

UDC 070.48(477):304(=161.2)  
DOI: 10.24919/2312-2595.6/48.228495

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**Бібліографічний опис статті:** Nakonechniy, V. (2021). Ruthenian community of the interwar time through the lens of "Lemko" newspaper. *Проблеми гуманітарних наук: збірник наукових праць Дрогобицького державного педагогічного університету імені Івана Франка. Серія Історія*, 6/48, 268–280. doi: <https://doi.org/10.24919/2312-2595.6/48.228495>.

## РУСИНСЬКА СПІЛЬНОТА МІЖВОЄННОГО ЧАСУ У ВИСВІТЛЕННІ ЧАСОПИСУ «ЛЕМКО»

**Анотація.** *Мета статті* полягає у з'ясуванні інформаційного потенціалу газети «Лемко» як джерела до висвітлення становища русинів у міжвоєнний час. **Методологічною основою статті є** принципи системності, історизму та компаративності із застосуванням культурно-історичного та порівняльно-типологічного методів. **Наукова новизна статті** полягає у спробі аналізу становища русинської спільноти у міжвоєнний час за матеріалами часопису «Лемко». **Висновки.** Проведене дослідження переконливо демонструє, що «Лемко» був оригінальним часописом зі своєю рідною видавничою програмою. На його сторінках було відбито малознане з інших джерел щоденне життя лемків москвофільської орієнтації. Встановлено, що ідейні переконання видавців були позначені безоглядною українофобією, яка проглядала з більшості газетних матеріалів. Захоплені таким антиукраїнізмом, редактори газети не змогли запропонувати своєму читачеві жодної конструктивної ідейної програми. Внаслідок цього менталітет лемків москвофільської орієнтації консервувався на рівні світоглядних уявлень XIX ст. Це, зрештою, мало руйнівні наслідки для долі всього москвофільства: подібна ідейна оптика

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унеможливила відповідне до вимог часу реагування на виклики модерної доби, де перемагали свідомі своїх завдань об'єднані національні спільноти. Натомість, русинському населенню газета «Лемко» пропонувала цінності світу, замкненого винятково гірськими теренами. Тому, незважаючи на значні зусилля видавців часопису поширити вплив «Лемка» на русинську аудиторію на Лемківщині та в еміграційних осередках, газета не витримала конкуренції з виданнями проукраїнської орієнтації і, незважаючи на потужну державну допомогу, припинила існування.

**Ключові слова:** «Лемко»; Друга Річ Посполита; русини; москвофільство; культурно-громадське життя.

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**To cite this article:** Nakonechnyi, V. (2021). Ruthenian community of the interwar time through the lens of "Lemko" newspaper. *Problemy humanitarnykh nauk: zbirnyk naukovykh prats Drohobyt'skoho derzhavnoho pedahohichnoho universytetu imeni Ivana Franka. Seriiia Istoriiia – Problems of Humanities. History Series: a collection of scientific articles of the Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University*, 6/48, 268–280. doi: <https://doi.org/10.24919/2312-2595.6/48.228495>.

## **RUTHENIAN COMMUNITY OF THE INTERWAR TIME THROUGH THE LENS OF "LEMKO" NEWSPAPER**

**Summary.** *The purpose of the article is to clarify the informational potential of the "Lemko" newspaper as a source for covering the situation of the Ruthenians in the interwar period. The methodological basis of the article is the principles of systematization, historicism and comparability with the use of cultural-historical and comparative-typological methods. The scientific novelty of the article is an attempt to analyse the situation of the Ruthenian community through the lens of the newspaper "Lemko". Conclusions.* *The study convincingly demonstrates that "Lemko" was an original newspaper with a certain publishing program. Its pages reflected the little-known daily*

