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# Imperial diversity in the village: petitions for and against the division of Galicia in 1848<sup>†</sup>

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In Galicia in 1848, petitions as to whether the province should be divided in two with a Polish and a Ruthenian region moved thousands of people to action. Although the petitions were among the largest in the history of the Habsburg monarchy, the petition lists have never been researched in detail. Whereas the initiators of the petition *for* the partition were anxious to present a narrative of national and confessional unity for a “Ruthenian” Eastern Galicia suppressed by “Poles,” the *counter-petitionists* disputed the very existence of a Ruthenian nationality and chose a narrative of peaceful, conflict-free living together. A close reading of the petition lists reveals both conflict and co-existence. The lists with a checkered contrast of Cyrillic, Latin, and Hebrew scripts bear witness to what was a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society. More than that, these sources prove impressively that the three large religious and ethnic communities – Poles, Ruthenians, and Jews – were in continuous day-to-day contact with each other. While the history of emerging nationalism has so far been in the foreground in historiography of the revolutionary events in Galicia in 1848, the petitions’ sources tell another story of everyday social interaction and of practices of social *ambiguity* in the Galician village and market communities.

**Keywords:** Galicia; 1848; Ruthenian and Polish petition campaign; peasantry; nationalism; religion; Jewry; practices of ambiguity

During the 1848 Austrian revolution, the decision as to whether the province of Galicia should be divided into two (a Polish and a Ruthenian region) moved peasants, priests, landlords, burghers, and hundreds of thousands of people into action. Those in favor of and against the idea each sent long petitions to the Austrian Emperor and to the revolutionary Kremsier Reichstag. The two petitions were among the largest in the history of the Habsburg monarchy. At least 200,000 signatures were collected in favor of the region’s partition, while a substantial number was also gathered to uphold the region’s unity. Those in favor of partition found arguments for their position through telling a tale of two historically, nationally, and religiously distinct communities. Those opposed to the idea contributed just as much to the perception of a population socially split in two with some disputing from the outset the very idea that there was such a thing as an independent Ruthenian nationality.

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However, if one takes the time to delve more deeply into the details of the petition texts, then an entirely different story begins to unfold. In sharp contrast to the explicit *collective claims* that the petition's initiators made with regard to their religious, national, and social belonging and "groupness" (Brubaker 2002) in defense of their position, the *individual presentations* made by the signatories in relation to their religious denomination, language, or script did not always match up with the tidy categories their argument assumed. The countless lists of signatures that can be seen in the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna have not been analyzed up to now. Even if Jan Kozik (1986), Otto Hoerhan (1966, 251–259), and Krevecz'ky'j (1910) provided seminal information on the campaign, the petition lists offer an additional and insightful perspective on the history of everyday social interaction in the region. The checkered contrast of Cyrillic, Latin, and Hebrew scripts that can be found in the documents bears witness to the pattern of interaction that occurred within what was a multi-national, multi-ethnic, and multi-confessional society. The affiliations of individuals reveal blurring borderlines and overlaps between the groups inhabiting the region at the time.

According to the census of 1849, about 4.9 million people lived in Galicia of whom 46% were Polish and another 47% Ruthenian. Almost 7% of the population was Jewish (a substantial proportion); Germans represented 0.6% of the population. As a rule, the Poles were Roman Catholic, the Ruthenians Greek Catholic, and the Germans Protestant, although religious and national affiliations did not always follow this pattern (Kozik 1986, 17).

### **Perspectives from the imperial center: Vienna's partition plans for Galicia between 1846 and 1850**

Before the March 1848 Revolution, there already were imperial plans for the partition of Galicia, directed toward two separate aims. Firstly, they were aimed at resolving administrative, bureaucratic, and political issues by increasing the effectiveness of paths of communication, decision-making, and military control within the imperial chain of command. The annexation of the Krakow Republic in 1846 was the event that pushed the Vienna government to action, as Krakow now needed to be legally and administratively integrated into the empire's structures. The annexation threatened to render the already oversized administrative region of Galicia entirely unmanageable, especially in light of the fact that the region remained in a restless state in the wake of the attempted Polish revolution and the peasant rebellions of 1846. It was for these reasons that in 1846 State Chancellor Klemens von Metternich moved to partition the province, a measure which seemed to him justified based on administrative, cultural, and geographical grounds. Metternich received imperial approval for his plans, but the new governor of Galicia, Franz von Stadion, then put them on hold. To avoid cutting the existing close relationship between Eastern and Western Galicia, Stadion wished to merely limit the change to the creation of two separate senates for the provincial government (Schlitter 1920, 61–71; Kozik 1986, 266–285; Maner 2005, 90).

