

The Lemkos (Rusyns) in Poland

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The Old and New Settlements

The Lemkos-Rusyns, who live on both sides of the Carpathian Mountains in Poland and Slovakia, constitute an ethnographic group which speaks Ukrainian dialect(s) with some very specific features. Rusyns (*Rusyny, Rusnaky*) is an older designation, still used in Slovakia and by the older generation in Poland; Lemkos is a name used only in Poland (since the second half of the 19th century).

Up to 1945-47 the Lemkos lived on a narrow compact belt on the Polish-Slovak border in the southeastern part of contemporary Poland: from the village of Szlachtowa in the west (a little to the west beyond the Poprad River Valley) up to Oslawa River (near Sanok) in the east. Further to the east there were transitional Lemko-Boiko dialects as far as the Solinka River and the Boiko dialects. This compact territory was interrupted by some Polish villages on the Poprad River. According to a 1945 governmental agreement 'Ukrainians and Rusyns' were repatriated into Ukraine (especially into the Ternopil, L'viv and Ivano-Frankivsk regions). About 70,000 Lemkos were resettled (mainly by force) into different parts of Soviet Ukraine. In 1947 within the framework of the 'Vistula action' (the liquidation of the compact 'Ukrainian' territories to deprive the Ukrainian partisan movement of its base) remnants of the Lemko population (about 30,000 persons) were resettled into the new Polish territories, especially the western and northern parts (Pudło 1992). In only two (?) villages (Komańcza and Olchowiec) were small groups of Lemkos allowed to remain; in others only single, usually mixed

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families. Many of the ancient villages were destroyed and even buried. Only a part of a few ancient Lemko villages were settled by Poles, mostly on the Polish-Lemko borderland.

After 1956 a limited number of permits to return were issued (for 6,000 families), mainly in the western region (Gorlice district). After 1989 all restrictions were lifted, but only a few, rather old people decided to return at that time. The younger generation preferred to remain in their new settlements.

The ethnogenesis of the Lemkos is still discussed especially by Lemko (and Ukrainian) politicians. According to research, for example Stieber's studies (based on the analysis of place names and the history of settlements), the Polish population was primarily dispersed in the area west of Dukla Pass. The Lemkos and Valakhs arrived there between the 14th and the 16th centuries. Among the Valakhs there were certainly Rumanian-speaking elements, although the Rusyn (Ukrainian-speaking) elements prevailed. To the east of Dukla Pass Rusyns found uninhabited territories.

As a result of the 1945-47 events and the later return of the displaced Lemkos, there are few villages in the Lemko region where the Lemkos prevail (Bartne, Bielanka, Kunkowa, Leszczyny), or are found in significant numbers (Hańczowa, Komańcza, Olchowiec, Tylicz, Zydranowa). The majority of the Lemkos lives today in the northern and western territories of Poland, concentrated in Masuria (the Olsztyn region) and in Lower Silesia (the Wrocław and Zielona Góra regions, especially the Legnica, Lubin and Wołów districts). In these territories the Lemkos live dispersed among the Polish majority. During the displacement the principle was to mix the Polish and Lemko populations, making the Lemko population a minority by scattering the ancient Lemko villages into the different new settlements. The exact number of Lemkos is not known today but is estimated at 60-80,000 (The Lemko Association — *Stowarzyszenie Łemków*), at 100,000 (The Lemko Union — *Zjednoczenie Łemków*, and at 150,000 (Rusyn Hostel — *Ruska Bursa*, in Gorlice); the last number is certainly exaggerated.

The preservation of the dialect

Since sociolinguistic investigations have not been conducted in this domain, any statements about preservation of the dialect may be based

only on incidental information and personal observation. It is certain that the older generation has preserved the dialect quite well. In villages where the Lemkos are strongly concentrated (in both old and new settlements) the dialect is preserved by all generations. Among the dispersed Lemkos (in villages and cities) knowledge of the dialect differs among the younger generation. In the Lemko region I have met both children who speak the dialect very well and those who only understand it and prefer to speak Polish. Since 1989 this situation has changed to the advantage of the Lemko dialect because of teaching of the dialect and publications (see below).

Bilingualism and trilingualism. Hierarchy of linguistic codes

Up to 1947 most Lemkos probably spoke only their own dialect. Contacts with Poles were limited to fairs and (for men) to military service. There was no industry requiring more frequent contacts. Only in two health resorts (Krynica and Rymanów) were contacts with Poles intensive. From 1918 to 1939 there were Polish schools in the Lemko territory with education either in Ukrainian or Lemkian. After 1947 the Lemkos primarily attended Polish schools, only a small number of them going to the few Ukrainian schools. Therefore today the greater part of the Lemkos know their own dialect (in local form) and Standard Polish. Those who live in the ancient Lemko region also have knowledge of the Polish dialects.