*life of pro-Moscophile Lemkos. It has been noted that the ideological beliefs of the publishers were marked by reckless Ukrainophobia in their articles. Being blinded by anti-Ukrainianism, the newspaper's editors were unable to offer their readers any constructive ideological program. As a result, the mentality of the Lemkos-Moscophiles was preserved at the level of the nineteenth century outlook. This strategy, in the end, had devastating consequences for the fate of all Moscophiles: such ideological optics made them unable to face the challenges of the modern age, where only the united national communities, who were ready for difficulties ahead, won. Instead, the "Lemko" newspaper offered the Ruthenian population outdated values of the isolated mountainous terrain. Therefore, despite the considerable efforts of the newspaper's publishers to spread "Lemko's" influence to the Ruthenian audience in Lemkivshchyna and in emigration centres, the newspaper could not compete with pro-Ukrainian publications and, despite strong state aid, ceased to exist.*

**Key words:** "Lemko"; the Second Polish Republic; Ruthenians; Moscophiles; cultural and social life.

**Formulation of the problem.** Lemko periodicals are continuously in the focus of scientific interests of researchers of the Ruthenian subethnic group. Their interest is well-justified as Lemko periodicals highlighted the most prominent problems the western Ukrainian Lemkos faced. At the same time, there is a tendency in scientific community to focus on those publishing projects that supported all-Ukrainian, unity-of-all ideology. Thus, Lemko's periodicals, created by sympathizers of other ideological orientations, have been almost completely ignored in the scientific discourse. Such neglect is especially bizarre in case of "Lemko", as its Moscophile ideology used to be quite popular in the nineteenth – first decades of the twentieth century (and in some diaspora cells to this day). However, without clarifying and taking into account all ideological optics, it is impossible to fully reconstruct the ideological world of the Lemko sub ethnos.

We believe that the solution to this problem should begin with a more thorough analysis of Lemko's interwar journalism. At that time, the first Lemko periodicals created by Ruthenians with polar outlooks appeared in the Second Polish Republic. They reflected ideological competition among Ruthenian public activists. Ukrainian-centric optics was presented by the publishers of the newspaper "Nash

Lemko" which has been the object of analysis in numerous scientific works (Nakonechnyi, 2017). Its ideological opponent was the Moscovophile newspaper "Lemko", a little-known publication even to specialists interested in Ruthenian issues. Therefore, we consider it an urgent task to analyse the publishing phenomenon of this journal.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Currently, there is no scientific research that has been devoted to the "Lemko" newspaper exclusively. In the Lemko-related literature we can come across a few references to this journal. A number of our publications refer to the newspaper "Lemko" in the context of the ideological struggle that took place in the Ruthenian environment during the interwar period (Nakonechnyi, 2017).

**The purpose of the article** is to clarify the informational potential of the newspaper "Lemko" as a source that covers the situation of the Ruthenians in the interwar period.

**The presentation of the main material.** The idea of creating a new Lemko newspaper appeared in early 1934 as a reaction to the intense publishing activity of the pro-Ukrainian part of the Ruthenians who lived in the mountains of the Second Polish Republic. In January of the same year the newspaper "Our Lemko" was published in Lviv and soon after it became an influential ideological platform for Ruthenians who considered themselves an organic part of Ukrainians. The unity-of-all ideology of the publishers of "Our Lemko" was perceived as a threat by officials of the young Polish state, who later started to forcibly assimilate the indigenous inhabitants of Zakerzonia. Therefore, Polish administration introduced measures to neutralize or at least undermine the influence of the new newspaper among Ukrainians in mountainous areas as some of them did not have a clear national self-awareness (Nakonechnyi, 2017).

One of the measures included the creation of a media alternative to "Our Lemko". The Lemkos, who continued to hold to the archaic idea of their own ethnic exclusivity and cultural kinship with the "Rus" world, were inspired to publish their own newspaper, which was designed to become an institutional platform for cultivating Moscovophile sentiments among Lemko residents. The idea of publishing a new newspaper was first voiced at the Lemko Congress held in Sanok on December 8, 1933. This forum, which united sympathizers of Moscovophile ideology, became the birthplace of "Lemko Union", and

its main goal was to "group all Lemkos and publish the newspaper «Lemko»" ("Ot redaktsyy", 1934, p. 1).