Secondly, the purpose of the imperial partition plan was to strengthen the authority of the state at the expense of the rights of the region's noble estates. As the seigniorial rights of the estates were mainly in the hands of Polish and Polonized high nobility and lower-level gentry, this policy of Vienna's was characterized by contemporaries and by some historians as "anti-Polish." However, as any comparison with other crown lands will show, the policy emanating from Vienna was not so much against any particular nationality, but was in the first instance a defensive action rooted in ideas of bureaucratic centralism against the

historical rights of the estates (for interpretation of the policy as “anti-Polish,” see e.g. von Mises 1902; Smółka 1916, 54; Bohachevska-Chomjak 1967, 21–24; Rudnytsky 1982, 34).

All this was to change as a result of the March Revolution. The issue was no longer simply the best way to carve up the province for administrative convenience. The Council of Ministers first resumed discussion of the administrative partition of Galicia on 17 May 1848, and returned to the issue on 30 May 1848 and 8 June 1848, ordering its implementation by 1 August 1848 (Kozik 1986, 266) via an Imperial Decree on 19 June 1848. During the revolutionary period, the Ruthenians, not least due to the loyalty they had shown to the emperor in 1846 and 1848, were promised on several occasions that Galicia would be partitioned. Admittedly, the Ruthenians were not thinking of the administrative benefits such an arrangement would have for the imperial center in Vienna, but rather of the opportunities to develop structures of their own independent of the Poles, who were the politically dominant force in Galicia at the time. The petitions in favor of the partition of Galicia, the pamphlets and polemics and the negotiations at the Slavic Congress in Prague and in the Kremsier Parliament, however, were to make the question of partition into an issue of nationality and religion (Polonsky 1998). This in turn was to have a negative effect on the approach taken by the Council of Ministers. As a result, even the substantial concessions granted to the Ruthenians in Pillersdorf’s Decree of 9 May 1848 and passed down by Greek Catholic Archbishop Hryhory Yakhymovych on 23 May 1848 within the church hierarchy (Pillersdorf 1848) were withdrawn once more (Waldenegg and Christoph 2005, 29–31).

The activities of Agenor Gołuchowski, the new governor of Galicia, who opposed Ruthenian autonomy, and who became involved in intrigues in Vienna against the Ruthenians for their alleged Russophilia (Magocsi 2002, 99; Rudnytsky 2001; Wendland 2001, 31–34; Jepsen 2005, 72) were to provoke the body that represented the head of the Ruthenian national movement, the *Holovna Rus’ka Rada*, to initiate its ambitious petition campaign. The Poles of Galicia responded with their own professional counter-campaign. On 27 July 1848, in response to Polish objections, Minister President Anton von Doblhoff postponed the planned partition (Kozik 1986, 269). The issue eventually landed in the revolutionary parliament in Kremsier, in whose constitutional committee it was discussed. Galicia was represented in this parliamentary committee by members of parliament Florian Ziemiałkowski, Greek Catholic Bishop Hryhory Yakhymovych, and Frantisek Smółka. While Ziemiałkowski argued in a 22 January 1849 speech that there was no such thing as a Ruthenian nation, and that the Ruthenians were simply an invention of Count Stadion, Yakhymovych defended Ruthenian autonomy and the partition of Galicia using historical, cultural, economic, religious, and linguistic arguments (Springer 1885, 20; Fras 1991, 54). The Czech representatives, who had already acted as intermediaries between the two parties and who had put a bilateral Polish-Ruthenian agreement on track at the Slavic Congress in Prague that was held in advance of the Kremsier debate, took a neutral position in the conflict now breaking out and abstained in the parliamentary vote. This proved enough to defeat the proposals of the Ruthenians in the Reichstag (Stolarczyk 1994, 150–153; Botushans’kyj 2000; Cetnarowicz 2000; Hostička 2000). After the revolution had been put down and after the premature dissolution of the Kremsier Parliament, the Austrian Council of Ministers was only able to bring itself to half resolve the problem, declaring on 28 January 1849 that the six westernmost districts of Galicia were autonomous administrative units. The last memorandum of the Supreme Ruthenian Council on 29 March 1849, which went substantially further than earlier demands and put the creation of a separate Crown Land of Eastern Galicia on the table, was unable to make any changes to this plan (Kozik 1986, 281).

