

POLISH THOUGHTS IN UKRAINIAN

The Polish language is slowly disappearing among the Polish community in Ukraine's Rivne Oblast. This is due to the influence of the clergy and the emigration of the younger generation.

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The first Christian temple in what is now Rivne (then known as Równe in Polish) was founded in 1548 by Maria Nieświęcka of the Ostrogski clan. It served the local Catholic community through many years, even when the surrounding lands became part of the Soviet Union following WWI – until 1956 when the Soviets forced the parish priest, Fr. Serafin Kashubia, to hand over the keys to the church. Despite being prohibited from performing his pastoral duties, Fr. Kaszubia secretly traveled around the parishes in

the Rivne Oblast and continued preaching, not only in Rivne, but also in Dubno, Zdolbuniv, Ostroh and Sarny. The local Catholic community also included Czechs, who can still sometimes be heard in the churches, praying in their language.

One of the most outstanding researchers of the Polish language in the Eastern Borderlands was Prof. Waczesław Werenicz. In an article published in part two of *Polish Dialects in the USSR* (Польские говоры в СССР), entitled "Towards a Historical-Sociological Characterization of Migratory Polish Dialects in Polesie," he discussed the historical migration of Poles into the Polesie region (now part of Ukraine and Belarus). He divided them into three groups. In addition to the settlers' place of origin, he included such criteria as their social status, profession, and prestige and level of native language, which influenced the speed of assimilation. The table shows the reasons behind

Type of settlement	Provincial manors	Forest farms	Agricultural settlements
Period of establishment	16th -17th century	Late 17th century to the 1860s	1860s–1914
Where did the migrants come from?	From various regions of Poland	From the Mazovia region	From various regions of Poland, Vilnius and Galicia regions
Social status of migrants	Provincial nobility, gentry	Petty nobility	Peasants and impoverished nobility
Profession	Military men, farmers	Foresters and farmers	Wage laborers and farmers
Prestige of native language	high	average	low
Language characteristics	Borderlands version of literary Polish	Mazovian dialect	Polish colloquial language
Speed of assimilation	slow	average	fast
Knowledge of Polish folklore	Polish romances, ballads	Mainstream Polish songs	Polish folk songs
Referred to by local people as:	<i>Szlachta</i> (Nobility), <i>Szlaktiuki</i> , <i>Pszeki</i> , <i>Liachy</i>	<i>Mazury</i> (Masurians), <i>Budniki</i> , <i>Bucy</i>	<i>hatieczkowe</i> , <i>parobki</i> (farmhands), <i>ślązaki</i> (Silesians), <i>krakusy</i> (Cracovians)

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KOSTOPOL. Kościół parafialny.

Kostopil, Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ of the Eucharist, built in 1924.

the disappearance of the Polish language, or its being maintained only in the spoken form.

The first group to arrive in the new lands were members of the provincial nobility and gentry, a community that enjoyed high social status – according to the common saying, popular not only in the Eastern Borderlands: “a nobleman on his own farm is a man with no equal.” Werenicz mentions such family names as Abramowicz, Bagiński, Borowski, Wysłouch, Deręgowski, Datner, Zborowski, Pietrowski, Radyszewski, Saplic, Stachowski, and Chwacki, which still exist today. This group, although the oldest, assimilated the least with the local population. The reasons for this included financial status, religion (Roman Catholicism as opposed to the Orthodox faith of the local population), and good relations with the local administration, which favored Polonization. In villages where the Catholic Church remained, Polish continued to be spoken (in the borderland dialect), without succumbing to assimilation, even as late as the third or fourth generation.

The second group was mostly made up of laborers from Mazovia who worked on forest farms. These were less educated people and more susceptible to assimilation. The only distinctive feature of this community was its Roman Catholic faith. Family names in this group included Dąbrowski, Marcinowski, Zaruski, Rudnicki, Trzybalski, Dwożecki, Bielawski, Siedlecki, Sosnowski, Suchecki, Tomaszewski, Grzesiak, Kowalski, and Janowicz, also still present among the current inhabitants of the Oblast.