This project was soon implemented, and the first issue of the new newspaper was published on February 22, 1934. The editorial announced that "Lemko", the "body of the Lemko Union" would be a biweekly, appearing on Thursday "on the 15th and the 30th of each month". Within a few months, from the eighth issue, the newspaper became a weekly. The language policy of the newspaper's editorial board stated that it was fundamentally a Moscovophile version of the Lemko dialect. Therefore, the larger quotations in our article are adapted to the requirements of the modern Ukrainian language. The initial place of publication of "Lemko" was Novyi Sonch; later the editorial office moved to the Lemko capital, which was then considered the town of Krynytsia. The newspaper was published in the Przemyśl printing house of Osip Stifio. The newspaper stated that it was edited and published by a committee, but its members were never announced. Vasyl Tilishchak and Garas Hromosyak were responsible for publishing the newspaper in different periods. Currently, there is no more detailed biographical information about them. The volume of the newspaper for the whole period of its existence was unchanged – four columns. The magazine was published for less than two years and by the end of 1935 there were 84 issues published. The subscription price for the newspaper was relatively insignificant: the biweekly cost PLN 3 per year, PLN 1.5 per month, and PLN 30 per month; for foreign subscribers – 1 US dollar per year. After the magazine was converted into a weekly, these prices doubled.

The first issue of "Lemko" presented the appeal to the reader and information about the purpose and tasks of the new newspaper. First of all, the publishers emphasized the informational function of their publication: "[...] You will learn how other nations live, what they do to improve their fate and reduce misery, you will learn about all the events that happen in the world and in our region" ("Ot redaktsyy", 1934, p. 1). The newspaper's solidarity mission was to become a unifying platform for pro-Moscovophile sympathizers: "Do not forget that as long as we are organized, as long as we live for greater good, we will be strong and everyone will reckon with us [...] One person cannot do much, but together we will be a great force" ("Ot redaktsyy", 1934, p. 1).

Finally, the third task of the editorial board was to advise its subscribers on various issues of today from business topics to juridical consultation. Summing up its promises, the editorial board stated: "In general, the newspaper will try to publish only those articles that are be useful for the Lemkos and will attempt to show our people how to live better" ("Ot redaktsyy", 1934, p. 1). The full implementation of these promises, as rightly stated in the editorial, could be possible only with a mass subscription to the newspaper which will allow it to be financially secure. Therefore, the editorial board called for distribution and popularization of the newspaper both in the above-mentioned appeal and in almost every issue. The editorial board also encouraged its readers to actively communicate with their newspaper and to become co-creators of its content through regular correspondence.

The implementation of those goals and objectives was facilitated by the attentive structural architecture of "Lemko". Usually, the first column was used for editorial posts and program texts. It also contained information materials of national importance (government decrees, announcements and appeals). The second column was devoted to the discussion of various problems of public life of the Lemkos, as well as posts on cultural and historical topics. The third and fourth columns were usually devoted to economic topics and their content was mostly formed by readers' requests for advice on various matters of daily life. There were also reviews of the social movement in pro-Moscophile Lemko villages. The last column, traditionally for most periodicals, contained advertisements.

These materials were grouped in several sections. Their nomenclature underwent some changes during the publication of the newspaper, which was natural given the constant editorial search for a balance of newspaper components. Regular sections included "From the editorial office", "Movement in our villages", "What is going on in the world", "Economic Gazette", "Luts-Puts", "Lemko tales" and others. These sections presented most of the issues discussed in the newspaper. "Lemko" also featured small but regular sections of poetry and humour that celebrated Lemko culture. The newspaper was illustrated with sketches from the daily life of Ruthenians and sometimes with photos of prominent figures in honour of some memorable dates.

The ideological platform of the new magazine was outlined in the editorial in the first issue. In this text, the editors highlighted two

core outlook values. The first was the thesis about the eternal Lemko autochthonism, the ethnic separateness of the Lemkos and their mental unity with the world of "Rus" culture. Such ideological optics was already reflected in the subtitle "Lemko: Rus newspaper for Lemkos". In accordance with this belief, the historical mythology of the Lemko editorial board was constructed and popularized in various articles from analytical to humorous.