However, debate on an administrative partition of Galicia was set to continue, even within the terms of neo-absolutist centralism (Brandt 2014; Seiderer 2015). As early as May 1850, Interior Minister Alexander Bach spoke at the Council of Ministers in favor of an autonomous Eastern Galicia, though his view was a minority one (Waldenegg and Christoph 2005, 36–39). Amongst his effects is a paper which I believe to be the notes for this speech to the Council of Ministers (von Bach n.d.). Bach, at the time still a liberal bureaucrat, appealed in this memorandum to the “governing principle of equality among nationalities” (see Stourzh 1985, for an excellent overview) and called for the creation of a “distinct Ruthenia.” In a rhetorically brilliant cameo, he picked to pieces the prejudices and resentments of his contemporaries. One of these attitudes consisted of the worry that the Ruthenians had been falling into “Czechism” and that they would therefore just strengthen “the already strong Slavist movement” within the Habsburg Monarchy. In addition, the Ruthenians, on grounds of their relative backwardness, were reckoned to be an “inert mass,” incapable of being endowed with equal rights. Bach opposed this view arguing that equality in competence could only be achieved through equality in rights. And he warned that, even if the national consciousness of the Ruthenians was still oriented toward loyalty to the crown, these attitudes could easily flip over into separatism.

Despite their loyalty to the house of the emperor, the Ruthenians were to achieve no further territorial autonomy in the years to follow. Instead, the imperial center was destined to favor stronger regional hegemony for Hungarians and Poles in the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 and in the Austro-Galician Compromise of 1868, as it feared the potential separatism of those two nationalities even more than that of the Ruthenians.

### **The views of the Galician population: the petition campaign**

If one opts to look at the partition of Galicia not merely from the perspective of the Vienna government, but also from that of the Galician population, it is necessary to delve deep into the source materials produced by the petition campaign. The most important documents are those of the Supreme Ruthenian Council, the Polish National Council, the Imperial Court, and the many petition forms on which the actual signatures for and against the partition of Galicia are written in Latin, Cyrillic, and Hebrew script. The individual names listed are sometimes accompanied with the profession of the signatory and often supplemented with an indication of his or her religion. It is indeed noteworthy that many women are among the signatories, showing that they had the opportunity to express themselves politically irrespective of the fact that they did not yet have the right to vote.

However, the manner in which the petition was recorded by contemporaries was ambivalent. Many of the forms contain no more than long lists of names, sometimes accompanied by a cross instead of a signature. The principal effect of these pages and pages of names without any signatures was to inspire mistrust of the petition’s validity. Mention of the fact that the Galician population contained a large proportion of peasants with a low level of literacy was enough to put the significance of the petition in favor of partition into doubt. This constituted an argument commonly used in the counter-petition’s campaign (ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 131, 1). The reaction of Polish member of the Reichstag for Galicia, Florian Ziemiałkowsky, was typical: in his view, every Ruthenian who adhered to the Greek Catholic rite had been forced to sign by his local priest, and the peasants who had signed it often had no idea of its content (Springer 1885, 20). If one puts some of the individual lists of names under the microscope, it is indeed impossible in all cases to rule out that the local Greek Catholic parish priest had drawn up the list and himself made the necessary cross beside the names of illiterate people included on that list.

Even for those of the peasantry who were indeed unable to read and write, one should not immediately make presumptions about their capacity to hold a political view. Recent research on the peasantry of Galicia has shown that peasants were indeed very capable of defending themselves in legal confrontations with landlords, for example, using Austrian institutions in order to enforce their legal rights and setting up their own local self-help organizations (Stauter-Halsted 2001; Pacholkiv 2002, 56; Struve 2005, 76, 123; for a more pessimistic view, see *Polnische Revolutionen 1863*; von Mises 1902). While the peasants were not represented in the Supreme Ruthenian Council in the revolutionary year from 1848 to 1849, they did participate in the work of the Ruthenian district and decanate councils (Struve 2005, 88–89; see Turij 2002, xxii–xxv on the Rada’s inner organization). One suspects that those who took on the role of literate intermediary in order to explain the political content of the petition documents would not have been limited to the few peasants who were able to read and write and to local priests (Himka 1984, 449), but one would also have had to include some of the Jews from the local village. While the Jewish innkeeper might have been an object of some disdain, he also acted as a person of trust and an advisor. Local village inns, which were often run by local Jews, were at the center of local social life, often hosting district councils and local judges (Haumann 2004, 35, 40; Struve 2005, 396).