When it comes to the third group, it is impossible to identify a specific region from which the settlers came, taking up jobs as wage laborers. This was the

least educated community, made up of people who had a weak emotional connection to their own language, and therefore were most susceptible to assimilation. Werenicz does not mention their religious affiliation, which was one of the key features of the previous two communities, distinguishing them from the local population. He mentions the following names: Golik, Gralko, Zajdel, Keszner, Klimczyk, Mróz, Pylisz, and Jagoda. These have undergone complete Ukrainization (Klimczyk – Kłeczuk, Mróz – Moroz) and are currently only found in the latter versions.

After World War II, 95% of Polish settlers left the area for the so-called regained territories in western Poland. Why did others stay? Werenicz cites two reasons. The first reason is subjective: it had to do with family ties, attachment to the place of residence, and fear of risk-taking. The second, objective reason was the lack of contact with large metropolises, which led the Masurians to quickly assimilate into the indigenous population of Polesie and lose their emotional connection to their own nationality.

The revival of the Catholic Church in the Rivne Oblast began in 1989, when the parishioners in Ostroh brought in a priest from Lublin. By Christmas 1989, Władysław Czajka became the Reverend of Ostroh, coming to lead his flock spread across the entire Oblast, which symbolically overlaps with the entire Rivne deanery. He restored temple after temple to the Catholic church. In places where this was not possible, such as in Kostopil, which had been affected by the slaughter of Volhynia, a new church was built in the place of the one that burned down. Father Czajka contributed greatly to the rebirth of the Church in

The newly built
Catholic Church of the
Sacred Heart of Jesus.



GRZEGORZ NAJWOWICZ/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

the Rivne Oblast. To this day he remains with and serves his flock.

The revival of Catholicism is closely related to the revival of Polishness, the return to the Polish language and the promotion of Polish culture. In the initial period, 1989–2001, the Catholic Church played a key role in this process. From the very beginning, apart from religion, the clergy most often taught Polish, and without them the revival of the Polish language would be impossible. Polish lessons stopped in 1939 when these areas were occupied by the Bolsheviks, and so only those who had attended Polish school before the war spoke the language. Those born in the late 1930s and after did not have the opportunity to learn the language as part of a formal education, only as it was spoken at home. Father Czajka had to resort to certain tricks, such as introducing Polish songbooks in Rivne printed in Cyrillic, which, albeit unconventional, was a move that allowed the faithful to not only actively participate in the services, but also to communicate in Polish. Gradually, Ukrainian was also introduced to the church, most often as a language used for liturgical readings, sermons and parish advertisements. However, this bilingual mass had many opponents, especially among the elderly, who contributed the most to reviving their Polish parish communities. This resulted in separate masses being held either completely in Polish or in Ukrainian.

The year 2001 is particularly significant as this is the year when liturgical books appeared in Ukrainian, which accelerated the Ukrainization of services. The division of services concerned the Eucharistic liturgy

on Sundays, weekdays and certain holidays with the Polish mass being held before noon for the elderly, while everyone else attended the Ukrainian services in the evening. This wasn't the case on Christmas Eve and during the Easter Triduum (from Holy Thursday to Easter Sunday), where the entire congregation would worship together. These services were mostly held in Ukrainian, with certain songs performed in Polish, while the Gospels were read in both languages, as was the Our Father prayer. In smaller parishes where only one mass was held on Sundays and holidays the services were divided by week. For example, in the first and third week of the month the mass was held in Polish, and during the other weeks in Ukrainian. During the holidays there was often a bilingual mass with certain parts of the service and the sermons presented in either language. The year 2017 may be considered a watershed date in the third period, in which Ukrainization has been completed. As a result of the clergy gradually excluding Polish from the services, the parish in Rivne has become the fully Ukrainian-language "Church of John Paul II."

There is also another problem. Maintaining the Polish language in the Catholic Church depends on its knowledge among the younger generation, which is eagerly learning Polish as a foreign language. However, the economic situation in Ukraine is forcing young people to emigrate, most often to Poland, as a matter of fact, which has a huge impact on the Catholic Church and the entire Polish community in the Rivne Oblast.

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