Its key theses were synthesized in the article "What Every Lemko Should Know About Himself". First of all, the editors stressed that "we are both Rus and Lemko". In its further invention of Lemko's ethnogenesis, the article claimed: "The Lemkos and their small land are in the middle of Slavdom, and they, their type, language and character, remind us of a time when the Slavs were all one tribe. And their oldest dialect at that time was the most similar to today's Lemko speech. With their language and location Lemkos remind everyone that the Russian people who inhabited Eastern Europe and northern Asia came from these Carpathians and that their ancestors were the Lemkos. We can provide a lot of material to all Slavs if they want to know more about their past" ("Shto kazhdyi Lemko musyt znaty", 1934, p. 1). It should be noted that such naive lemko-centrism dominated in other publications of the newspaper on historical topics, aiming at strengthening the sense of uniqueness in the Ruthenian environment.

The historical ideology of the Lemko editorial board was largely constructed around opposition to the idea of the unity of Ukrainians in all its regional diversity. Imperial propagandists of various parties came to the aid with their theses about the artificial origin of Ukrainians. For example, the following thesis, constantly broadcast from the pages of a Ruthenian magazine, has a blatant blackhundredist genesis: "Let us remember that the Rus people have a thousand-year history and that fifty years ago no one heard about the «Ukrainians» and that the Ukrainians were invented by the Germans to defeat the Slavic peoples. And now the Germans are giving money to Ukrainian organizations and support their treacherous work. Most Ukrainian newspapers and books are published for German money. That's why let us stick together and not let the Ukrainian wedge divide Rus people!" ("Tsy yest daiaka rada", 1934, p. 1).

However, the publishers of "Lemko" were more sensible in their views of regions and population of Lemkos. Ruthenian lands,

according to the author of the above-mentioned post, are bounded on the west by the rivers Poprad and Danube; in the east they are adjacent to Eastern Lesser Poland and Subcarpathian Rus where they are separated by the rivers San and Uzh. The editorial board believes that there are "more than six hundred" of all Lemko villages, which were divided between the Polish and Czechoslovak states. The population of Lemkivshchyna is "about 500.000". The area of their compact residence was outlined by the author as follows: "That piece of our land along the overhead line is about 80 km long, 40 km wide at its widest point, and about 20 km at its narrowest point".

Another ideological guideline of "Lemko's" publishers was outright and often brutal anti-Ukrainianism. The growing pro-Ukrainian sentiment in the Lemko community and the growing sense of their connection to the world of cultural and political Ukrainianness were presented as the greatest disaster for the local population of Zakerzonia. Therefore, anti-Ukrainian campaign can be seen in most of the newspaper's texts throughout its existence. Some sections of the newspaper were specifically introduced to discredit or desecrate the ideals of Ukrainians. For example, the above-mentioned humorous column "Luts-Puts" included anonymous jokes of low quality to discuss real and often fictional problems of life of Galician and Dnipro counterparts.

The motivation for launching anti-Ukrainian propaganda was the starting point for Lemko's discussion of many issues like the school problem. The Polish authorities tried in every way to limit Ukrainian cultural influences in the Lemko environment, focusing primarily on the public school (Nakonechnyi, 2017). Therefore, education officials decided to displace Ukrainian-language school practices with Mosophile ones at any cost. In order to do this, it was decided to republish with state money clearly obsolete school textbooks of the XIX century in Lemko dialect to level the sense of kinship with Ukrainians among the younger generation. "Lemko's" articles popularized such a school policy. The authors of the magazine openly admitted that the government "does not cause us difficulties and does not forbid us to nurture and develop [...] the mother tongue" ("Shto kazhdyi Lemko musyt znaty", 1934, p. 1). Instead, Ukrainians were constantly portrayed as unsolicited intruders, destroying the authentic world of Lemko culture by diverting trusting Ruthenians from ancient spiritual sources.