Incidentally, fraud attempts cannot be ruled out for the counter-petitions created by the Polish National Council either. Mistrust in relation to the petitions’ signatories and content was expressed from both sides. There were more than a few complaints that landlords had forced their dependents, peasants, and tax-payers to sign the counter-petition (Kozik 1986, 267). These reports mainly concentrate on casting doubt on the apparent high level of participation in the petition. The grand total of 270,000 signatures represents one-fifth of the entire population of Galicia – a rather improbable proportion. However, even if we take into account these irregularities and accept the fact that public support for each of the two petitions may have been less than what the organizers claimed, it is clear that tens of thousands of people were engaged in the debate over the partition of Galicia.

### **The petition in favor of the partition of Galicia**

One of the motivations of the Ruthenian population to express a view *in favor of* the partition of Galicia surely lay in the deeply rooted need to use their own language, but also in the opportunity to mark themselves off both to the outside world and in the face of “others” – whether those others be Polish, Jews, or Germans – and to create their own political community. The initiators of the petition for the partition of Galicia into Western and Eastern Galicia – with administrative centers in Krakow and Lemberg (now Lviv), and with a Polish and Ruthenian majority, respectively – were therefore anxious to present a narrative of unity for Eastern Galicia. Their claims in this regard were national and confessional in character.

The first draft of the petition by the Supreme Ruthenian Council in Lemberg listed the benefits of the partition of Galicia for the region’s population. Thus, in that first draft the population was asked only whether they wanted to speak Ruthenian in school, official communications, and church (Figures 1 and 2).

The eventual demands of the Supreme Ruthenian Council to the government and Reichstag were more far reaching. In summary, they demanded not just the recognition of the Ruthenian language for use in public administrative bodies, in school and in church, but also the equal treatment of the Greek Catholic rite and an equal endowment to its clergy (see e.g. a letter from the district of Stryj [Stryj] to the Reichstag, *ÖStA HHSStA ÖRT 1848–1849*, 130, 195). This equal and improved treatment of the clergy was not only

## Protokol.

Ny Hromadamy Zastrebicy i Porodymyr Cerkwie  
Kowkowskeho z kolorych Zastrebicy i 83, a Porodymyr  
i 83 Owadow iły Numerow domowych pomylacie, uazet mi.  
sawocho Dusz Slawomyha na dnia najpizszym wyznawny.

1<sup>o</sup>  
Czy chcieliby podzielić Galicyę zę,  
byście maty zabezpečenye czechu  
narodnost' nashy ruskyj i s'ko,  
ty, ruskyj Włady, i rusku  
Guberniyu? ad 1<sup>o</sup>

2<sup>o</sup>  
Czy podpiszele s'ia na toic? ad 2<sup>o</sup>

Chociemo. -  
Ne pygnazemo s'ia, dla toho, bo  
dskazemo s'ia, aby jakta zrada nlym  
ne byla. -

Diat s'ia w Zastrebiczech i Porodymyry dnia 10<sup>o</sup> Sierpnia  
1848.

Władysław Sztrawijfki  
Paroch Dastrebicki i Porodymyrski  
Namytlyng k Sokolki

Nasno wiaty ze Hromady hie w Protokoli wyrazony ho  
dponidaty, s'ia hie napisano Sumlinna Smilayona, i wsta,  
s'iois rukhoj podpisucemo. -

Jozann Surawinskiy  
Dawid Nedyk Ryznykubakow, Jozif  
.....

Figure 1. Citizens from the Zowkow region under the lead of their priest express their wish for 'securing the Russian nation, our Russian schools, Russian authorities, and for a Russian province'. However, they do it using exclusively the Polish language.

argued to be in the interests of the Church, but was also formulated as responding to a wider social need. The absence of equality for the Eastern Church, it was argued, had led to the cultural and social hegemony of the Roman Catholic Church, and thus of the Poles, as well as to a level of emigration and polonization affecting the Greek Catholic elite (see Memorandum of the Supreme Ruthenian Council to the Ministry, 17 July 1848, in ÖStA HHSStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 130, 360).

