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# Constructing Identities, Ascribing Nationalities: The Polish Minority in Ukraine During Late-imperial and Early-Soviet Rule

by Olena Palko<sup>1</sup>

*This article investigates underlying state intentions behind the counting and standardizing minority populations in view of the dire need to modernize the country. It takes a close look at the statistics regarding the Polish minority provided by the 1897 Imperial and 1926 Soviet censuses to understand how, within a span of only thirty years, the abstract figures of language, religion, and social status came to represent rigidly ascribed and hereditary national categories. The article also explores how the category of “nationality” was understood and how its meaning, political, and economic significance changed in the decades between these two censuses.*

**Key words:** Census, Polish minority, Polish question, *korenizatsiya*, national identity

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As a result of the three partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the late eighteenth century, the Russian Empire acquired vast territorial holdings between the Bug and Dnieper rivers. The Western Region, known in Polish historiography as *Ziemie Zabrane* (“taken lands”) or more frequently *zabór rosyjski* (Russian partition), consisted of two administrative units — the Northwestern region, encompassing the present-day territory of Lithuania and western Belarus, and the Southwestern region, comprising the three General Governorates of Kyiv, Podolia and Volhynia and corresponding to present-day right-bank Ukraine. The Western provinces were home to a large segment of educated Polish nobility who remained loyal to their vanished state. Indeed, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, Polish nobles continued to assert cultural and political dominance over this area, often seeking support from among the local Ukrainian and Belarusian populations. Consequently, this strong Polish national and separatist movement remained a root cause for the continuous political “headache” that plagued the local authorities. Their desire to restore their state manifested in two major Polish Uprisings of 1830–31 and 1863–64, spreading throughout the western provinces and engaging many locals across ethnic and confessional lines. The popular tactics to cope with the belligerent Poles was land expropriation and redistribution, as well as assimilation and russification, combined with occasional

support for weaker national movements, especially those of Lithuanians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians.<sup>2</sup>

Distrust of Poles remained high during the early Soviet decades. This sentiment was particularly obvious in Soviet Ukraine, where the Polish minority was perceived as a permanent security concern, especially given the support they had offered to their kin state during the Second Polish Republic's brief military occupation in 1920.<sup>3</sup> Although the number of Poles in the territory was significantly reduced as a result of the new territorial arrangements agreed at Paris in 1919, and through the subsequent 1921 Treaty of Riga, fears of Polish subversion had only increased by the end of the 1920s. Unlike their predecessors, however, the Soviet leadership did not try to suppress Polish culture. Instead, the new government promoted ethnic self-identification among its ethnically diverse population, guaranteeing national rights and freedoms. Nevertheless, the need to grapple with this ongoing security dilemma, this article argues, was not the only reason why the Bolsheviks attempted to mobilize different national populations. Various minorities were to play an equal part in the process of constructing Soviet socialism and the country's modernization. Yet, the process of modernizing these backward regions, necessitated a need to standardize and order their populations via the filter of national categories.<sup>4</sup> The Soviet strategy of ethnic proliferation was therefore an important constituent for building socialism, synonymous for modernization, in Soviet parlance.<sup>5</sup>

This article is based on a close interrogation and comparison of the quantitative data gathered by state ethnographers, as well as statisticians and demographers, during the first Imperial (1897) and Soviet (1926) censuses relating to the Polish population residing on the territory of the present-day right-bank Ukraine, especially the Podolia and Volhynia *gubernii*. In terms of geographical parameters, the Podolia *guberniya* had been created in 1793 through the merging of lands seized by Russia following the second partition of Poland; its administrative center was situated in Kamianets-Podilskyi, but was moved to Vinnytsia in 1914. The Volhynia *guberniya* was established in 1796, encompassing territories acquired after the third partition. These included today's Rivne, Volhynia, and Zhytomyr *oblasti* as well as the northern parts of Ternopil and Khmelnytskyi *oblasti*. Since 1804, the city of Zhytomyr was the seat of the Volhynia Governor-General.

This article also intends to demonstrate how the process of enumerating the number of Poles residing in Russia's western reaches was not a matter of science, but of politics. Overall, seeking to establish the total number of subjects served multiple objectives. An accurate, or reasonably accurate, census could help unify a particular space, turning heterogeneous populations into neatly defined categories. Statistical data also provided the authorities with the means to evaluate, conceptualize, transform, and control this diversity of inhabitants. On the other hand, censuses help shape a sense of identity among those being counted by

making them think and ascertain themselves in terms of these strictly defined and limited categories. Therefore, regardless of claims of objectivity, as David W. Darrow points out, census taking is a political act, inextricably linked to questions of power and identity.<sup>6</sup> Fundamentally, it is the state's interests that gain pre-eminence in the process of gathering, processing, and interpreting statistical data. As the Soviet strategy of positive discrimination came to replace the imperial ethnic bias, the tendency to magnify the number of Poles in the Soviet-Polish borderland outpaced the authorities' propensity to reduce it.

With this in mind, the article seeks to examine a range of questions concerning how the category of "nationality" was conceptualized by imperial and Soviet ethnographers, statisticians, and demographers, and how those externally defined, and rigidly ascribed, ethnic identities were subsequently instrumentalized by the authorities. It also builds on previous examinations of the census' political role highlighted by Benedict Anderson, as well as its application to the imperial Russian and Soviet context, previously explored by Darrow, Juliette Cadiot, and Francine Hirsch.<sup>7</sup> However, instead of scrutinizing "nationality" as a census category, the article aims to investigate how those rigid forms of division corresponded to realities on the ground. The first part mostly accounts for the imperial interests in enumerating Poles in the western provinces and considers, based on existing ethnographic reports and census data, how those state interests impacted upon demographic statistics.

The second part scrutinizes the primary archival sources available for these Polish communities in the west of Soviet Ukraine to understand the motives behind national categorization, as well as how these communities responded to the state's actions. In my analysis, I have decided to limit my focus to the statistical data provided by the 1897 and 1926 censuses only since it allows the best means for evaluating the dynamic of demographical changes and trace the evolution of political interests across the 1917 divide. The present analysis of these processes of constructing Polish "identity" during the late imperial and early Soviet decades also contributes to the recent historiography on the "Polish question," state conceptualizations of national differences, and the role of scientific knowledge in organizing populations. At the same time, the comparative nature of this analysis highlights important continuities between the imperial and early Soviet approaches to ordering different national and ethnic groups, illustrating how the state interest took prevalence over declared modernizing intentions.

### **The Polish Language, the Catholic Faith, and the Noble Estate: Defining "Rebellious" Poles in the Russian Empire**

The Russian Empire was the principal beneficiary of Poland's historic partitions. More than 60% of the former Commonwealth's constituent territories, and nearly half of its 14 million-strong population, were incorporated within the empire's

“recovered territories.” According to the 1886 “Alphabetical list of peoples (*narody*) living in the Russian Empire,” some 6 million Poles were living under the Tsar’s rule, most of whom resided in right-bank Ukraine, their homelands having been seized in the 1793 partition, and the Vistula land (*Kraj Nadwiślański*) encompassing the territories of the former Kingdom of Poland (or Congress Poland) to the immediate west.<sup>8</sup> Throughout the long nineteenth century, two processes concurred in the former Polish lands: the more the authorities wished to centralized the empire’s western provinces, the more their actions continued to provoke grassroots resistance. Already in 1819, Tsar Alexander I had moved to abolish freedom of the press and impose draconian censorship laws in the semi-autonomous Kingdom of Poland. In 1829, Nicholas I, the future “gendarme of Europe,” formally abandoned his oath to abide by the Kingdom’s constitution, introduced by his predecessor, proceeding to instead implement various assimilation policies. These measures precipitated the disastrous November Uprising of 1830–31, resulting in Poland losing its semi-independence and being forced into even closer political integration with the rest of the empire. This was later followed by the January Uprising of 1863–64, the defeat of which only further accelerated the integration of the former Commonwealth’s territories. Regarded as the least loyal of the Romanovs’ subjects, Poles were subjected to constant assimilation that took the form of russification, a continual loss of privileges, and forced conversion to Orthodoxy.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, ethnic distinctions within the Kingdom of Poland became increasingly blurred, making self-determination based on one’s national or ethnic background ever-more difficult.

### **Ethnographic Knowledge**

The first attempt at separating national identities in the Russian Empire was undertaken by ethnographers, who, as demonstrated by Hirsch, played an important role in state-sponsored efforts to promote the empire.<sup>10</sup> State interest defined the activities of the newly created and officially sponsored Russian Imperial Geographical Society (RGO), a learned organization founded in 1845, devoted to the study of the lands, peoples, and resources of the Russian Empire. In the words of Nathaniel Knight, the RGO, stood “at an awkward juncture between the forces of science, empire, and nationality.”<sup>11</sup>

During the late 19th century, one of the most important attempts at mobilizing ethnographic knowledge for political ends was the ethnographic and statistical expedition to the West Russian region (*Zapadno-Russkiy kray*), organized in 1869–70 by the RGO. The expedition was headed by the ethnographer Pavlo Chubynskyi, who had only recently received permission to return from Arkhangelsk in northern Russia, where he had been exiled since 1862 for his “harmful” Ukrainophile activities. The government sponsored this ethnographic study in the hope that it

would provide a scientific basis for these western province's Russian character – despite being the last territorial acquisition of the Romanov Empire after the partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – and thus rebuff the popular view of them as still being “Poland” and its nobility as “Polish.”<sup>12</sup>

While the expedition's stated aim was to chart the ethnic make-up of the region, its underlying motive was to negate Polish demographic dominance in favor of Little Russians (Orthodox people inhabiting territories of modern-day Ukraine who spoke dialects similar to modern-day Ukrainian), and thus enhancing Russian superiority.<sup>13</sup> With this in mind, Chubynskiyi faced a challenge over how he and colleagues were to disentangle complex local identities in a region, where language, culture, and religion were especially mixed.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, the first step in his strategy was in seeking to divorce ethnicity and religion, thus providing a conceptual difference between “Catholics” and “Poles.”<sup>15</sup> Instead, linguistic (defined as a “native,” or *rodnoy*<sup>16</sup>, language) and ethnographic criteria were prioritized. During the expedition, Chubynskiyi and his team contrasted existing demographic data (with the lack of any historical censuses requiring them to turn to parish books) with their own observations of the characteristic elements of everyday life, local customs, and habits among mixed populations in the Kyiv, Volhynia, and Podolia *gubernii*. This survey also encompassed parts of Minsk, Grodno, Lublin, Sedlets provinces, and Bessarabia.<sup>17</sup>

Based on his analysis, Chubynskiyi asserted that an adherence to Roman Catholicism did not determine Polish ethnicity. According to the church registers, 389,100 individuals in the region were recorded as Catholics. The question, however, was how many of these Catholics could actually be categorized as ethnic Poles. Within the study itself, “Poles” were defined not only as a national group (*narodnost'*), but a religious denomination (*veroispovedaniye*) and social estate (*sosloviye*): bourgeoisie and nobility.<sup>18</sup> Thus the “true” number of Poles in the southwestern Ukrainian provinces could only be calculated by cross-referencing these three components. For Chubynskiyi, only Catholic *dvoryane* (nobles or *szlachta*, in Polish), who had preserved their language and *byt* (national “being” or “essence”), could automatically be regarded as Poles. The wider Catholic population, he claimed, were indistinguishable in everyday customs and habits from their Orthodox (“Little Russian”) fellows. This was especially true among poorer segments of the population, most notably the peasantry. This observation of *byt*, customs, and religious rites subsequently allowed Chubynskiyi to estimate the exact number of Poles in the region: out of 389,100 Roman Catholics, only 91,996 met his criteria of being Poles (for his specific calculations, see Table 1).

