from post-war Poland disobeyed the Soviet call to leave for Soviet Ukraine, Stalin's "Warsaw puppets" used terror and unprecedented cruelty against them. Whole villages were set on fire by artillery with the express purpose of destroying them. Men, women, and children were slaughtered in many localities. Events of January–April 1946, in the village Zawadka Morochowska (Sanok County – *I. L.*), crossed the line of cynicism and cruelty, where the 34th Polish infantry regiment, under the command of the Soviet officer Colonel Pluto, killed 56 people and deported 78 persons to Ukrainian SSR and destroyed the entire locality⁴⁵. The Zawadka Morochowska massacre was just one of thousands of such events in post-war Europe. Repressions and persecutions of ethnic minorities were recorded throughout Europe, especially in its eastern part⁴⁶.

In archival documents, we come across the message from the authorities that in April 1946, in Sanok County, an American delegation arrived "to test the principle of voluntary evacuation of Lemkos". The Soviet authorities were very wary about this delegation because, as we read in the document, they immediately "informed the General Commissioner of the Polish Government for the repatriation M. Wolski about it, to take measures so that the delegation should not be untruthfully informed, and their actions should not prevent the evacuation"⁴⁷.

Interestingly, the conscious part of the intelligentsia of the region was aware of the passive position of the international community concerning deportation. In this regard, we consider it expedient to quote from the Open Letter of Ukrainians Living Behind the Curzon Line, entitled *To the Whole Civilized World*, written in October 1945. Its lines shed much light on the very process of eviction and the passive contemplation of the international community. "We are Ukrainian residents of the ethnographic territories lying west of the San River, and we are addressing representatives and governments of Great Britain, the United States, France, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. Personally, to President Truman, Prime

⁴⁴ Walter Dushnyck, *Death and Devastation on the Curzon Line: the Story of Deportations from Ukraine*, New York, 1948, 32 p.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15-19.

⁴⁶ Keith Lowe, *The Savage Continent. Europe in the Aftermath of World War II*, London, Viking, 2012, pp. 187-270.

⁴⁷ TDAHOU, fond 1, op. 23, spr. 2605, s. 99.

Minister Attlee, other foreign ministers who drafted and signed the UN Charter, all the heads of Christian churches and the International Red Cross and the conscience of all progressive cultural humanity with an open letter about the terrible violence and injustice that the army and the Polish government allow towards us to carry out Moscow's orders blindly. The local population did not want and do not want to leave their land under any conditions. No one wanted to depart for the Soviet Union voluntarily. Officially declared that the resettlement is voluntary (...). However, representatives of the Polish and Soviet governments all the time since the autumn of 1944 led not voluntary resettlement but forced eviction. The attempt to evict Ukrainians using terror failed, so the Polish government in August 1945 threw regular troops for the forced eviction of Ukrainians. All this mass of lawlessness and unprecedented crimes on us is carried out when the liberties of President Roosevelt and the UN Charter are proclaimed to the whole world and when President Truman declares the beginning of the golden age of freedom and happiness, and the noble men of Great Britain assure all that they will guard the rights and justice around the world. To us Ukrainians living beyond the Curzon line, not only the duty imposed by the UN Charter is violated, but the most modest foundations of Christian morality are destroyed. We are thrown by force from our parental homes and beaten to blood and death. We address this open letter to all civilized world with deep hope"⁴⁸. This letter is a soulful cry and the most convincing evidence of the assessment and awareness regarding the brutal deportation of the local population instead of the promised resettlement.

The continuation of this letter was prepared in September 1945 by Ukrainian insurgents, a kind of appeal called *Ukrainians of Lemko Region*, where it was noted: "In front of our eyes, unheard of in the cultural world lawlessness is going on (...). Ukrainian people are taken away their right to live on their own land. Without the consent and against the will of the Ukrainians, the bloodthirsty Moscow sells this land and trades the lives of Lemko Ukrainians. Dear Brothers, you are being thrown out by deceit and force, with false promises and bloody terror"⁴⁹. The document ends with the words: "Do not dare to throw on the ground the native land of your ancestors. You as a tree, plucked by a terrible storm out from native soil – will wither, will dry without it"⁵⁰.

⁴⁸ Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchikh orhaniv vlady i upravlinnia Ukrainy (hereinafter **TDAVOVUU**) [Central State Archive of Higher Authorities and Administration of Ukraine], fond 4959, op. 1, spr. 28, ss. 39-43.

⁴⁹ TDAHOU, fond 1, op. 23, spr. 1472, s. 146.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, s. 147.

From the documents dated February 1946, we learn about the strengthening of anti-Soviet propaganda by people who returned to Poland from the Ukrainian SSR. According to preliminary data, up to 400 people from the Kirovohrad region returned to the villages of Gorlice County⁵¹. In Nowy Sącz County in May 1945, under the influence of anti-Soviet agitation, “many Ukrainians categorically refused to evacuate”⁵².