The narrative of unity of an autonomous Eastern Galicia, which the Supreme Ruthenian Council presented in the document accompanying the petition, was politically nationalist in its language. It was directed most immediately against the "Poles." It expressed the danger that within Europe Galicia "would be taken for a Polish land from an international

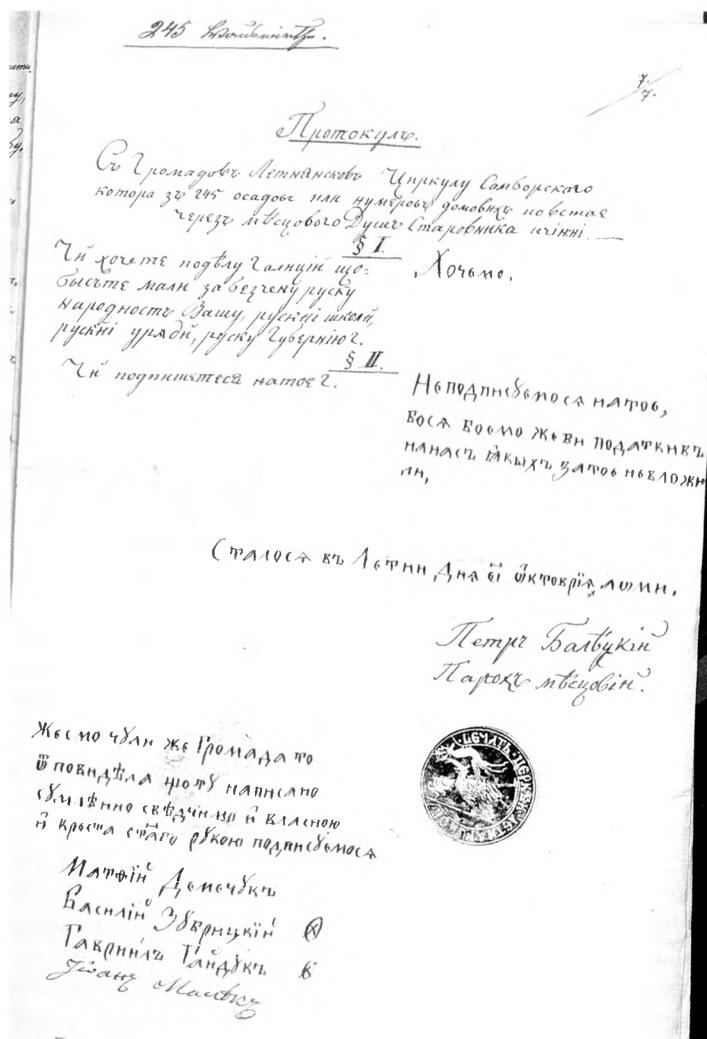


Figure 2. Citizens from the Sambor region express their wish for Russian nationality, schools, authorities, and province as well. This time, the priest drafted the minutes using Ruthenian language with Cyrillic script.

perspective! [...] we Ruthenians would be committing political suicide if we were not to raise our voices to correct this erroneous, yet widespread view” (Denkschrift 1848).

With the transformation of the partition question into a question of nationality, the original very wide-ranging reasons that were appealed to in 1848 for the partition of Galicia were combined together into a single politically nationalist justification. In one of their last communications to the Reichstag on 19 September 1848, the Lemberg-based Supreme Ruthenian Council was to summarize its demands once more (letter to the Imperial Council, Lemberg, 19 September 1848, in: ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 132, 606). The document begins in a reproachful tone:

The Polish Party, which considers its struggles for its nationality and independence to be an inviolable Holy Grail, for which it would sacrifice everything and for whose furtherance would set the whole of Europe in movement, denies to Ruthenians the most basic principles of truth and justice.

The Ruthenians were responding once more to Polish imputations that the Ruthenian people were simply “a branch of the Polish people” and that the Ruthenian language was merely a “dialect” unsuitable for use in “higher-level rhetoric and education.” Against this view the Supreme Ruthenian Council again countered that the use of Cyrillic was an identifiable Ruthenian trait and that the Ruthenians had long constituted a nation. According to them, the long-term survival of the Ruthenian language and culture could be assured only if the partition of Galicia into its Polish and Ruthenian parts became a reality, and only if Ruthenian was to be spoken in public institutions and places of education. Authors talked at length about the specific character of the Ruthenians in terms of “language, costume, customs, calendar, church rites and national practices” and used these traits as justification for partition not just in the letter accompanying the petition written by the Supreme Ruthenian Council, but also expressed similar sentiments in letters sent in from the various regions of Galicia to the Reichstag (see e.g. the letter from Drohobycz in the district of Sambor to the Imperial Council, 17 July 1848, ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 130, 395).