These interventions resulted in a significant increase in the number of Little Russians (termed *malorosy* in the study). Chubynskiyi's conclusions were both necessary and desirable for the authorities — among the total Catholic population of the West Russian region, Poles constituted a minority of only 25%; with the

remaining 75% of the Catholic population officially regarded as Little Russians.<sup>19</sup>

### **Interpreting the 1897 Census**

These hybrid identities and intertwined notions of ethnic and cultural belonging presented a major challenge to the imperial demographers, especially in view of the first census, which had been organized by the Ministry of Interior with both scientific and administrative concerns.<sup>20</sup> Guided by the belief that imperial subjects had little awareness of their national identity, the officials tasked with putting together the 1897 census questionnaire decided not to include a direct question on nationality. Instead, the ethnic make-up of the empire was defined by a combination of questions relating to native language (*rodnoy yazyk*), religion (*veroispovedaniye*), and social estate (*sosloviye*). Alongside these, respondents were also asked to respond to questions about civic status and occupation, literacy, and mental and physical impairments.

Nevertheless, as a close examination of the data gathered by experts studying the Polish population in the southwestern provinces illustrates, the context of a centralized and authoritarian empire made any objective criteria for nationality, such as language or national belonging, impracticable. In the absence of a clearly defined category for nationality, any data obtained was open to easy manipulation, error, and abuse; those recording the results, aware of the various political necessities underpinning their work, were ultimately granted exclusive power over defining who belonged to which nationality.<sup>21</sup>

From the outset, it was recognized that language remained the most useful criterion for obtaining data on nationality. However, translating any data on language into evidence of an inherent sense of national identity was far from straightforward, with the category of “native language” (*rodnoy yazyk*) itself allowing substantial room for interpretation. Indeed, the instructions issued to registrars even stipulated that each respondent could freely define their native language, thus permitting them to indicate either their mother tongue, or the language they used most often in their day-to-day life, but not both. Therefore, Cadiot maintains, the census recorded a sense of “belonging to a particular language, hence culture,” and not the kinship, as projected by the organizers.<sup>22</sup>

According to the 1897 census, 7,931,307 people throughout the empire chose Polish as their “native language”. At the same time, the total population of the former Kingdom of Poland alone accounted for 9,442,590.<sup>23</sup> The disproportionate number of self-reported Polish speakers could only partly be attributed to the design of the census categories. It must be noted, however, that in this Polish-Ukrainian borderland, local vernaculars often blend, and the language people spoke, although distinct, had become very similar. This was an expected outcome of systematic administrative and linguistic russification (*obruseniye*) in the empire that had been operating under the three-pronged ideology of so-called “Official

Nationality,” comprising “Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality” (*pravoslaviye, samoderzhaviye, narodnost*).<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the Polish language survived since, as Theodor Weeks argues, the Russian administration in the region was unconcerned about the languages people spoke at home, as long as these non-Russian elements did not resist the hegemony of Russian culture.<sup>25</sup>

Given the state’s widespread implementation of assimilationist policies, the responses on language needed to be cross-referenced with those on religion, deemed a more durable ethnic marker. Moreover, within the Russian Empire there was even an officially acknowledged delineation between confessional registration and nationality. For instance, the 1903 instruction to the Governor of Vilna suggested the following equivalents used to reconstitute national composition: Orthodox were Russians, Catholics were Poles or Lithuanians, Protestants were Germans, and *Iudeii* were Jews.<sup>26</sup> These equivalents held since the official registration of religion, up until the twentieth century, was regarded as hereditary. Changing confessions, although bolstered by an edict on freedom of consciousness (*svoboda sovesti*) issued by Tsar Nicholas II’s government as an emergency response to the 1905 Russian Revolution, remained a strictly regulated, and generally discouraged process. Still, Orthodoxy continued to enjoy the advantageous position as the recognized state religion, meaning that those seeking governmental jobs or promotion opportunities were compelled to convert. As far as statistics was concerned, “moving from one religion or faith to another is most often followed by the loss of nationality.”<sup>27</sup> Consequently, rising numbers of Orthodox converts were likewise increasing the number of Russians recorded in the official statistical registers.

According to the census results, Roman Catholics numbered 11,467,994 people, constituting 9.13% of the empire’s total population. Based on the above-cited equation, apart from Poles, Lithuanians also belonged to the Catholic rite. However, even the combined number of Polish and Lithuanian (termed *Aukštaitian* in the census) speakers still only totaled 9,141,817 individuals, leaving more than two million Roman Catholics as uncategorized. Large number of these “left-outs” were those Catholics who spoke local Ukrainian and Belarusian dialects, and who had converted to Catholicism at some point during the centuries-long Polish rule. In the case of Podolia and Volhynia *gubernii* alone, as accounted for by Chubynskyi, that number stood at around 300,000.

There was yet another religious community that complicated the interpretation of the data on religion gathered in 1897: the Uniates. The Uniate Church, or Greek Catholic Church, had been established under the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth through the 1596 Union of Brest; it retained the Orthodox rite but accepted the authority of the Catholic Pope. Following the Commonwealth’s partition, more than three million Belarusian and Ukrainian Uniate believers were incorporated into the Russian Empire. The imperial government had treated the Uniate Church



with utmost hostility, forcing its “return” to the Orthodox faith and subsequent “reunion” with the Russian Orthodox Church. The “Act of Reunion” was signed in 1839, formally severing all historical contacts between the Uniates and the Holy See in Rome. This Act was further extended to the Kingdom of Poland after the 1863 uprising, in which the majority of Uniates had supported the Catholics and Polish *szlachta* against the Russians. In 1875, the Union of Brest was annulled, prompting a wave of mass conversions to Eastern Orthodoxy.<sup>28</sup>

Uniates did not feature in the 1864 *Atlas of the Population of the West-Russian Region According to Their Faith*, compiled by the Imperial Russian general, cartographer, ethnographer, journalist, and RGO member, Aleksandr Rittikh.<sup>29</sup> However, the denomination was referenced as one of the confessional affiliations of Belarusians in the 1886 *Alphabetical List of Peoples*. Of particular note was the manner in which the list labelled Belarusians (*belarusy*) as “a variety (*raznovidnost'*) of the Russians,” which could be Orthodox, Catholic or Uniate, whereas Little Russians (*malorosy*) were seen as one of “the main tribal modifications of the Russian people (*plemennoye vidoizmeneniye russkogo naroda*),” hence Orthodox only. Unsurprisingly, the 1897 census did not include Uniates, with those believers often registered as either Catholics or Orthodox, regardless of whether they were Ukrainian or Belarusian speakers.

The absence of a statistical category did not amount to the Uniate faith being erased, however. Weeks cites the case of Sedlets province, where the acting governor complained in 1876 that out of 136,215 “Russians”, some 20,000 considered themselves Catholics. These “confused souls” were former Uniates, who preferred to attend Catholic mass, as well as have their children baptized by Catholic priests.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, in view of the imperial government’s assimilationist policies, as tallied by Bohdan Bociurkiw, “some 200,000 ‘reunited’ believers in the Kholm-Podlachia region opted for Roman Catholicism and, inevitably, Polonization.”<sup>31</sup>

In their search to establish what constituted an individual’s “true” nationality, the statisticians and demographers who compiled the census also introduced the notion of estate (*sosloviye*), or social status, into the equation.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, in the centuries leading up to the survey, social status had often been directly defined by one’s nationality. Such overgeneralizations had even resulted in numerous pogroms in the region. Socio-economic tensions had long been at heart of ethnic violence, which had seen poorer Ukrainians rising up against their Polish landlords and Jewish *arrendars* (leaseholders), such as during the Cossack raids on Jewish settlements in the seventeenth century, or the bloody uprising of summer 1768, known as *Koliivshchyna*.<sup>33</sup> Poles, as seen from Chubynskyi’s ethnographic study, were mostly associated with the upper classes, primarily the *szlachta*, since those of lower social standing were more likely to assimilate. However, the ingrained rigidity of the imperial Russian social system had been somewhat shaken by the Great Reforms of the 1860s - notably the formal abolition of serfdom in 1861 -

which had permitted a greater degree of social mobility, thus leading to a gradual transformation of the traditional *sosloviya* into modern classes. Such a move would eventually make any correlation between one's social status and ethnic belonging obsolete. Nevertheless, even at the beginning of the twentieth century, Gregory L. Freeze claims that most of Imperial Russian society continued to emphasize the estate as their primary reference group, while many others referred to their ethnic background, occupation, or property ownership as basis for their social identity.<sup>34</sup>

### **Poles in Volhynia and Podolia *Gubernii***

Looking at the census data at the level of particular *guberniya* allows for a more nuanced understanding of the complexities faced by statisticians when using individuals' census questionnaires to establish their "nationality," as well as frequent manipulations by officials on the ground, especially in relation to Polish communities in the empire's western provinces.<sup>35</sup> In Volhynia *guberniya*, the census recorded 184,161 individuals, or 6.16% of the total population, who answered "Polish" to the question of their native language. The data also reported that the number of Roman Catholics stood at 298,110, or 9.9%. In Podolia *guberniya*, there were 69,156, or 2.3%, Polish speakers against 262,738, or 8.7%, Roman Catholics.