The Lemko dialect is limited to the family circle and neighbourhood contacts. In villages where the number of Lemkos is significant the dialect is used also in the street and for public contacts. There are no Lemko schools, but courses in the 'Lemko language' are offered in some schools.

In 1993 Poland had four Ukrainian primary and three secondary schools, and 83 establishments where Ukrainian was taught. The Lemkos are less interested in learning Ukrainian (see below). The level of knowledge of Standard Ukrainian learned in the Polish schools is rather poor. Ukrainian is the language of the Greek-Catholic Church (see below).

Standard Polish is used in all public contacts. The Lemkos attend Polish schools, and the greater part of them, especially the younger generation, can write only Standard Polish. Children, teenagers and

people up to 40 years speak Standard Polish as the Poles do. Polish dialectal speech is known and used where there are mixed settlements. In the Polish new western and northern territories only the older generation of Poles use their own Polish dialectal speech; the younger generation generally speaks only Standard Polish. In mixed families Polish prevails.

It is thus possible to speak about the use of language codes. Language consciousness and the value of the mother tongue have not been examined. See below about the ethnic orientation.

Ethnic Orientation and its Relation to Language Choice

It is not known to what extent the Lemkos consider themselves a separate group or nation and how much they consider themselves Ukrainians. Activists on both sides give contradictory information.

Even before 1939 there were two orientations: Rusyn and Ukrainian. Both of them were supported by different groups of priests. There were two cultural movements, and Polish schools with either Rusyn or Ukrainian subjects. After 1945 there was no opportunity to create a separate Lemko movement, and only one (official) Ukrainian organization existed. Since 1989 there have been two Lemko organizations (pro-Rusyn and pro-Ukrainian). Some activists have also changed their orientation. Most Lemkos are not connected with these movements and have their own separate self-identification. Ukrainian or the 'Lemko language' are extra subjects in some schools but this is dependent upon the teacher's or parents' interest. Teaching the 'Lemko language' is more difficult because of the lack of a Lemko standard and of books (see below).

Lemkos generally adhered and adhere to Greek-Catholicism, the minority to the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church was present in the Lemko region before World War II. The language of the Greek-Catholic Church was Church Slavonic, but sermons were held in the local dialects and sometimes in Ukrainian, because the young priests usually had a Ukrainian national orientation. After 1947 the Greek-Catholic Church was abolished, and Greek-Catholics attended either Roman Catholic or Orthodox churches. After 1956, Greek-Catholic priests held semi-legal services in Roman Catholic churches and performed other religious duties. In 1989 the organization and hierarchy of the Greek-Catholic Church in Poland was restored. The national

orientation of the priests is Ukrainian, and the language in which the sermons are held, Ukrainian. Both the Greek-Catholic and the Orthodox churches provide the Lemkos with identities separate from Polish.

The Lemko dialect and standardization efforts

The Lemko dialect has primarily Ukrainian (and East Slavic) language features: pleophony, e.g. *soloma, moroz, bereh*, the place name *Berest*; initial *o-*, e.g. *ożyna, osin, ozero*, the place name *Ożenna*; the reflexes *'a* and *u* from Proto-Slavic **ę* and **ǫ*, e.g. *pjat, hr'ada, zub, dub*, place names like *Švjatkova* and *Dubne*; the affricates *č* and *dž* (ʒ) from **tj, *kt'* and **dj*, e.g. *onučy, nič, medža*; the vowel *i* from *ě*, e.g. *sino, xlib*; the vowel *i* from *e* and *o* in new closed syllables, e.g. *šist, nis, viz, stupa*.

It also has its own, distinctive features in phonetics, morphology, and vocabulary: hard final consonants, e.g. *ohen, zajac*; preservation of the difference between Proto-Slavic **y* and **i*, e.g. *býty* (*y* is pronounced like Russian *y*) 'to be' and *bity* 'to beat'; often the vowel *'u* from *e* in new closed syllables, e.g. *n'us, pjuk, mjud*; lack of prothetic consonant before *o*, e.g. *osa, ohen*. The features which differentiate the Lemko dialects from (East) Slavic are partly a result of Polish or East Slovak influence: constant stress on the penultima, e.g. *śćina, holóva*, (Acc. *holóvu*), *derévo*; 'Polish' softness of consonants, e.g. *śino, źile, pšenyća*; the 'Slovak' groups *yr, yl* (*ŷr, ŷl*) from **rc, *lc*, e.g. *hŷrmŷt, kŷrnyća, syłza, býłca*; Instr. sg. in —*om*, e.g. (*z*) *rukom, (z) nohom, (z) molodyćom*; 1. sg. pres. in —*am*, e.g. *mam, znam, trymam*; 3. sg. pres. in —*at*, e.g. *mat, podat*. Typical Lemko words (or variants) are, for example, *xyža, zaran, tunij, čotŷrdesat, vŷhlad, pelevnyk, holin, pošćil, smerek*. Polonisms are, for example, *vandrovnyk, vansŷ, gribŷ, kšondz*, and Slovakisms, for instance, *baća, oblak, draha, strana, palinka, španec, zdravja*. Many of the Slovakisms are of Hungarian origin, e.g., *gazda, baća, juhas, segin, bosorkaňa, čuha, duhan, nadragula, xosen, kelčyk, odomas, fajta, serenča*. Words of Rumanian origin are remnants of the old Valakh migrations, e.g., *rumegaty, klag, bryndža, kurastra, žyntyća, komarnyk, džama, zastra, grun, vakeŷja, jafŷrŷ, čatyna, valbija, carok*.