The Supreme Ruthenian Council in Lemberg sent the Reichstag in Vienna and Krenier the original petition documentation from the various regions in several stages. On 13 September 1848, at a time when the Supreme Council found itself already under strong pressure from the Polish counter-movement, it submitted the last substantial volume of forms, containing almost 68,000 signatures, which had been sent to the Supreme Council by its affiliate assemblies from the various districts of Eastern Galicia. This paper will focus on the petition lists created during this last stage, with the justification that the counter-petition documents from the same eastern regions are also accessible. This allowed us to compare the petitions from the same regions for and against partitioning the province directly against one another, including the explicit claims they made and implicit information they allowed us to deduce.

If the Ruthenian nation in its own self-image as described by the Supreme Ruthenian Council was defined by identifying features such as the Ruthenian language, Cyrillic script, and its people’s adherence to the Greek Catholic rite, then these elements could be expected to have left their mark in the signature lists collected in Eastern Galicia. It is surely no coincidence that the final lists of signatures submitted *in favor of* the partition of Galicia almost all contain indications relating to language and religious adherence. The language used in these indications ranged from official abbreviations such as “rit. gr.,” “rit. lat.,” which were preferred by officials and intellectuals, to colloquial descriptions such as “Rusyn,” used by inhabitants themselves.

Indeed in this final bundle, which takes in almost 68,000 signatures (for more regional details, see ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 132, 608), the vast majority of the petitioners – close to 100% of them – can be identified as adherents to the Greek Catholic rite. This seemed such a natural assumption to the creators of the petition that on many petition forms the information on religious affiliations was not given for the individual persons listed, but for the group of petitioners as a whole. This was due not least to the approach taken by the Supreme Ruthenian Council, which, when setting up its affiliate Ruthenian councils around the countryside very largely, not to say exclusively, took advantage of the existing structures provided by the Greek Catholic parishes. This had the effect that some of the lists came not from a particular municipality in a particular district, but were recorded with an explicit reference to a particular “parish” (see e.g. for the Lemberg district, ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 132, 762; for the Przemyśl district ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 132, 780, 823). The community of Wierzbiany in the district of Przemyśl signed the form as the “Rusische [*sic*] Gemeinde,” “Russian community,” and in doing so were referring not to a nationally defined community but to a religious one

(ÖStA HHSStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 132, 773). In the case of other petitions, the parish priest of the relevant village had organized the signatures, and certified the results of these efforts as the “Paroch,” “parish priest” (see in particular for the districts of Brzeżany and Kolomea, ÖStA HHSStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 132). What was particularly clear was the self-image of the Eastern Church as the religion of the majority, as illustrated on the signature lists that only mentioned religious affiliation where it differed from the norm. In the communities of Iwanowka, Kokoczyne, Okno, Dubkowce, and Czernieszówka in the Tarnopol district, for example, after the names of particular individuals the abbreviation “rit. Latini” appeared, indicating adherence to the Roman Catholic rite (ÖStA HHSStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 132, 945–950).

As clear as the petition forms of the Supreme Ruthenian Council were in terms of religious affiliation, they were much more equivocal in relation to the language and script form used in writing. Cyrillic and Latin characters alternated consistently throughout the documents (Figure 3).

From this, however, one can only come to very vague conclusions as to whether the spoken language of signatories tended to be Polish or Ruthenian (see also Struve 2005, 378–381). This uncertainty in interpretation of the sources is due to the fact that the vast majority of the petition lists were columns of names of illiterate peasants collected together by the parish priest, upon which crosses were placed against the individual names. Whether or not this collection of signatures contained more “forgeries” than previous ones due to the fact that the Supreme Ruthenian Council was at the time under heavy political pressure can neither be confirmed nor ruled out in hindsight. It is certainly noteworthy that while for some districts, including Brzezany, Zołkiew, Sambor, and Przemyśl, a relatively large number of names with autographic signature were submitted – this applies, by the way, to women who signed the petition too – the names listed for other areas, such as Tarnopol (now Ternopil) or Stanisławów, were almost exclusively marked with crosses. However, this may have been due to a deliberate strategy chosen by the relevant individual affiliate Ruthenian Councils. Jan Kozik reports that some landlords threatened their peasants with massive penalties for having signed the partition petition and that for this reason the local parish priest signed on behalf of the community according to his own rights (1986, 267; see also Lane 1998, 377). Independently of the question as to whether there were “forgeries” within these lists of names, the style of script used does certainly provide clues as to the education and language of the village clergy.