Summing up the above-mentioned material, we note that after the Second World War, in connection with the Soviet–Polish agreements, the situation on the Western borderlands regarding Ukrainians has become much more complicated. During the negotiations, new heavy political-administrative and ideological factors against the local population were involved at the official points of the agreements. The deportation of the local people in the Lemko Region in 1944–1947 became the most tragic ethnopolitical experiment of the USSR and Poland, which Lemkos had to survive in the modern era. Despite all the manipulations in the text of the Agreement itself... in 1944, the so-called evacuation, at its core, was severely violent. The result of deportations was the destruction of the Lemko ethnographic region in Poland itself. The inhabitants were scattered throughout Ukraine and Poland, facing the threat of permanent disappearance today. In general, we can say that studies of deportation actions as a historical and political phenomenon have not yet acquired complete outlines in Ukrainian and Polish scientific communities, which would paradigmatically contribute to the search for consensus among scientists of both countries.

According to the documents, during 1944–1946, the government resettled the evicted population from Poland throughout the Ukrainian SSR, to 17 regions in total. Most of the settlers were sent to the western regions of Ukraine, in particular, Ternopil, Lwów and Stanisławów (now Ivano-Frankivsk), as well as to the eastern and central: Donetsk, Voroshylovhrad (now Luhansk), Poltava; and southern: Mykolaiv, Odesa and Kherson.

After the arrival of the first evictees in the region, in every village, the authorities tried to unleash political and agitation work among them. Specially appointed agitators from the party held talks about the State’s five-year plan, read newspapers and tried to break the settlers ideologically, preparing them for new socio-political realities⁵³. For example, among the arrivals in the Dolyna district, many were Lemkos, for whom a general meeting was held three times during the

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, s. 3.

⁵² *Ibid.*, s. 106.

⁵³ DAIFO, fond 249, op. 1, spr. 16, ss. 146, 362.

last four months of 1946. In order to popularize Soviet slogans and impose devotion to the Soviet State among the evicted, even the film *The Oath*⁵⁴, which, according to the contemporary press, was supposed to have a great political and educational significance, was shown especially.

There were cases when the inspector of the regional executive committee of the resettlement department, checking the Horodenka district in January 1946, in the act of verification, pointed out the need to “single out propagandists for talking and reading newspapers with evictees, familiarizing them with the Stalinist constitution, since many do not know Soviet laws and the Soviet system”⁵⁵. It was decided to hold a meeting of evictees at least once a month. Some district councils made a decision to limit migration among evicted and newly settled people, particularly, the ability to move freely to other villages, to control the situation better⁵⁶. In the summer of 1947, the region received an order from the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR not to allow former evictees from Poland to the archive to verify the documents⁵⁷.

Overall, as of March 1946, 3,488 families of Ukrainian settlers arrived from Poland to the territory of Prykarpattia, which included 11,492 people⁵⁸. However, each month, their number increased. The situation of evicted families who fled from other areas was challenging. Local authorities often did not want to register those resettled escapees for permanent residence in the region, offering to return them to previous central and eastern areas of their resettlement. Materials from the Otniia district in early 1948 show that many resettled escapees from the Centre and East of Ukraine (particularly Poltava and Kirovohrad regions) arrived illegally in the area. One of the components of the Sovietization policy was the collectivization of the village, which the newly arrived settlers from Poland perceived with particular prejudice.

In this regard, the authorities of the region stubbornly reported, usually guided by their totalitarian methods of management, that “within a short time, the settlers will be members of the collective farms. In this regard, there is a wide organizational work of our party and collective farms”⁵⁹. The system workers tried, in various ways, to lure the settlers to the collective farms, artificially

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, spr. 13, s. 350.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, s. 282.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, s. 196.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, spr. 14, s. 13.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, spr. 10, s. 41.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, fond 249, op. 1, spr. 24, s. 49.

creating and promising them better conditions, in particular, by freeing them from all taxes and agricultural supplies. Experiencing issues with the settlement, in particular, the lack of free houses, the authorities tried to solve them, according to documents, by the “compaction” method⁶⁰.

In general, based on the questionnaires of the respondents, we state our conscious or unconscious craving for memories about the lost native land, the need to express the song or narrative – but always in the longing word of sadness for the Lemko Region – a manifestation of the collective memory of deep ethnic roots from under the Beskidy. This nostalgia for the homeland, apart from being an impulse to create narratives, is also a significant factor in the consolidation of the displaced Lemkos scattered by fate outside their native land.