A closer look at the data on religious affiliation also reveals some other interesting features (for Volhynia, see Table 3, and for Podolia Table 4). In Podolia, against the expectations of the demographers, many Ukrainian speakers identified as Roman Catholics, 191,127 or 7.8% of the total populace. The share of Ukrainian-speaking Catholics was also significant in Volhynia (105,749 or 5.1% of the population) and Kyiv *guberniya* (33,600 or 1.2%). The census also revealed that the greatest share of Ukrainian Roman Catholics resided in Proskuriv (20.7%), Letychiv (13.2%), Ushytsia (12.8%), Novohrad-Volynskyyi (10.3%) and Zhytomyr (10.4%) districts. Conversely, Polish speakers were found among Orthodox Christians, (1,451 recorded in Volhynia and 625 in Podolia), Protestants and *Iudei*.

Similarly, the statistical data for these two provinces disproved the stated link between the language (read: "nationality") and the social status of the respondents, with the biggest share of Polish-speakers registered from among both urban and rural dwellers (see Table 4). At this stage, one could refer to Chubynskyyi's ethnographic methodology to estimate how many of these Roman Catholics (and Polish speakers) viewed themselves as possessing a distinct form of national identity (demonstrated through their *byt* and customs) (see Table 5). By applying this approach, the nobility (those "Poles by definition," as specified by Chubynskyyi) were always minority, albeit a significant one, representing 11% in Volhynia and 23.5% in Podolia. Instead, urban commoners (*meshchane*), single homesteaders (*odnodvortsy*), and rural dwellers (*krestyane*) did not possess, or rather, had not expressed, a distinct national identity. Hence, out of the total number of the Polish

speakers across all *sosloviya* in Volhynia *guberniya* (184,161), only 33,907 (nobility and foreign subjects), or 18.4% could be regarded as “conscious” Poles.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the deliberate efforts of imperial statisticians and demographers, the results of the 1897 census quickly proved to be inapplicable. The modernization and urbanization of the Russian Empire had increased individual social mobility, thus breaking the restrictive social chains of the estate system. In a similar vein, religious categorization became obsolete in view of the “Edict on Religious Tolerance” (*Ob Ukreplenii Nachal Veroterpimosti*) signed by Nicholas II on 17 April 1905. This removed restrictions on practicing religions other than Orthodoxy, ostensibly granting freedom of consciousness to all imperial subjects.<sup>37</sup> Most importantly, the politicization of everyday life split the local elites along national lines. As seen during the revolutionary period of 1905–07, the empire’s long-simmering national question could no longer be ignored.

Amidst these events, Imperial Russia’s Poles started to organize themselves. Major Polish political parties, such as People’s Democracy (*Narodowa Demokracja*, ND), the Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*, PPS), and the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (*Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy*, SDKPiL), were soon established with some of them incorporating demands for Poland’s independence into their propaganda. Social upheavals and strikes in Łódź and Warsaw involved hundreds of thousands of workers, peasants, and students, who, besides social and economic concerns, posed political demands – namely, the end to russification and the restoration of Poland’s sovereignty.<sup>38</sup> Besides, former members of the “Russian language group,” others, especially Ukrainians, also started to demand recognition as representatives of a separate national group.

Nevertheless, prior to the outbreak of the First World War, the urgency of the “national” categorization remained a mostly academic concern.<sup>39</sup> In 1914, the “language of nationality” was instead adopted by internationalists, socialist, and nationalists alike. The February Revolution of 1917 further advanced demands for self-determination for the various *natsional’nost’* (or, depending on the author and context, *narodnost’* or *natsiia*).<sup>40</sup> However, it was the Bolsheviks who supported, as well as often constructed, national identities, institutionalized national differences within the former Russian Empire, and made use of these national categories as a formative principle in the founding of the new Soviet state.

### **‘Would a man become a horse if he was born in a stable?’: searching for Poles in Soviet Ukraine**

In contrast to 1897, the category of *narodnost’* was to become the key determinant of the first Soviet census of 1926. Indeed, after the respondent’s personal details, this specific detail served as the survey’s very first question.<sup>41</sup> As explained, *narodnost’* meant “tribal origin, that is the belonging of a person to a

particular ethnic group.”<sup>42</sup> It is important to highlight however, that, unlike in 1897, when demographers interpreted the respondents’ national identity based on how they had answered questions relating to language, religion, and social status, the 1926 census was based on subjective self-determination of nationality, with no category of religion included in the questionnaire.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the census-taker was only permitted to intervene when the respondent had problems understanding a question – replacing *narodnost’* with native language, religion, *grazhdanstvo* (citizenship in the pre-revolutionary sense), or residence in a particular locality.<sup>44</sup> Among other questions recorded by registrars were native language, referred to as *rodnoy yazyk* – which could be different to *narodnost’*; place of birth and residence; and literacy, including the respondents specific linguistic repertoire. Respondents were invited to provide details regarding, among other things, their mental and physical health, occupation and profession, source of income, and family status and composition.

It is worth mentioning that prior to 1926 general census, there were two other population surveys that had already featured a separate question on *natsional’nost’*, tautologically defined as “a population group united into a nationally self-conscious community.”<sup>45</sup> The first of these demographic assessments had taken the form of a professional and agricultural census held in 1920. However, this had only been conducted on the territory controlled by the Bolsheviks during the Russian Civil War that, at the time, excluded Belarus, Transcaucasia, Crimea, Dagestan, the Kirgiz and Yakut Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics, the former empire’s entire Far Eastern Territory, as well as a great part of Ukraine and some of Russia’s enclaves controlled by other military forces. Furthermore, the survey mainly focused on households, with the head of each household permitted to answer questions on behalf of all the members.<sup>46</sup> The second of these surveys was an all-Union urban census conducted in 1923. However, it was the 1926 general population census that provided the main basis for studying the national make-up of the Soviet Union. For the purposes of this study, the discussion will be limited to the statistics regarding the Polish population of Soviet Ukraine, with particular attention placed on its western border zones.<sup>47</sup>

In the period between the two censuses under investigation, the number of Poles fell sharply from 7,931,300 Poles (based on language) in 1897 to only 781,700 (based on a self-defined *narodnost’*) in 1926 (for comparison, see Tables 6 and 7). The main reason for such a drastic decrease was the loss of Imperial Russia’s former western territories, as a result of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference treaties as well as the 1921 Treaty of Riga, which ended the Polish-Soviet War. Following these international territorial settlements, as Soviet statisticians claimed, 7,399,400 individuals of Polish origin remained on the territories ceded to other countries.<sup>48</sup> If limited to those individuals who had remained within the Soviet borders, the number of self-declared Poles had increased by 68%, however,

from 531,900 to 781,700. Furthermore, of the total Polish population, only 46%, or 362,400, cited Polish as their mother tongue.<sup>49</sup>

Among its territories, Ukraine was home to almost half of the Soviet Union's Polish population – 476,435 Poles to be precise, constituting 1.64% of the total population. The majority of this group remained concentrated in the western provinces (*okruh*) of Soviet Ukraine's newly reorganized Volhynia, Podolia and Kyiv *gubernii*, which were subsequently split into smaller administrative units after 1925. Across the region, similar variance between *narodnost'* and native language were observed: mirroring the situation Union-wide, the number of self-declared Poles was far higher than those who actually spoke the Polish language. Moreover, in every *okruh*, many more native speakers resided in urban areas than in the countryside where assimilation was a more frequent phenomenon (see Table 8).

The main objective of this section is to understand how the number of “ethnic” Poles could rise by 68% in only thirty years, given the fact that so many Poles remained on the territory ceded to Poland or had seized the opportunity to emigrate from the Soviet territories before it became a practical impossibility.<sup>50</sup> The results of the census were attributed to the success of the Soviet nationalities and minorities policies that allowed non-Russian populations, for the first time, to freely define their ethnic origin without it being tied to the language of everyday use. Could one therefore suggest that this rise was linked to the extreme development of Polish national consciousness across much of the region's population, aptly defined by Kate Brown as “no place” – a borderland zone inhabited by a rural, poor, largely illiterate population and hardly any potential for either agriculture or industry”?<sup>51</sup> Or was it the outcome of a conscious and meticulous effort by Soviet bureaucrats and minorities specialists, tasked with organizing the country along national lines, who had assisted this once “nationally indifferent” population in acquiring a tangible sense of ethnic identity?<sup>52</sup>

### **Motives behind the Promotion of Ethnic Identification**

In reaching out to minorities, Soviet leaders were pursuing several objectives. The most pressing concern was the need to consolidate Bolshevik rule in the former empire's non-Russian, or more ethnically diverse provinces. The traumatic experience of the civil war along the imperial frontiers had brought the question of necessary cooperation with local populations to the political fore. Instead of alienating, or even annihilating non-Russian elites, the Soviet leadership actively sought to gain their trust and turn them into eager contributors to the project of building socialism. In terms of “small western minorities,” such as Germans or Poles, there was also an urgent need to convince a shift in loyalties, given the enthusiastic support such groups had offered to their kin states during the German Empire's occupation of Ukraine in 1918, and the brief Polish military occupation in 1920.

In order to convert said minorities' to the cause of Soviet state-building, however, the party needed to overcome a century-long legacy of distrust in centralized (read, Russian) institutions. As highlighted by Joseph Stalin himself, in order to make Soviet power "near and dear to the masses of the border regions of Russia," it was necessary to integrate "all the best local people" into the Soviet administration, since "the masses should see that Soviet power and its organs are the products of their own efforts, the embodiment of their aspirations."<sup>53</sup> The use of native languages was posited as a means of easing the process of political socialization. Their sovietization was, in Brown's words, "the art of persuasion via enlightenment."<sup>54</sup> Therefore, native-language clubs, schools, drama circles, party cells, youth and women's groups were quickly established. Alongside this other educational institutions, literacy circles, libraries, and periodicals were also founded with the stated aim of teaching more heavily assimilated populations their historical native languages.