If one recalls contemporary attitudes to the habits and tendencies of the Greek Catholic clergy, the proportion of lists of names written in Cyrillic is surprisingly high. The typical Greek Catholic priest in or around the year 1848 was considered by contemporaries to be largely Polonized, according to an image that is still to be detected in portions of the historiography right up until today (Pacholkiv 2002, 56). While the village priests in the eighteenth century shared the lives of their community and were often active as farmers, by the middle of the nineteenth century the clergy, after reforms in their training, had distanced themselves from the village community and began converging in terms of manners and status with the Polish gentry (Pacholkiv 2002, 65). The clergy began to use Polish in their everyday dealings, especially after use of the “Slavo-Ruthenian” language was eliminated once more from universities in 1806. In 1816, prominent men of the cloth managed to extract from Vienna the concession that primary schools should be placed under church care and that Ruthenian should be accepted under certain circumstances as the local language of instruction (Kozik 1986, 51–53). However, this movement was to wane again during the 1830s, and concern for language was to become restricted to small circles within the intelligentsia, especially among young intellectual clerics (Pacholkiv



Against this assumption, however, evaluation of the petition forms show that basic knowledge of Ruthenian and Cyrillic was widespread in Eastern Galicia. Almost every single petition form contained at least one short passage in Ruthenian Cyrillic. Cyrillic script was used exclusively for the short introductory remarks expressing approval of the partition of Galicia, while in the lists of names themselves Cyrillic alternated with Latin lettering. But when one takes a closer look at the usage of Cyrillic written language in the lists of names on the petition, this usage varied radically from region to region. The proportions given here are based on my own estimations and counts as I looked at the archival sources (ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 132). In the district of Brzezany, one-third of the petition forms were exclusively written in Cyrillic Ruthenian, while the same could be said of only one-fifth of the forms from the district of Czortków, yet for Kolomea the figure was almost three quarters. Against this, the figure for the Lemberg district was vanishingly small. For the district of Przemyśl, which had been the cultural center of Ukrainian up until the 1830s (Stepien 2005), the share was also down to around about one-fifth. The Sambor district submitted one-third of its forms in Cyrillic. Against this, only a little more than a tenth of the forms from Tarnopol were in Ruthenian. Almost a fifth were in Ruthenian script in Żółkiew. In the Złoczów district the figure was one-third and in Stanisławów the proportion was equally small. The contention oft repeated in the historiographical record that the use of Polish in everyday speech does not rule out the presence of a Ruthenian consciousness would seem to find support in the petition forms. An eloquent example to illustrate this assertion is found in one of the forms submitted from the district of Stanisławów, which – apart from its demand for the partition of Galicia – called for the use of “the land’s own language” – Ruthenian – in higher and intermediate-level schools. It made these demands, however, in Polish (see Rizdwiony municipality in the district of Stanisławów, ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 132, 1165). In addition, some indications support the contention that more than a few of the literate population switched regularly between the two languages and script forms. A resident of the Alt-Bohordczan municipality may serve here as *pars pro toto*: her name appeared in the list of signatories with her forename written in Latin script and her surname in Cyrillic (see Alt-Bohordczan municipality in the Stanisławów district, ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 132, 1167).

If one were to base one’s view of the Ruthenian national movement on the benchmark provided by the petitions in favor of partitioning Galicia, then the large proportion of Greek Catholics would seem to accord with the connection asserted between nation and religious denomination (see e.g. Himka 1984; Turij 1999, 2003). In contrast, the relatively modest use of Ruthenian Cyrillic written language would seem to contradict any postulated relationship between nation and the use of Cyrillic script (Magocsi 2002, 83–98). The logic of the forms used in the petition in favor of a partition of Galicia in 1848 would seem therefore to show the Ruthenians as a more religiously based nationality than one based on language. However, as the paragraphs to follow will show, adherence to the Greek Catholic Church did not suffice as a reliable one-to-one indicator of belonging to a “Ruthenian” identity either.

### **The petition in opposition to the partition of Galicia**

When one changes one’s perspective through taking a look at the petition *against* the partition of Galicia, one sees the village and country communities of the same regions of Galicia in an entirely different light. The everyday story of coexistence in a heterogeneous society now comes center stage – with all the hierarchies and divisions that go along with such a society, but also with the commonalities and places of encounter that can be read from the sources.