Among the most numerous western Ukrainian regions were Ternopil, where 35,106 families and 155,620 people were registered. The Lemko ethnographic group (44% of the deported Lemkos) settled in this region⁶¹. Along with the leading vector of moving evicted from the West, a powerful stream of evicted fugitives to the Ternopil region from the previously settled in the eastern and southern territories of the USSR was formed. In almost all regions, the social adaptation of the deportees from the border intelligentsia occurred in the conditions of suspiciousness and distrust of the authorities to the specialists brought up in Poland.

From archival documents, we learn that for three weeks in August–September 1946, in Ternopil and Stalin (now Donetsk) regions, the places of resettlement of Lemkos were visited by the former editor of the newspaper “Karpatska Rus” (the body of the Lemko Union, USA) D. Vyslotskyi, who was accompanied by the editor of the All-Slavic Committee N. Filatov. The transcript of the conversation of a member of the Politburo Udovychenko with named members of the delegation reveals the peculiarities of the insidious attitude of the authorities and public figures who tried to impose Lemkos Moscovophilic views. D. Vyslotskyi divides the Lemko newcomers to the Ternopil region into three groups. “The first, who moved there in 1940, the second – which was organized, as a result of the resettlement from Poland in 1944–1946, which did not stick and look

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, fond, 282, spr. 12, s. 110.

⁶¹ Yuliia Bodnarchuk, *Osoblyvosti rozselennia y adaptatsii na Ternopilshchyni ukrainskoho naseleattia, deportovanoho z terytorii Polshchi (1944-1947 rr.)* [Peculiarities of resettlement and adaptation in the Ternopil region of the Ukrainian population deported from the territory of Poland (1944–1947)], Avtoreferat dysertatsii na zdobuttia stupenia kandydata istorychnykh nauk, spetsialnist 07.00.01 - Istoriiia Ukrainy, Chernivtsi, 2009, p. 13.

around. And the third – who flee from the eastern regions. They have no houses, no land, no farm. They have to do something about them because if they let them go, they'll be running back to Poland"⁶².

D. Vyslotskyi reported that they organized the meeting, where the room was full, and all were Lemkos. "The trouble is, Lemkos have relatives in America", he recalled of those meetings. "They thought that I was going back to America and they gave me many letters to their relatives. If we send these letters to America, it is a material for fascist propaganda"⁶³.

In several mostly found anonymous letters, which the Lemkos gave D. Vyslotskyi in the hope that they would reach their destination, the intentions, as we can see, were completely different. In one of the letters, written in September 1946 by Lemko from the village of Dovhe, Gorlice County, we read: "Dear Lemko brothers in America. Let me write you a few words about our lives (...) we were in a hopeless situation. We arrived in Great Ukraine in the Kirovohrad region. We were taken away by 4–5 families in each collective farm so that the people did not converge with each other (...) When someone complained, we were called Poles (...) Now we returned to Galicia, Ukraine, live among people and ask for bread. What happens next – we do not know. Dear brothers-Lemkos, try us. We were returned to our native land, otherwise, the Lemko tribe would disappear. I can't tell you about our whole life because it is very hard"⁶⁴.

In another anonymous collective letter delivered in the village of Mykulyno in the Ternopil region from immigrants from Lemko Region, we read: "Please, dear brothers and sisters living in America (...) give us a hand of help. When we were in our Carpathians, we were considered people, and now we consider us worse than cattle (...) Now we walk around people and ask for bread. We live in hunger and cold (...) And if you refuse our request, our Lemko tribe will perish forever"⁶⁵.

Analysing the documents, along with the transcript, we understand that the authorities were interested in the letters but with a different tone. The representative of the authorities, Udovychenko, was interested in whether they met or photographed evictees from Poland, who gave their daughters to the Russian peasant. He thinks it is better for these people to write letters. According to him: "If Lemko decides to marry the local – this is a good sign, and better

⁶² TDAHOU, fond 1, op. 23, spr. 2605, s. 62.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, s. 61.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, s. 80-81.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, s. 83.

counterpropaganda can no longer be”⁶⁶.

Among the central Ukrainian regions where the authorities numerically evicted Ukrainians from Poland, Lemkos in particular, was the Poltava region. Most of the evicted families from Poland settled in the Poltava region in the Zinkivskiyi, Kozelschynskiyi, Chornukhy, and Nekhvoroshchanskyyi districts. Sources say that in March 1946, Pyryatyn held a meeting of evictees from Poland with the participation of 66 people, of which none agreed with the arrangement in a new place. Everyone wanted to go to the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR, referring to the fact that the climate is not suitable for their body. Some of those present, being driven to despair, spoke radically. M. Gyria rebuked: “In Poland, we were in prisons, and here it is worse than prison”⁶⁷.