Such initiatives were implemented as a part of the Soviet nationalities policy of *korenizatsiya*, which was launched Union-wide in April 1923. Scholars vary in their assessment of the Soviet leadership's intentions behind the introduction of the *korenizatsiya* policy. Some have defined these early measures as "ethnophilia"<sup>55</sup> or a form of "affirmative action" intended to promote "national minorities" at the expense of "national majorities".<sup>56</sup> Others view the policy as indicative of a well-elaborated strategy for standardizing ethnic diversity and, eventually, unifying the population. Hirsch, for example, calls this Soviet approach of seeking to transform populations "state sponsored evolutionism."<sup>57</sup> This strategy rested on the assumption that the state could intervene in the natural process of national development by creating favorable conditions for a quick acquisition of the necessary attributes of a nation, or even inventing nationalities in certain cases. The long-term goal was to achieve the amalgamation of diverse ethnic groups into a unified Soviet people or, as Hirsch opines, "to usher the entire population through the Marxist timeline of historical development to transform feudal-era clans and tribes into nationalities, and nationalities into socialist-era nations – which, at some point in the future, would merge together under communism".<sup>58</sup>

Preferential treatment of minorities had broader implications too. The central party leadership did not stop treating "western national minorities," such as Poles or Germans, with suspicion, especially given the widespread fear of a Polish invasion in the late 1920s.<sup>59</sup> These minorities continued to be closely monitored by the Soviet secret services, which reported regularly on the influence the Warsaw continued to exercise mainly through its diplomatic services and religious leaders onto co-nationals in the Soviet Union.<sup>60</sup> To prevent minorities from siding with their "home" states, the idea behind these state efforts was to reduce national discontent, and thereby the potential influence of hostile foreign governments in case of a future war. Particular emphasis was placed on poor and middle-income

peasants – who constituted the majority of the Polish minority population – who had potentially the most to gain from the Soviet modernization effort.

While fear of foreign invasion remained the dominant security concern of the day, the ostensibly generous treatment of minorities within the Soviet Union's borders could also help improve the country's image abroad, precipitating the spread of communism beyond its western borders. Indeed, every opportunity was used to contrast the Soviet Union's preferential treatment of its minorities to the assimilatory policies of the Second Polish Republic. At the fifth anniversary of the Polish Marchlevisk region, Jan Saulevich, the vice director of the Ukrainian Commission of national Minority Affairs, explained that the Polish Autonomous Region served as an example for those workers and peasants just across the western border that a proletarian society based on Polish culture was indeed possible. As he elucidated further:

*Situated in the Polish-Ukrainian borderland, the Polish district is a living example of how different the policies in capitalist Poland are; it serves as a constant reminder of the political persecutions of the Ukrainians and Belarusians in Poland; the establishment of the district became one of the main factors to draw and engage the masses of Polish peasants into the building of socialism, gain their devotion to the common cause of the Motherland of all the workers – the Soviet Union.<sup>61</sup>*

### **The Ethnic Dimension of the Administrative Reform**

Measuring the population and estimating their ethnic backgrounds was not only a statistical exercise. In the early 1920s, ethnicity became the basis for administrative and economic reform in the Soviet Union. Ronald G. Suny and Terry Martin define the 1920s as “the great era of the territorialization of ethnicity,” whereby each nationality, no matter how small, was granted the possibility for self-rule in its native language, which extended downward into smaller and smaller territories, the smallest being the size of a, typical, single village.<sup>62</sup> In Soviet Ukraine, this administrative reform was launched by the *Radnarkom's* (Council of People's Commissars) decree from 29 August 1924: “On the formation of national districts and soviets.” Its declared objectives were to draw Soviet power closer to the local population and strengthen the lower-level Soviet state apparatus.<sup>63</sup> The secretary for the all-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (VUTsVK), Panas Butsenko claimed that the formation of separate administrative territorial units in the areas where minority nationals dominated, also served a dual-purpose of engaging the broader masses' participation in Soviet state-building, while also reducing the level of ethnic conflict.<sup>64</sup>

In order to facilitate this, an intricate system of village soviets (*silski rady*, or *silrady*) was gradually established throughout Soviet Ukraine. By 1929, 1089 national village soviets and 107 town soviets were in place, including some which had been formed on behalf of more demographically negligible minority groups

such as Swedes and Albanians. In addition, twenty-six national districts (*raion*) were set up, out of which nine were Russian, seven German, four Bulgarian, three Greek, one Polish, and two Jewish. Within those national-territorial units, the Soviet state strove to provide access to state institutions, political representation, police and judicial protection, health care, education, and cultural opportunities in minority language. Moreover, for those of minority origin residing beyond their respective national-territorial units, the state pledged to provide non-territorial autonomy with similar access to services in their own languages and guarantee of national rights.<sup>65</sup>

In theory, establishing a national soviet could represent a grassroots initiative. In villages with mixed populations, general meetings were organized to discuss the possible formation of independent national soviets. Local Poles, however, often objected to any plans that entailed ethnic segregation. The protocol of the Polish population's meeting in the village of Horodniavka (Sudenkivsky *raion*)<sup>66</sup> from 25 June 1925, for instance, stated that the "local Catholic population (*sic*)" had nothing against co-existing with the Ukrainians in the local Ukrainian village soviet. Instead "if the authorities decide to establish a Polish national soviet in the village, we will not part, and if they decide to join [the Polish population of] another village – we will categorically reject it."<sup>67</sup> A similar decision was issued on 29 June 1925 by the Polish population from the village of Velyka Novoselytyia (Polonne *raion*). According to this protocol, the delegates wished to express their gratitude to the Soviet authorities for their views on the minorities question. Nevertheless:

*as for the creation of a [separate] Polish national soviet we, the citizens (hromadians) of Velyka Novoselytsia are one family with the Ukrainians, with whom we have merged (zzhylysia) over the centuries and we have no difference with them either in the way we lead our households, or in our views. On the contrary, in unity, as one family and in mutual understanding it would be easier to solve different land and everyday disputes. So, we have decided that in no way will we agree to form a separate Polish soviet and we will remain in the same soviet with the Ukrainians.*<sup>68</sup>

Even in 1929, local mixed communities were still protesting the possibility of dividing their villages along ethnic lines. During the elections to the various local national soviets (elections were based on ascribed ethnicity) some peasants in the village of Mukhovata (Koziatyn *raion*) lamented that "it has never happened before that Poles and Ukrainians were split apart."<sup>69</sup> Ukrainians likewise opposed the formation of national soviets, although their considerations were more practical. As highlighted by Martin, the new administrative system often exacerbated fears among former "majorities" of the prospect of losing control over their land and possible popular ethnic expulsions.<sup>70</sup>

Despite such local concerns, the final decision regarding the creation of national soviets rested with the party.<sup>71</sup> In 1924–25, the VUTsVK Central Committee for



National Minorities organized an inspection of the ethnically mixed Volhynia *guberniya* to determine the ethnic composition of each potential soviet. Overall, some 150 villages were examined, with detailed reports on the region's economic, social, and cultural situation being sent back to the then Soviet Ukrainian capital in Kharkiv.<sup>72</sup> The language of these reports suggests that judgments on whether to establish a Polish national soviet were often arbitrary.

For example, the inspector of the Pulyny *rayon* in Zhytomyr *okruh*, a certain Shopynsky reported that in the village of Novozavodske only 20% of the population spoke Polish, however most could understand and switch between languages if necessary. In the neighboring village of Koshelivka, however, the majority of locals used Ukrainian and only a few could understand Polish. Moreover, in Sosnova Boliarka, another village affiliated to the Koshelivka soviet, 30% used Polish on a day-to-day basis. Shopynsky's recommendations were to therefore make (*sdelat'*) Novozavodske soviet a Polish one; Koshelivka – a Ukrainian soviet with a Polish school; and to remove Sosnova Boliarka from the jurisdiction of Koshelivka village and make it an independent Polish national soviet.<sup>73</sup>

As of April 1926, there were 129 Polish national soviets with a total population of 148,502 individuals. In 1925, the first national *rayon* for Poles was formed in Volhynia province (*okruh*) some 120 km east from the Polish border. The district was created from those village soviets with the majority of Polish population that had been separated out of the Novohrad-Volynskiyi, Baraniyka, Pulyny, Chudniv and Myropil *rayony*.<sup>74</sup> The Polish national district occupied an area of approximately 650 km<sup>2</sup>, with 7,667 households comprising 40,577 inhabitants. Out of these, 69.83% were recorded as Poles, 20.4% Ukrainians, 7.05% Germans, and 3.25% Jews.<sup>75</sup> The center of the Polish region was located in Dovbysh, soon renamed to Marchlevsk, in honor of the late Polish Bolshevik leader Julian Marchlevskii.