On the other hand, the Lemko dialect has influenced Polish dialects, especially in terminology connected with shepherding and milk processing. There were two kinds of contacts: contacts in connexion with

the Valakh migrations which reached as far as the Tatra Mountains, and contacts with neighbours (Rieger 1983, Stieber 1946).

For the post-1945 period I have not observed new influence of Polish on the Lemko dialect used by the older generation, except the loanwords used to denote current events and political and economic vocabulary. The speech of the younger generation exhibits much more frequent loans due to their contacts with Poles and the necessity of an abstract vocabulary. These observations are superficial, however, because it was first of all the older generation that was examined.

The Lemko dialect is deeply differentiated. Old **i* is in the western part pronounced like *i* (sometimes like *ɨ*, a sound between *i* and *y*), in the eastern part like *y* (*robiti* - *robiti̇*, *robyty*); in Poland old **i* after *č*, *d* has in the western part the pronunciation *ŷ*, in the eastern part *y*, and in Slovakia *i* (*čystŷj*, *čudžyj* — *čystŷj*, *čudžyj* — *čistyj*, *čudžij*); old **i* after *š*, *ž* is realized as *ŷ* in Slovakia and by the older generation in Poland, e.g. *šŷja*, *žŷto* (the younger generation has, especially in the eastern part of the dialect, the pronunciation *y*); old **o* in so-called new closed syllables is reflected in the western part of the Lemko region as *ŷ*, e.g. *kŷn*, *nŷs*, *vŷz*; old **e* in new closed syllables in the past tense is reflected as *'u* in the west, e.g. *ńus*, *vjuz*, *pjuk* (in the east as *i*); hard consonants in word-final position are typical for the western part of the dialect, e.g. *kin*, *žotud*, whereas in the eastern part (especially in Slovakia) we can also find soft consonants, e.g. *kiñ*, *žotud'*; the suffix *-sk-* is typical for the greater part of the dialect, e.g. *panskyj* but in the eastern part of Slovakia the suffix is *-s'k-*, (*pans'kŷj*); soft *š*, *ž* are typical for the Lemko region in Poland and for eastern Slovakia, soft *ž*, *ś* for the greater part of the dialect in Slovakia, e.g. *š'ino*, *ž'at*; the old consonant group **sk* before *i* is reflected in the western and central part of the dialect as *ść*, e.g. *śćina*, *śćit'*, in the east as *st'*, e.g. *st'ina* (*sk'ina*), *st'it'*; the Instr. sg. ending *-om*, e.g. *rukom*, *nohom* is typical for the western part, in the east dominates the ending *-ow*, e.g. *rukow*, *nohow*; the ending *-am* in *mam*, *znam* prevails in the dialect, but in the eastern part of the dialect in Poland there are forms like *maw*, *znaw*; the future tense is predominantly expressed with the auxiliary *budu* + *l*-participle, e.g. *budu pysaw*, *budeme xodyły*, while in the eastern part forms like *budu pysaty*, *budeme xodyty* also occur. (Stieber 1956-64, Latta 1991, Rieger 1994).

There is no Lemko standard. The scanty literature, for example the 'Lemko page' (*Lemkivs'ka storinka*) in the Ukrainian newspaper *Nashe Slovo*, poetry (Petro Trochanovs'kyj), a journal *Besida* (since 1989), and

almanacs (*Lemkivskij Kalendar*, since 1993), have been written in the middle and western dialects. There is no standard Lemko dictionary. Horoszczak's Lemko-Polish dictionary (1993) was distributed only among Lemko consultants. My dictionary (Rieger 1994) is a dialectal, not a normative one, although the entries are standardized (the vocabulary is also from the dialects in Slovakia). It demonstrates variants existing in different parts of Lemko territory and in separate villages, and we can appreciate the great problems connected with the choice of one variant for standardization. There is no Lemko grammar, except the old description of Verchrats'kyj (1902) and attempts by Chomiak. Nor are there any textbooks, readers, etc. Attempts at standardization are being made in Poland and Slovakia (in Prešov) as well as in Transcarpathia (Uhorod) simultaneously with some coordination, but the Rusyns in Slovakia and the Lemkos in Poland have different dialectal orientations. The difficulties are associated with the small number of 'simple' people who are interested in this codification and in learning the Lemko language.

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