To prevent this, the authorities relied only on strengthening political and agitation work. To intensify the explanatory work in the form of “conversations, reports and lectures”, one propagandist of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) was sent to each area of the region where the evicted remained. Sources say that in some areas, the agitation work was conducted during meetings at rallies, accompanying newcomers to the settlements and at special meetings, evenings by means of conversations, reports, answers to questions, and reading newspapers⁶⁸.

Still, despite their dispersed resettlement, the Lemkos in the Poltava region tried to unite. Almost until recently, they had a habit of going to the temple holiday for the Feast of the Transfiguration in Lutenski Budyshcha village, and for Christmas – in Shylyvka. In the first years after the eviction, it was almost the only way to communicate, when from the whole area Lemkos converged on foot for 20–30 km to meet with their family and friends. They sang songs, remembered their homes, and shared joys and pain.

Trying to highlight the reasons that attracted the evicted Ukrainians to the eastern regions of the USSR, researcher D. Baikienich says: “People were moving to the east of Ukraine because the dominant factor in solving the issue of a new settlement was the desire to get away from the Polish authorities”.⁶⁹ This was also facilitated by the fact that most of the Soviet agitators who worked at Zakerzonia

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, s. 64.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, fond 1, op. 80, spr. 517, s. 43–44.

⁶⁸ TDAVOVUU, fond 4959, op. 1, spr. 28, ss. 39–43.

⁶⁹ Dmytro Baikienich, *Ukrainski pereselentsi z Polshchi na terytorii Voroshylovhradskoi oblasti v 1944–1945 rr.: planuvannia, kilkist i heohrafiia rozselennia* [Ukrainians Displaced from Poland in the Territory of Voroshilovograd Region in 1944–1945: Planning, Number and Geography of Resettlement] in “Visnyk LNU imeni Tarasa Shevchenka” [Visnyk LNU Named after Taras Shevchenko], 2010, no 23, p. 172.

were people from the eastern part of Ukraine who “knew the language and knew how to make the sign of the cross”⁷⁰. The author points out that the majority of the evicted, who were sent to the eastern regions of the Ukrainian SSR during the second phase of the evacuation, came from counties inhabited by Lemkos, where Russophilia was well established among the local population. Lemko women, who were deported from the village of Wola Cieklińska (Jasło County), now living in the Ivano-Frankivsk region, recall that they were first taken to Voroshylovhrad Region (now Luhansk).

In general, the difficult material conditions in which those evicted from Poland fell, the unusual sociocultural environment and ideological attitudes led to the fact that many Lemkos left the Luhansk region for the western areas of Ukraine. At the same time, those Lemkos who remained in the Luhansk region, in the majority, still retained their ethnic identity, some features of rituals, folklore, and dialect.

The centre of the Lemko community in the Luhansk region, mainly from the Western Lemko counties, was Peremozhne village of the Lutuhyne district. From the transcript talks on the results of Filatov’s and Vyslotskyi’s trip to the Stalin region (now Donetsk), we learn that to the question: “How many Lemkos live in the Stalin region?”, Vyslotskyi replied that “it is difficult to say since local authorities do not distinguish the population among Lemkos and others, but I think that most of the Lemkos in the eastern regions live in the Stalin region. We met with Lemkos on collective farms. We observed them thrust westward”⁷¹.

About the terrible living conditions of deportees from Poland to the Ukrainian SSR, letters were sent by them abroad in the hope that their relatives would read them. However, those were intercepted and confiscated before reaching their addressees. In one of these letters, a Lemko whose last name was Stechnyi, who lived in the Stalin region, told his friends in Poland: “If you hear that you have to resettle, you do not listen to anyone, keep your head on your shoulders.”⁷². A. Trokhanovskyi, being deported to the Kirovohrad region, wrote in a letter to relatives in Canada: “Our life is bad here. Such a life as before will not be... There we worked and knew for what, and here we work and see nothing on these collective farm works”⁷³.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ TDAHOU, fond 1, op. 23, spr. 2605, s. 57.

⁷² *Ibid.*, fond 1, op. 23, spr. 2606, s. 100.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, s. 101.

CONCLUSIONS

In general, during the 1920s and 1940s, Lemko people were under the influence of active Russian propaganda. It manifested itself through the activities of public associations, as well as the imposition of Orthodoxy as the spiritual support of Russianness.

During the Second World War, insidious propaganda became increasingly active in the agitation for the departure of the Lemkos to the USSR, and in the mid-1940s it ended with the general forced eviction of the Lemkos from their ethnic lands, which led to the destruction of the ethnocultural environment of the region and made the problem of preserving the Lemko identity extremely difficult.

Under the influence of the Soviet totalitarian reality, Lemkos found themselves in difficult sociohistorical living conditions – evicted from their ethnic lands, faced with the complete impossibility of continuing their usual way of life in a new place and at the same time with significant difficulties in adapting to the new conditions of their traditional ethno-culture.

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