The Soviet Polish region was established in an economically and socially backward area; it was far from the railway with no telephone or telegraph lines connecting it to the more developed parts of Ukraine.<sup>76</sup> The only industry was a ceramic factory that had opened in 1840, closed for the duration of the Great War and Civil War, and recommenced production in 1922. By 1925, the area remained predominantly agrarian (92% of the total population were listed as peasants); literacy was low, being recorded as 47% for men and 37 % for women; and only 4% of households had been collectivized, the lowest out of all the national units. Nevertheless, local Poles had been granted territorial and cultural autonomy while religious practices for Roman Catholics were permitted, albeit under strict party supervision.<sup>77</sup> The Polish district also boasted its own newspaper – *Marchlewszczyzna Radziecka* (*Soviet Marchlevsk region*), while also having preferential access to state funding to allow for accelerated modernization of the region and its population.<sup>78</sup>

## Poles or Catholic Ukrainians: Defining Categories

In April 1926, the VUTsVK Central Committee for Nationalities reported that only 35% of the total Polish population in the Ukrainian republic belonged to national soviets.<sup>79</sup> It is puzzling, therefore, that despite being one of the biggest national groups and being concentrated in a relatively compact area near the western border, Poles still remained underrepresented within the system of national soviets. Moreover, while there were five German rayony (for a total minority population of 393,924), three Bulgarian (population 92,078) and one Jewish (population 1,574,391), some of which were created as early as in 1924, only one Polish autonomous district existed for the population of 476,435.<sup>80</sup>

This was one among several factors behind the low engagement of the Polish minority into the Soviet experiment. As reported in April 1926, the VUTsVK Minority Committee still had no representative for the Polish section.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, the official reports attributed the delay in the formation of the Polish national units to the lack of data on the exact number of Poles in the region, pointing out that such information could only be acquired in the course of extensive field observations.<sup>82</sup> Regardless, the inspection reports referred to the fear among locals towards ascertaining their exact nationality, a prevalence of bilingualism, and strong local or religious, rather than ethnic, identities.<sup>83</sup>

Language, long-seen as the key determinant of national identity, could hardly help disentangle the various hybrid identities on the ground. As mentioned above, less than half of the registered Poles declared Polish as their mother tongue. Even their language differed significantly from the standard Polish spoken across the border. One of the inspectors, for example, mentioned that the Polish vernacular (*narechiye*) used in Soviet Volhynia was very similar to that of spoken Ukrainian.<sup>84</sup> This linguistic assimilation was partially a tsarist legacy: since there were no official Polish schools until 1917, spoken language was mostly learned through regular church attendance. Very few people could read Polish literature. In addition, some Catholics, who were themselves the descendants of Orthodox converts from the early modern period, had never fully assimilated into Polish elite culture or adopted the language.<sup>85</sup> To reflect these local nuances, Brown asserts, Polish-language newspapers were published in Polish mixed with Ukrainian and Russian words, as well as Bolshevik political jargon.<sup>86</sup>

Additionally, there appeared to be no observable differences in the way Poles and Ukrainians managed their households.<sup>87</sup> As one report detailed, Poles and Ukrainians could only be differentiated in the way they greeted each other and their religious practices.<sup>88</sup> Unlike Poles, other minority groups were much easier to distinguish – Jews were defined by religion, and the common experience of movement restrictions; Greeks and Bulgarians by compact settlements in the south of the republic, and their own distinctive languages; and Germans, although organized around different religious groups and vernaculars, had enjoyed a special

autonomous status until the 1880s which made them more “recognizable” in cultural and social terms.<sup>89</sup> Meanwhile, Poles remained ambiguous, culturally and linguistically.

The imperial legacy of assimilation posed a great challenge to the Bolshevik’s far-reaching socio-economic objectives. In the village of Bobrytska Baliarka 87% of the total population of 795 were recorded as Poles, although only one-fourth of recipients used Polish in everyday communication.<sup>90</sup> Conversely, in Burtyn Polish national soviet (Polonne *rayon*) there were no Polish speakers whatsoever.<sup>91</sup> When asked elsewhere why people would use Ukrainian instead, some had responded that it was a habit and that they did not know that “such freedom for the Polish language existed.”<sup>92</sup> This was similarly applicable in the distinction between religion and nationality, with all Catholics routinely being regarded as “Poles.” For example, in the village of Gorodyshche (Shepetivka *okruh*) only 5% of population could distinguish their ostensive *natsional’nost’* from their religious affiliation. In other instances, however, Roman Catholics answered “Ukrainian” to the question of their *natsional’nost’*, explaining that “Poles lived in Poland,” and that they were Catholic Ukrainians.<sup>93</sup> On the other hand, however, one villager ironically challenged the party inspector’s intention to record all Ukrainian-speaking Catholics as Ukrainians by asking him whether “a man born in a stable should be called a horse.”

This terminological confusion was caused by the lack of clear centrally defined directives and definitions over whom should be defined as a Pole. In their absence, local bureaucrats simply applied their own personalized criteria:

*Yarmolyntsi RIK [rayon executive committee] counts as Poles only those born in Poland; Bakhmativtsi RIK – all those not speaking Ukrainian; Felshtyn RIK in addition to the language takes into account the level of Polish self-consciousness (samozoznaniye) in the Catholic villages (the village of Oleshkivtsi is purely Polish; Felshtynska Yurydyka – also Polish but more Ukrainianized; Kudryntsi – half-Poles, since they speak Ukrainian at home but demand a Polish-language school; and Klymkivtsi – Ukrainian Catholics, they speak solely Ukrainian at home and do not demand a Polish school).<sup>94</sup>*

Moreover, few of those assumed to be Poles defined themselves as such. In the village of Oleshkivtsi (Felshtyn *rayon*), “Poles” referred to themselves as “*mazury*,” the descendants of *chłopy* (peasants) from Masuria (*Mazury*) region in Poland, calling their vernacular “*chłopski*” in contrast to the Polish language of the *szlachta*.<sup>95</sup> Others simply insisted that they spoke “Catholic” (*katolytska*).<sup>96</sup> By contrast, Poles in the village of Novoselytsi (Polonne *rayon*) called themselves “*mazuny*” in reference to having previously lived under a landowner named Mazun,<sup>97</sup> while others considered themselves simply as “locals” (*tutaishi*).<sup>98</sup>

As in 1897, the biggest challenge was posed by those “in the middle”: the Ukrainian Catholics.<sup>99</sup> Their national identity mattered since, depending on classification,

such people were to be subjected either to Soviet Ukrainization policies (as a titular Ukrainian nation) or to the minorities policies (as Poles). For the Ukrainian lobby, Ukrainian Catholics were “Ukrainians polonized by the Catholic Church”<sup>100</sup>, whereas for the Polish lobby these were, in fact, Poles assimilated under the tsarist autocracy.<sup>101</sup> Unfortunately, within Soviet statistical criteria those of ambiguous identity could not be simultaneously placed in two categories.

When advocating for the Ukrainian interest in 1924, Butsenko explained that Ukrainian Catholics should be barred from joining Polish national village soviets. Language that was used in the private sphere (*v bytu*) should serve as this policy’s basis.<sup>102</sup> Following this approach, in Proskuriv *okruh*, the number of Poles among the Roman Catholics was largely underestimated; in Kamianets *okruh* the official position was that there were no Poles whatsoever, leading local bureaucrats to completely discard any minority programs. This, in turn, prompted an intervention from state minority specialists, who condemned this approach of seeking to diminish the number of minority populations employed by certain local executive committees as “wrong and dangerous.”<sup>103</sup>

Apart from these single, anecdotal cases, minority specialists had an upper hand in this “identity battle.” It is safe to suggest that the increase in the number of Poles in Ukraine (as recorded by the 1926 census) was largely due to the re-categorization of Ukrainian Catholics as Poles. In terms of one particular village, Stara Syniava, this change engendered a radical shift from a mere twenty Poles and 2,006 Ukrainian Catholics in 1924, to 2,325 Poles and no Ukrainians in 1925!<sup>104</sup> As explained, prior to the 1920s, local people had often been wary of declaring some form of identity, but “now the Polish population is flourishing thanks to our nationality politics, and the number [in 1920] is 309,800 Poles, 22% of whom are definitely Poles” (referring to those who spoke the Polish language).<sup>105</sup> Thereafter, minority specialists worked tirelessly to promote Polish and teach their native language to those categorized as Poles. As mentioned before, Polish-language schools, reading huts, and literacy rooms quickly appeared across the region. This was coupled with crash language courses for governmental employees, pedagogical institutes were created to train teachers and educators, while publication in Polish was prioritized.

It was mainly due to the need of imperial and Soviet statisticians and bureaucrats that these people, who had lived side-by-side for generations, needed to define themselves in terms of ethnicity. In the Russian Empire, ethnographic knowledge mostly served academic and ideological purposes, helping the imperial authorities (re)claim the western borderlands as Russian lands. In contrast to these imperial practices, the Soviet leaders relied on ethnic categories to draw administrative and internal borders, believing that such frontiers would be more durable than those drawn according to physical factors and economic considerations. Thereafter, the entire success of the socialist project relied heavily on the authorities’ ability to

neatly classify population along class and ethnic lines.

With the introduction of Soviet passports in December 1932, the category of *natsional'nost'* became one of the essential pieces of included on Soviet personal identification documents.<sup>106</sup> According to Martin, the modern Soviet strategy of ethnic stratification and ethnic labelling turned the impersonal category of nationality into a “valuable form of social capital,” by ascribing a status as a modern equivalent to the traditional estate (*sosloviye*) divisions.<sup>107</sup> However, as this paper has demonstrated, the minimum criteria for Polishness were far from clear and thus easy to manipulate in accordance with the political demands of the time. As Brown notes, “to be Polish in a Soviet and proletarian setting was a yet unwritten text, while to be Polish in the old way – religious, aristocratic, bourgeois – had become a crime.”<sup>108</sup>

This article traced the evolution of the official approach to measuring, ordering and classifying Russia’s populations, with particular interest paid to its Polish minority. As has been shown, regardless of the declared objectives and propaganda coloring, state interests always prevailed. In the late imperial context, nationality (although defined through a language-confession-social status triad) was used to indicate the alignment of a certain community’s standing within the state ideology. Although defined from above, these designations could easily transform the entire region from a hostile frontier, populated by foreign Others, into an ideological tsarist stronghold.<sup>109</sup> In the Soviet context, personal self-determination, although acknowledged as a key factor in recording one’s nationality, was of little regard when administrative considerations were in play.<sup>110</sup> As such, there was an important continuity across the 1917 divide. Ultimately, Soviet modernizing aspirations, abundantly propagated in their official programs and popular propaganda, were significantly undermined by economic, administrative and, not least, security concerns.