Another problem presented in the anti-Ukrainian fashion was the church issue. As in the case of the school, it was an attempt by Polish officials to replace the influence of the pro-Ukrainian Greek Catholic clergy with Orthodox Moscophiles. Therefore, the newspaper launched a campaign to discredit the nationally conscious part of the Uniate clergy. They were concerned about the politicization of religion, which manifested itself in the alleged political propaganda from the church pulpits. Thus, any patriotic pro-Ukrainian speeches of priests to their faithful or simply the mentioning of Ukraine and Ukrainians in a positive context were interpreted as support of Ukrainian movement. As an example of such rhetoric, we would like to provide a quote from the article "Politics in our churches": "For a long time our priests considered churches to be houses of prayer and houses of God. [...] But other priests and other times came. Instead of the teaching of Christ, those new priests care only for politics. Places of preaching in churches have been replaced by venues, from which they preach about Ukraine. Those priests are not talking about the morality of the souls entrusted to their care; they are only talking about everyone calling themselves Ukrainians" ("Polytyka v nashykh tserkvakh", 1934, p. 2). Greek Catholic hierarchs, well-known from their pro-Ukrainian position, became an object of brutal criticism of the Lemko editorial office and the Greek Catholic Bishop of Przemyśl, Kotsilowski received the biggest amount of criticism and berating ("Yak otbylasia v Sianotsi ukrajnska parada", 1934, pp. 2–3).

Another object of fierce anti-Ukrainian agitation was Ukrainian cultural and educational institutions and publications as their quantitative growth in Ruthenian territory openly disturbed Lemko's contributors. At the same time, special attention was paid to "Prosvita", "Beskids", "Our Lemko", "New Star" and others. Without offering a positive ideological alternative to these real enemies of Lemko autochthonism, the newspaper's authors even went so far as to brutally animate these symbols of Ukrainianism in interwar Poland: they were often symbolically depicted as domestic animals destroying the established order of Ruthenian rule. Another popular method of inspiring ideological opponents among the authors of Lemko was the depiction of a Ukrainian in the form of a Cossack-Cutthroat, entirely in the spirit of Polish Lubok propaganda. It should be noted that as a certain ideological alternative to the development of Ukrainian institutions in

the Lemko territory, the newspaper popularized the idea of establishing branches of the Moscovophile Mikhail Kachkovsky Society.

The above-mentioned anti-Ukrainianism of "Lemko's" editors contrasted sharply with its pro-government rhetoric. Publishers were openly proud of the fact that "the Government (written in capital letters – auth.) does not make any difficulties for us" ("Shto kazhdyi Lemko musyt znaty", 1934, p. 1). Moreover, many of the posts were openly adulatory to the new owners of the Lemko lands. The columns of the "Lemko" newspaper bizarrely included the anniversaries or memorable dates of Polish cultural and political figures who had nothing to do with the Ruthenian world. For example, let us mention the congratulations of Józef Pilsudski on his birthday, where he was repeatedly called a "great man", a "hero" who has a "genius political mind" ("Ymenyny Marshala Pylsudskoho", 1934, p. 1). Instead, the newspaper published unequivocally critical assessments of Ukrainian public and cultural figures. Among the latter, perhaps the harshest criticism was directed at M. Hrushevsky (Telvak, 2008, pp. 358–377).

The historical policy of the Lemko editorial board was interesting as well. As in the case of most Moscovophile institutions operating in the Second Polish Republic, its cells were commemorating the victims of the massacres at Thalerhof camp in 1914. The newspaper was extremely active in tackling these memorial events as its twentieth anniversary was in 1934. According to "Lemko" it was "a great national tragedy". Information columns constantly printed messages of Central Thalerhof Committee about the preparation and organization of daily cooperation, which took place in Lviv on the last day of May.

Unfortunately, the anti-Ukrainianism of the editors of "Lemko" was present event in highlighting of this tragic event. In many articles of the Thalerhof cycle, the Ukrainians were portrayed as the cause of the tragedy of the Orthodox citizens in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The following passage gives an idea of the rhetoric of such accusations: "What is the saddest and the most terrible, is that at that bloody banquet the Germans and Hungarians were helped by our own brother-Cain, a German traitor who changed himself into a Ukrainian. Blinded by promises, he lost his human conscience and with a happy smile with denunciations and false testimonies he put the noose on the neck of his Russian brother" ("Otdaimme vsenarodnyi poklon", 1934, p. 1). As we can see, these words were largely a repetition of imperial pro-

paganda about the artificial nature of modern Ukrainianness. It should be noted that along with such anti-Ukrainian attacks, the newspaper was silent about the participation of the Polish administration in direct cooperation with the military authorities in finding and imprisoning "unreliable" citizens.