## Appendicies

<b>Table 1: The correlation between ‘Poles’ (nationality) and Catholics in the West-Russian areas based on the 1869-1870 ethnographic expedition of Pavlo Chubynskyi</b>		
<b>Soslovie</b>	<b>Catholics</b>	<b>Out of them Poles</b>
Nobility ( <i>dvoriane</i> )	67,366	67,336
Urban dwellers ( <i>meshchane</i> )	62,987	6,400
Single homesteaders ( <i>odnodvortsy</i> )	132,511	13,200
Rural dwellers ( <i>krestiane</i> )	126,236	5,060
<b>Total</b>	<b>389,100</b>	<b>91,000</b>
<i>Source: M. Dragomanov, Yevrei i poliaki v Yugo-Zapadnom kraye [Jews and Poles in the South-Western Krai]. Vestnik Yevropy, t.4, kn. 7 (1875), 135-36</i>		

**Table 2: The Population of the Volhynia Gubernia based on the language group and religion**

	<i>Orthodox and Edivovertsy</i>	<i>Old Believers and those evading Orthodoxy</i>	<i>Roman-Catholics</i>	<i>Protestants</i>	<i>People of the Jewish Faith (Judei)</i>
<b>Poles</b>					
<i>Guberniya</i>	<b>1,451</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>179,957</b>	<b>2,731</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Of those in cities</i>	107		17,633	86	6
<i>Of those in the district</i>	1,344	4	162,324	2,645	5
<b>Velikorosy (Russians)</b>					
<i>Guberniya</i>			1,733	213	600
<i>Of those in cities</i>			611	99	487
<i>Of those in the district</i>			1,122	114	113
<b>Malorosy (Ukrainians)</b>					
<i>Guberniya</i>			105,749	1,697	537
<i>Of those in cities</i>			2,233	9	19
<i>Of those in the district</i>			103,516	1,688	518
<b>Belarusy</b>					
<i>Guberniya</i>			846	1	1
<i>Of those in cities</i>			7		
<i>Of those in the district</i>			839	1	1
<b>Total in Volhynnia Guberniya</b>			<b>298,11</b>		
<i>Source: Adapted from the tables XII and XIII in Pervaya vseobshchaya perepis' naseleniya v Rossiyskoy Imperii 1897 g. pod red. N.A. Troynitskogo, Vol. 8: Volynskaya oblast' (1904), 84-85; 86-87.</i>					

<b>Table 3: The Population of the Podolia Guberniya based on language group and religion</b>				
	<i>Orthodox and Edinovertsy</i>	<i>Old Believers and those evading Orthodoxy</i>	<i>Roman-Catholics</i>	<i>People of the Jewish Faith (Iudei)</i>
<b><i>Podolia Guberniya</i></b>				
<b><i>Poles</i></b>				
<i>Guberniya</i>	<b>625</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>68,36</b>	<b>25</b>
<i>Of those in cities</i>	138		10,674	3
<i>Of those in the district</i>	487	1	57,686	22
<b><i>Velikorosy (Russians)</i></b>				
<i>Guberniya</i>			1,434	886
<i>Of those in cities</i>			524	563
<i>Of those in the district</i>			910	323
<b><i>Malorosy (Ukrainians)</i></b>				
<i>Guberniya</i>			191,127	536
<i>Of those in cities</i>			5,507	154
<i>Of those in the district</i>			185,62	382
<b><i>Belorusskii</i></b>				
<i>Guberniya</i>			65	1
<i>Of those in cities</i>			8	1
<i>Of those in the district</i>			57	0
<b><i>Total in Podolia Gubernia</i></b>			<b>262,738</b>	
<i>Source: Adapted from the table XIV, in Pervaya vseobshchaya perepis' naseleniya v Rossiyskoy Imperii 1897 g. pod red. N.A. Troynitskogo, Vol. 8: Volynskaya Oblast' (1904), 102-105.</i>				



<b>Table 4: The Population of the Volhyn' and Podillia Gubernia based on the language group and soslovie</b>												
<i>Polish speakers in</i>	<i>Hereditary nobility and their families</i>	<i>Personal nobility, non-nobility bureaucrats and their families</i>	<i>Clergy (all Christian denominations)</i>	<i>Hereditary distinguished citizens and personal distinguished citizens</i>	<i>Merch- chantry</i>	<i>Urban commoners</i>	<i>Rural dwellers</i>	<i>Ino- roods y</i>	<i>Individuals not belonging to any of the above</i>	<i>Individuals who did not record their soslovie</i>	<i>Foreign subjects</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Volhynia Guberniya</i>	17174	3226	163	264	57	48752	100701	0	299	445	13079	184161
<i>Of those in cities</i>	4524	1268	93	145	35	7333	3776	0	66	53	541	17834
<i>Of those in the district</i>	12650	1958	70	119	22	41419	96925	0	233	392	12538	166327
<i>Podillia Guberniya</i>	13,946	2052	78	201	65	14573	31332	0	134	62	6711	69156
<i>Of those in cities</i>	2805	464	14	49	37	5201	1842	0	20	12	418	10866
<i>Of those in the district</i>	11141	1588	64	152	28	9372	29490	0	114	50	6293	58290
<i>Source: Adapted from the table XXIV in Pervaya vseobshchaya perepis' naseleniya v Rossiyskoy Imperii 1897 g. pod red. N.A. Troinitzkogo, Vol. 8: Volynskaya Oblast' (1904), pp.248-251; and table XXIV in Pervaya Vseobshchaya Perepis', Vol. 32. Podol'skaya Guberniya, 256-257.</i>												

<b>Table 5: Different understandings of ‘Polish’ in the Volhynia guberniya based on the 1897 census</b>	
‘Polish’ as language	184,161
‘Polish’ as a confessional group	298,11
‘Polish’ as a <i>sosloviye</i>	33,907

**Table 6: The results of the 1897 and 1926 census as for three national groups compared**

<i>Narodnost'</i> (=language)	1897 Census				1926 Census			
	Total	Including those ceded to other countries	Remaining on the territory of the USSR		Total		European Part	
			Total	European part	<i>Narodnost'</i>	Language	<i>Narodnost'</i>	Language
Ukrainians	22,380,600	2,148,100	20,232,500	19,903,900	31,189,500	27,569,200	29,057,100	26,187,900
Belarusians	5,885,500	2,314,900	3,570,600	3,555,400	4,738,200	3,466,900	4,343,200	3,409,000
Poles	7,931,300	7,399,400	531,9	482,4	781,7	362,4	712,3	334,3

*Source:* 'Calculations based on Vsesoyuznaiy Perepis' Naseleniya. 17 dekabria 1926 g'. Kratkie svodki. Vypusk IV: *Narodnost' i rodnoj yazyk naseleniya SSR* (Moscow: TsSU SSR, 1928), XXIV-XXVII.

**Table 7: The change between the two censuses (1897 results taken as 100)**

	<i>In the USSR</i>		<i>European Part only</i>	
	<i>Narodnost'</i>	Language	<i>Narodnost'</i>	Language
<i>Ukrainians</i>	154,2	136,3	146	131
<i>Belarusians</i>	133	97,1	122	95,9
<i>Poles</i>	147	62,1	147,6	69,3

Source: 'Calculations based on Vsesoyuznaya perepis' naseleniya. 17 dekabrya 1926 g.' Kratkiye svodki. Vypusk IV: *Narodnost' i rodnoy yazyk naseleniya SSR* (Moscow: TsSU SSR, 1928), XXVIII-XXIX.

**Table 8: Number of people who recorded Polish as their nationality and native language in the western *okruhy* of Soviet Ukraine, based on 1926 census**

<i>Okruh</i>	<i>Narodnost'</i>	<i>On 1000 persons</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>On 1000 persons</i>
<i>Proskuriv</i>	58,511	102.1	34,535	60.3
<i>urban areas</i>	4,839		4,068	
<i>countryside</i>	53,672		30,467	
<i>Shepetivka</i>	60,215	91.3	36,479	55.3
<i>urban areas</i>	5,794		4,373	
<i>countryside</i>	54,421		32,106	
<i>Volhynia</i>	86,627	125.4	38,052	55.1
<i>urban areas</i>	7,803		4,018	
<i>countryside</i>	78,824		34,034	
<i>Berdychiv</i>	48,439	66.1	19,277	26.3
<i>urban areas</i>	8,586		5,147	
<i>countryside</i>	39,853		14,13	
<i>Kam'ianets'</i>	30,102	55.7	10,89	20.1
<i>urban areas</i>	2,567		1,532	
<i>countryside</i>	27,535		9,358	
<i>Korosten'</i>	40,643	78	10,371	19.9
<i>urban areas</i>	1,172		616	
<i>countryside</i>	39,471		9,755	
<i>Vinnitsia</i>	19,592	25.3	10,659	13.8
<i>urban areas</i>	5,032		3,674	
<i>countryside</i>	14,56		6,985	
<b>Total Population Ukraine</b>				<b>29,018,187</b>
<i>Source: 'Vsesoiuznaia Perepis' Naselenia 1926 goda', Kratkie Svodki. Vyp. 4. Narodnost' i Rodnoi Iazyk Naselenia SSSR, (1928), 103-110.</i>				

## Endnotes

- 1 The author would like to thank Andrii Portnov, Bozhena Kozakevych, Stephan Rindlisbacher, Böries Kuzmany, and the NTAutonomy team at the University of Vienna, as well as Fabian Baumann for providing valuable feedback at different stages of this research. It was funded by the Leverhulme Trust (ECF-2017-641) and the Polish Institute of Advanced Studies (PIASt).
- 2 See, Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863–1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996); “Russification: Word and Practice 1863–1914,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 4, no.148 (2004): 471–489; Darius Staliūnas, *Making Russians: meaning and practice of russification in Lithuania and Belarus after 1863* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007). The processes of russification and assimilation in the imperial context remain highly contested among scholars, with most historians tending to challenge the view that such policies were ever implemented with any consistence. See, Mikhail Dolbilov, ‘Russification and the Bureaucratic Mind in the Russian Empire’s Northwestern Region in the 1860s’, *Kritika* 5, no.2 (2004): 245–271; Andreas Kappeler, “The Ambiguities of Russification,” *Kritika* 5, no.2: 291–297; Alexei Miller, “‘Russifications’? In Search for Adequate Analytical Categories,” in *Imperienvergleich: Beispiele und Ansätze aus osteuropäischer Perspektive. Festschrift für Andreas Kappeler*, ed. G. Hausmann & A. Rustemeyer (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 123–144; Darius Staliūnas, and Yoko Aoshima, (eds.), *The Tsar, The Empire, and The Nation: Dilemmas of Nationalization in Russia’s Western Borderlands, 1905–1915* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2021) (especially, Anton Kotenko’s “Inconsistently Nationalizing State: The Romanov Empire and the Ukrainian National Movement”); Darius Staliūnas, ‘Affirmative Action in the Western Borderlands of the Late Russian Empire?’ *Slavic Review*, 77(4) (2018): 978–997; Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
- 3 For the most recent scholarship on the Polish-Ukrainian relations and the resultant Warsaw Agreement, see the Special issue of *Przegląd Wschodni*, Tom XVI, Zeszyt 1 (61) (2020).
- 4 Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2004), 14.
- 5 The author seconds Francine Hirsch’s argument for “state-sponsored evolutionism,” as elaborated upon in her book Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2005).
- 6 David W. Darrow, “Census as a Technology of Empire,” *Ab Imperio* 4 (2002): 145–76.
- 7 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso 1983); Darrow, *Census as a Technology of Empire*; Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*; and “Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress: Ethnographers and the Category Nationality in the 1926, 1937, and 1939 Censuses,” *Slavic Review* 2 (56) (1997): 251–78, Juliette Cadiot, “Searching for Nationality: Statistics and National Categories at the End of the Russian Empire (1897—1917),” *The Russian Review* 64 (3) (2005): 440–455; and “Kak uporiadochivali raznoobraziye: Spiski i klassifikatsii natsional’nostey v Rossiiskoy imperii i v Sovetskom Soyuze (1897–1939 gg.)” [How diversity was ordered: Lists and classifications of nationalities in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union (1897–1939)] *Ab Imperio* 4 (2002): 177–206. For a similar study on the Habsburg Empire, see, György Kövér, “‘Statistical Assimilation’ in the Hungarian Kingdom 1880–1910,” *Romanian Journal of Population Studies*, 2 (2016): 71–118.
- 8 ‘*Alfavitnyi spisok narodov, obitaiushchikh v Rossiiskoi Imperii*’ [The Alphabetic List of Peoples Residing in the Russian Empire] (Sankt-Peterburg 1895). Available at <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2005/0187/perep04.php> (accessed 04/12/2020).
- 9 On the Polish movement in the Russian Empire see, Andrii Portnov, *Poland and Ukraine Entangled Histories, Asymmetric Memories*. Series “Essays of the Forum Transregionale Studien,” 7 (2020).

See also, Andrzej Walicki, *Poland Between East and West: The Controversies over Self-Definition and Modernization in Partitioned Poland* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press. *Harvard Papers in Ukrainian Studies*, 1994).

- 10 Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 33. On imperial experts and their role in preserving the Russian Empire, see: Nathaniel Knight, "Science, Empire, and Nationality in the Russian Geographical Society, 1845–1855," in *Imperial Russia: New Histories for the Empire*, ed. Jane Burbank and David L. Ransel, 108–41 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); Robert Geraci, "Ethnic Minorities, Anthropology, and Russian National Identity on Trial: The Multan Case, 1892–96," *The Russian Review* 59 (4) (2000): 530–54; Joseph Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia: Science, Patriotism, and Civil Society* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), especially the third chapter about RGO: 86–127; Vytautas Petronis. *Constructing Lithuania: Ethnic Mapping in Tsarist Russia, ca.1800–1914* (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2007).
- 11 Knight, *Science, Empire, and Nationality*, 108.
- 12 Anton Kotenko, *The Ukrainian Project. In Search of National Space, 1861-1914*. PhD diss. CEU, 2013, 109; Johannes Remy, "The Ukrainian National Movement and Poland from the 1840s to the 1870s," *Przegląd Wschodni*, t. XIV, z. 3 (55) (2017), 558.
- 13 It should be noted that the RGO was also behind the first categorisation of the "Russian" people, differentiating the Little Russians, Belarusians, and Russians, as seen on the 1875 *Ethnographic Map of European Russia*, prepared by the RGO member Aleksandr Rittikh. On the understanding and evolution of the concept of Little Russian (*Maloros*), see Anton Kotenko, Olga Martyniuk and Aleksei Miller, "Maloross," [Little Russian] in *Poniattia o Rossii: K istoricheskoj semantice imperskogo perioda* [Concepts of Russia: Towards the Historical Semantics of the Imperial Period], ed. A. Miller, D. Sdvizhkov, I. Shirle (Moscow: Novoie Literaturnoe Obozreniie, 2012): 392–442.
- 14 On this western region, see Brown, *Biography*.
- 15 Quoted from Cadiot, *Searching for Nationality*, 444. On imperial attitudes towards Catholics, see, Mikhail Dolbilov, *ruskiy Kray, chuzhaya vera: Etnookonfessional'naya politika Imperii v Litve i Belorussii pri Aleksandre II* [Russian Region, Foreign Faith: Ethnic and Confessional Politics of the Empire in Lithuania and Belarus under Alexander II] (Moscow: Novoie Literaturnoe Obozreniie, 2010). Dolbilov and Darius Staliunas, *Obratnaia Uniya: iz istorii otnoshenii mezhdru katolitsizmom i pravoslaviyem v Rossiyskoy Imperii* [A Reverse Union: from the History of Relations between Catholicism and Orthodoxy in the Russian Empire] (Vilnius: LII leidykla, 2010).
- 16 Here and thereafter, the article provides transliterations for the Russian terms, as published in the Proceedings.
- 17 *Trudy Etnograficheskoy-Statisticheskoy Ekspeditsii v Zapadno-Russkii Kray, snariazhennoy Imperatorskim Russkim Geograficheskim Obshchestvom. Yugo-zapadnyi otdel. Materialy i issledovaniya, sobrannyye d. chl. P.P. Chubinskim* [Proceedings of the Ethnographic and Statistic Expedition to the Western-Russian Region, Appointed by the Imperial Russian Geographical Society. South-Western Section. Materials and Studies Gathered by P. P. Chubynskiy], 7 Vols. (St Petersburg: Imperatorskoye Russkoe Geograficheskoye Obshchestvo 1872–8).
- 18 M. Dragomanov, "Evrei i poliaki v yugo-zapadnom kraie," [Jews and Poles in the Southwestern region] *Vestnik Evropy* t.4, kn. 7 (1875), 134.
- 19 Chubinskii, *Trudy Etnograficheskoy-Statisticheskoy Ekspeditsii* 7, no.1, 281–289. Chubinskii's main thesis appeared in the calendar of the South-Western region for 1873, having been written for a wider audience: V. Borisov and P. Chubinskii, eds. *Kalendar' Yugo-Zapadnogo Kraya na 1873 god* [Calendar of the Southwestern region for 1873] (Kyiv 1872): 58–66.
- 20 Hybrid identities among local populations posed a great challenge to the so-called national awakensers, and their nationalist activists, in contested lands. Such widespread indifference was itself perceived as

a threat to their nationalist projects and prompted concerted efforts to deny or minimize its presence. See: Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); and “Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis,” *Slavic Review* 69 (1) (2010): 93–119; Peter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation. Activists of Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2006); Olena Palko and Samuel Foster, “Contested Minorities in the ‘New Europe’: National Identities in Interwar Eastern and Southeastern Europe,” Introduction to the Special issue in *National Identities* 23, no.4 (2021): 303-323.

- 21 Darrow, *Census as a Technology*, 166.
- 22 Cadiot, *Kak uporiadochivali raznoobraziye*, 180.
- 23 P. K. “The Census of the Russian Empire,” *The Geographical Journal* 6, no.9 (1897): 658.
- 24 Nathaniel Knight, “Ethnicity, Nationality and the Masses: *Narodnost*’ and Modernity in Imperial Russia” in *Russian Modernity. Politics, Knowledge, Practices*. eds. David Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis. 41-66 (London: MacMillan Press, 2000), esp. 54–60.
- 25 Weeks, *Russification*, 48.
- 26 Cadiot, *Searching for Nationality*, 444.
- 27 Ibid, 445.
- 28 Larry Wolff, *Disunion within the Union. The Uniate Church and the Partitions of Poland* (Cambridge, Mass.: HURI, 2020)
- 29 *Atlas Narodonaseleniya Zapadno-Russkogo Kraya po Ispovedaniyam* [Atlas of the Inhabitants of the Western-Russian Region based on Confession], 1864 g. Available at <http://elib.shpl.ru/ru/nodes/4742-rittih-a-f-atlas-narodonaseleniya-zapadno-russkogo-kraya-po-ispovedaniyam-spb-1864> (accessed 04/06/2018).
- 30 Theodore R. Weeks, “The ‘End’ of the Uniate Church in Russia: The ‘Vozsoedinenie’ of 1875,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 1 (44) (1996), 38
- 31 Bohdan Bociurkiw, *The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the Soviet State (1939-1950)* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1996), 10.
- 32 Cadiot, *Searching for Nationality*, 442
- 33 Barbara Skinner, “Borderlands of Faith: Reconsidering the Origins of a Ukrainian Tragedy,” *Slavic Review*, 1 (64) (2005): 88–116.
- 34 Gregory L. Freeze, “The Soslovie (Estate) Paradigm and Russian Social History,” *American History Review* 91 (1986), 30.
- 35 See, Darrow, *Census as a Technology*, 166-168.
- 36 A similar approach was also used by Soviet party observers. During an inspection of the Shepetivka *okruh*, in the Dobri Losy village soviet, it was asserted that only 38% of assumed Poles used the Polish language, “the *szlachta* and emigrees (*pereselentsy*)”. See Tsentralnyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Vyschchykh Orhaniv Vldy Ukrainy [Central State Archive of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine] (TsDAVO) 413/1/6, ark.73. Most documents quoted in this article are part of the f the Central Commission for National Minority Affairs’ collection (1925–1934) (f.413) held at the TsDAVO.
- 37 *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoy Imperii* [*The Complete Collections of the Laws of the Russian Empire*] Sobr. 3-e T.XXV: 1905 (Sankt-Petersburg, 1908), 237–238.
- 38 Robert E. Blobaum, *Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904–1907* (Ithaca NY, Cornell University Press, 1995); Wiktor Marzec, *Rising Subjects: The 1905 Revolution and the Genesis of the Polish Public Sphere*, (University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 2020).
- 39 See Cadiot, *Kak uporiadochivali raznoobraziye*; Vera Tolz, *Russia’s own Orient: The Politics*