However, the consultative and economic component of "Lemko's" editorial policy was quite adequate and corresponded to the realities of the time. After all, in the conditions of the chronic crisis of the Polish economy in the interwar twentieth century, the most vulnerable group of the population was the peasantry of the mountains that did not have the opportunity to quickly adapt to the new economic conditions. As a result, the newspaper's editorial staff was working hard to mitigate the effects of economic modernization. Like most peasant newspapers, "Lemko" paid the most attention to the intensification of traditional industries and the promotion of new forms of activity in mountainous areas.

Regarding the former, the editorial board of the Ruthenian newspaper popularized information on improving the techniques of folk crafts, the best methods of cultivating fields and hayfields, raising domestic animals, and so on. The newspaper informed about new practices of traditional Lemko dairy farming. These practices included mechanization of the process (first of all, the use of centrifuges) and sowing of Lemko lands with enriched types of grasses, which enabled better milking of cattle. Among the new types of farming, "Lemko" paid special attention to advantages of honey harvesting which perfectly corresponded to the conditions of the Lemko region. "Lemko" also informed about gardening as another profitable type of agriculture management and advised mountaineers to grow vegetable gardens in the backyards.

These new economic measures, as the editors of "Lemko" rightly pointed out, should be accompanied by the development of peasant cooperation. The newspaper was extremely active in promoting the activities of the "Lemko Union", which was designed to unite the economic efforts of the Moscovite part of the Lemko community. The newspaper persistently persuaded its conservative reader: "To improve our destiny, we need to organize, because only when we all join the «Lemko Union» in Horlytsia, we will give that Union the strength it will use for our common good. Only then we can be sure

that the sun will shine in our window and prosperity will come to our homes" ("Shto nam robyty", 1934, p. 1). Interestingly, "Lemko" also popularized the idea of peasant cooperation on the example of other nations, showing that united peasants can become a respectable force in their own state. Encouraging their compatriots to unite, the magazine wrote: "Peasants in other countries have been organized for a long time and established agrarian (peasant) unions in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Belgium, Holland, Germany, France and other countries" ("Sto tysiach delehatov", 1934, p. 1).

Another salvation from poverty, as "Lemko" rightly emphasized, is the active education of Ruthenian youth. The newspaper devoted a lot of articles to popularizing the idea of sending Lemkos to study not only in public schools, but also in vocational schools and grammar schools. This should have ensured the growth of the number of Ruthenian intellectuals, who would serve as a reliable support to their people. The slogan was: "For those who can, let them take the light of science – because without science – we will perish" ("Shcho nam hrozyt?!", 1934, p. 1).

**Conclusions.** The authors of this article believe that "Lemko" was a unique publishing project, the columns of which reflected the little-known daily life of Ruthenians who shared Moscovophile values. As we have shown above, the ideology of the newspaper was archaic, having an openly anti-Ukrainian orientation, the editors instead failed to offer any independent positive ideological program. Thus, the Ruthenian community was preserved at the level of mental practices of the nineteenth century which had fatal consequences for the entire Moscovophile movement. After all, such an ideological orientation made it impossible to adequately respond to the modern challenges of the first half of the twentieth century that could be overcome only by the united national communities conscious of their tasks. Instead, the inhabitants of Transcarpathian region were invited to continue to think in terms of the world limited by mountainous terrain. Therefore, despite all the significant efforts of "Lemko" to deepen its influence on compatriots and expand its readership, the magazine could not compete with the pro-Ukrainian publication "Our Lemko" and, despite state support, ceased to exist after less than two years of operation. However, for Lemko scholars, the newspaper is an important reminder of the complex search of the Ruthenians for their national identity, the sharp

competition in their environment of opposite ideology optics. Most importantly, "Lemko" encourages scholars to look closer at reasons why some Ukrainians chose to read it. This problem, as demonstrated by the study, needs further detailed consideration.

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Стаття надійшла до редакції 25.01.2021 р.