- of *Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); eadem, "Imperial Scholars and Minority Nationalisms in Late Imperial and Early Soviet Russia," *Kritika* 10, no.2 (2009): 261–290; Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*.
- 40 On the debate surrounding this terminology, see Hirsch, *Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress*, 257–261; Cadiot, *Kak uporiadochivali raznoobraziye*, 190–192; and *Searching for Nationality*, 450–52.
- 41 Nik.Vorobyev, *Vsesoyuznaya perepis 17 dekabria 1926 goda. Kratkiy obzor organisatsii i proizvodstva* [*The All-Russian Census of 17 December 1926. A Short Survey of its Organization and Implementation*] (Moscow, 1933), 95–96.
- 42 *ibid*, 31.
- 43 Francine Hirsch suggests that by 1926, the ethnographers began to discuss national self-determination and the right of individual citizens to choose their own national identities as related ideas. See, Hirsch, *Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress*, 260.
- 44 *Vsesoiuznaya perepis' naseleniya 1926 goda. Kratkiye svodki. Vyp. 4. Narodnost' i rodnoy yazyk naseleniya SSSR* [*The All-Russian Census of 1926. A Short Report. Part 4. Nationalities and Mother Tongue of the Peoples of the USSR*] (1928), III; Hirsch, *Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress*, 261–62.
- 45 Quoted from Hirsch, *Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress*, 260.
- 46 The decree on the Census and its aims from 2 April 1920, as well as the questionnaire see in Vorobyev, *Vsesoyuznaya Perepis*, 11–15.
- 47 Border zones had special regimes, see Terry Martin, "The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," *Journal of Modern History* 70, no.4 (1998): 813–861.
- 48 *Vsesoyuznaya Perepis'*, Table I: *Comparison of the Results of the 1897 and 1926 Censuses*, XXIV.
- 49 *Vsesoyuznaya Perepis'*, XVIII.
- 50 Andrzej Brozek claims that the repatriation in the early post-war period (1918–1922) involved around 12 million people of Polish origin. See Andrzej Brozek "People of Polish Origin and Polish Nationality in The USSR and in The United States. Their Language Situation," *Studia Polonijne* 14 (1992), 134.
- 51 Brown, *Biography*.
- 52 Reference to Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities."
- 53 *Pravda*, October 10, 1920.
- 54 Brown, *Biography*, 92.
- 55 Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53, no.2 (1994): 414–452.
- 56 Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press 2001).
- 57 Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 7–8.
- 58 *Ibid*, 8–9.
- 59 John P. Sontag, "The Soviet War Scare of 1926–27," *The Russian Review* 34, no.1 (1975): 66–77; Peter Whitewood, "The International Situation: Fear of Invasion and Growing Authoritarianism," in *The Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution. Illiberal Liberation, 1917–1941*, edited by Lara Douds, James R. Harris, and Peter Whitewood. 173–186 (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).
- 60 O. Rubl'ov, V. Repryntsev, "Represii proty poliakiiv v Ukraini u 1930-ti roky," [*The Repressions against the Poles in Ukraine in the 1930s*] *Z Arkhiviv VUCHK–HPU–NKVD–KGB*, 1/2 (2/3) (1995): 116–156.
- 61 Quoted from *Entsyklopediya Istorii Ukrainy* [The Encyclopaedia of the History of Ukraine]: In 10 Vols. 2010. Kyiv: NAN Ukrainy. Vol.7: 306–307.

- 62 Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 111. Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 33.
- 63 *Itogi po Rabote sredi Natsiona'lykh Men'shinst na Ukraine* [The Results of the Work among the National Minorities in Ukraine] (Kharkiv, 1927), 7.
- 64 TsDAVO, 413/1/6, ark.61.
- 65 M. Panchuk, O. Koval'chuk, B. Chyrko B. (eds.) *Natsionalni Menshyny v Ukraini, 1920–1930-ti roky: Istoryko-Kartohrafichnyi Atlas* [National Minorities in Ukraine, 1920–30s: Historical and Cartographical Atlas] (Kyiv: Instytut nationalnykh vidnosyn i politolohii NAN Ukrainy, 1995). On the minority experiences, see: L. Iakovlieva, B. Chyrko, S. Pysenko, *Nimtsi v Ukraini. 20–30-i rr. XX st. Zbirnyk Dokumentiv Derzhavnykh Arkhiviv Ukrainy* [Germans in Ukraine. 1920–1930s. A Collection of Documents from the State Archives of Ukraine] (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy, 1994); Colin P. Neufeldt, *The Public and Private Lives of Mennonite Kolkhoz Chairmen in the Khortytsia and Molochansk German National Raiony in Ukraine (1928-1934)*, The Carl Beck Papers (2015); M. Dmytriienko, *Hreky na ukrainskykh terenakh: Narysy z etnichnoi istorii. Dokumenty, materialy, karty* [Greeks on the Ukrainian Lands: A Sketch of the Ethnic History. Documents, Materials, and Maps] (Kyiv: Lybid'; Iwanov, 2000); Mikolaj Iwanow, *Pierwszy Narod Ukaryny: Polacy w Związku Radzieckim, 1921–1939* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1991); H. Strons'kyi, *Zlet i Padinnia. Polskiy Natsionalnyi Raion v Ukraini u 20-30-ti roky* [Rise and Decline. The Polish National District in Ukraine in the 1920-30s] (Ternopil, 1992); J. Kupczak, *Polacy na Ukrainie w Latach 1921–1939* [Poles in Ukraine in 1921-1939] (Wrocław: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1994); Brown, *Biography*.
- 66 The name of the region was not possible to verify because of the bad quality of the original document.
- 67 TsDAVO 413/1/99 ark. 23.
- 68 TsDAVO 413/1/99, ark. 25.
- 69 TsDAVO, 413/1/172, ark. 26.
- 70 Martin, *Affirmative Action*, 42.
- 71 TsDAVO, 413/1/6/ ark.61–62
- 72 TsDAVO 166/5/824, ark. 381–392.
- 73 TsDAVO 413/1/6, ark.102-104zv
- 74 TsDAVO 413/1/6, ark.36.
- 75 TsDAVO 413/1/6, ark. 38zv.
- 76 TsDAVO 166/5/824, ark 381–392; On the social and economic situation in the region, see Brown, *Biography*.
- 77 TsDAVO 413/1/6, ark. 39; on the supervision, O. Rubliov, “Shkitz do istorii zahybeli ukrainskoi ‘Polonii,’ 1930-ti roky,” [A Sketch for the History of the Demise of the Ukrainian ‘Polonia’ in the 1930s], *Istoriografichni doslidzhennia v Ukraini* 13 (2013): 275–319.
- 78 TsDAVO, 413/1/500.
- 79 TsDAVO 413/1/10, ark. 3.
- 80 In fact, there were plans to form another Polish district around the village of Hrechany in Proskuriv raion. Hrechany was one of the biggest Polish villages in Ukraine, with 3,408 Poles out of the total 3,656 villagers registered. The Polish national soviet was established there in 1927. However, these plans were subsequently abandoned in view of changes in Soviet minority policy. See: Taisiia Zarets'ka, “Polityka radianskoï vlady shchodo stvorennia polskykh natsionalnykh raioniv v USSR,” [The Politics of the Soviet Power as for the Creation of the Polish National Districts in the USSR] *Problemy istorii Ukrainy: Fakty, sudzhennia, poshuky*. 16 (2007), 216–217.

- 81 TsDAVO, 413/1/10, ark.1 The request for the Polish representative was not satisfied even during the reporting period by 1.10.1926, TsDAVO 413/1/10, ark.38
- 82 TsDAVO, 413/1/6, ark.30zv.
- 83 TsDAVO, 413/1/99, ark. 40; 413/1/6, ark.30–30zv
- 84 TsDAVO, 413/1/6 (1924/25), ark 38.
- 85 Cf. Larry Wolff, *Disunion within the Union: The Uniate Church and the Partitions of Poland* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press/Ukrainian Research Institute, 2019)
- 86 Brown, *Biography*, 31.
- 87 TsDAVO, 413/1/99, ark.35.
- 88 TsDAVO, 413/1/99, ark.40.
- 89 Works on other minorities; Iakovlieva, *et. al. Nimtsi v Ukraini*.
- 90 TsDAVO, 413/1/6, ark. 84.
- 91 TsDAVO, 413/1/6, ark. 73.
- 92 TsDAVO, 413/1/6, ark. 102.
- 93 TsDAVO, 413/1/99, ark.35zv.
- 94 TsDAVO, 413/1/99, ark. 90 zv.
- 95 TsDAVO, 413/1/99, ark. 43; ark.91.
- 96 TsDAVO, 413/1/99, ark.92zv.
- 97 TsDAVO, 413/1/99, ark. 44.
- 98 Brown, *Biography*, 39.
- 99 For the discussion on the problem posed by the ‘so-called’ Ukrainian Catholics in Podilia, see: TsDAVO, 413/1/99, ark. 90-96; and 413/1/172, ark.39–46
- 100 TsDAVO, 413/1/51, ark.41
- 101 TsDAVO, 413/1/99, ark.21; 36; 95
- 102 TsDAVO 413/1/6, ark.62
- 103 TsDAVO, 413/1/99, ark. 92zv.
- 104 TsDAVO, 413/1/99, ark. 90.
- 105 TsDAVO, 413/1/13, ark. 60; 413/1/6/ ark.30.
- 106 Ukaz TsIK NSK ‘Ob ustanovlenii yedinoi pasportnoy sistemy po Soyuzu SSR i obiazatel’noy propiski pasportov’ 27.12.1932. [The Decree of the Central Executive Committee ‘About the Establishment of the Unified Passport System in the Soviet Union and the Obligatory Passport Registration]. Available at <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/901958829> (accessed 09/09/2021).
- 107 Martin, *Origins*.
- 108 Brown, *Biography*, 39
- 109 On Russian nationalism on Ukraine’s territory see: Faith Hillis, *Children of Rus’: Right-Bank Ukraine and the Invention of a Russian Nation* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).
- 110 On the primacy of the administrative and economic consideration in the process of border making see Stephan Rindlisbacher, “From Space to Territory: Negotiating the Russo-Ukrainian Border, 1919–1928,” *Revolutionary Russia* 31, no.1 (2018): 86–106. See also, idem, “Contested Lines: The Russo-Ukrainian Border, 1917–1929,” in *Making Ukraine: Negotiating, Contesting and Drawing Borders in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Olena Palko and Constantin Ardeleanu, forthcoming in MQUP, 2022.