The counter-petition was an initiative of the Polish National Council, *Narodowa Rada*, together with the *Sobor Ruskyy*, a Ruthenian institution that was funded and supported by the Polish National Council. The *Sobor Ruskyy* was mainly made up of the Polish-Ruthenian landowning gentry, along with legal scholars and officials, and enjoyed relatively little backing in Eastern Galicia in comparison with the Supreme Ruthenian Council (Kozik 1986, 269; Polonsky 1998, 457; Mudry'i 2008). The *Sobor* pursued a policy that can be described in a nutshell by the slogan “gente rutheni, natione poloni,” “Ruthenians of Polish nationality.” They acknowledged a political, cultural, and even linguistic hegemony of the Poles, at the same time as opposing an excessively narrow identification of the Ruthenian nationality with the Greek Catholic community. Instead, some of them stressed “ancestry” and history as decisive features within the definition of “Ruthenianness” (Mudry'j 2007, 268; Świątek 2014). Additionally, in the covering letters and pamphlets they wrote for the initiative, the initiators of the counter-petition drew a picture of the harmonious coexistence of the various communities living together in Galicia. Thus Dąbcański, in the brochures already referred to above, emphasized that both social advancement and social intercourse between Roman and Greek Catholics and between the Polish and Ruthenian-speaking populations had always been possible in Galicia. Aside from the political campaign, in which the very existence of a Ruthenian nationality was vehemently disputed, this picture of conflict-free coexistence in Galicia constituted the second main line of argument which the Polish national movement used in their efforts to oppose the partition of Galicia. This argument was to persist through the following decades and was still propagated in the voluminous monograph by Stanisław Smółka, who alluded to the fact that it was only the very political and cultural co-existence of Poles and Ruthenians that gave momentum to the emergence of a Ruthenian consciousness (Smółka 1916, 54, 75). It was therefore very important for a wider perception of the campaign in 1848, that followers of the Greek Catholic clergy and peasants describing themselves as “włościan [*sic*] obrz. Greckiego,” “peasants adhering to Greek rites,” were among those who signed the petition against the partition of Galicia (see e.g. examples from the Żółkiew district, ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 131, list nos 2, 7 without folio number).

The transformation of the debate on the partition of Galicia into an issue of nationality had the effect that it was now possible to assert objections and arguments that would not have made sense for use against a merely administrative partition, which was what the Vienna government had originally envisioned. Ruthenians living in the western, Polish-dominated, but not exclusively Polish-populated, part of Galicia were to make their presence felt in the counter-petition. They wrote of fears that in the event of a new split up of territories motivated by Polish nationalism, they would be demographically outnumbered in Western Galicia by Poles. According to their arguments, such a “political partition” would be a threat to the development of their Ruthenian nationality, as no precise geographical division could be made between the two nationalities. If any substantial number of Ruthenians residing in West Galicia were to remain in that territory after partition, they would be threatened with the “irrefutable danger of the total extermination of their nationality” (ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 131, 1). A look at the lists of signatories shows that those who spoke out against any partition motivated by political nationalism were in no way made up exclusively of polonized krypto-Ruthenians, as has been conjectured on various occasions in historiography. It should be said, though, that the Polish influence in these counter-petitions by Ruthenians is clearly visible. The headers of such petitions were drawn up exclusively in the Polish language. The majority of supplementary comments beside the signatures, on professions or on religious adherence, for example, were also in Polish. Against this, one also finds names in Cyrillic script as well as a

great many adherents to the Greek Catholic rite, which was considered among the main characteristics of the Ruthenian nation (on polonophilism among Greek Catholic clergy, see Turij 1994).

Given the process that had made the partition plans an issue of nationality, it is not surprising that a large number of members of the Jewish community expressed their opposition to it. They feared being made to suffer additional penalties as an ethnic and religious minority within a nationality-based polity. And this fear was not entirely unfounded. In one of the covering letters accompanying the petition *in favor of* the partition of Galicia from the Stry district, the complaint was made that industry and commerce in Galicia was in the hands of Jews, accompanied by a demand for a prohibition on Jewish settlement (ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 130, 194). In addition, fears emerged among Jews of anti-Semitic violence. This may explain the existence of petition forms *against* the partition recorded exclusively by Jewish communities and containing their own separate introductory remarks. For example, the Jewish citizens of the city of Złoczów were surely alluding to the fears of violence and anti-Semitic excesses elsewhere when they warned of the “horrific events set in train by the division of Hungary and Croatia,” and expressed their “utterly emphatic” rejection of the partition of Galicia (ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 27, 131). Jewish citizens of the municipality of Zatoscy in the same district referred to the economic disadvantages of partition, if “the existing relationships in industry and commerce” were severed “by the division of region into two governments” (ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 131, 86). The fear of becoming collaterally involved in local conflicts between Ruthenians and Poles, and of suffering injury and property damage as a result, reflects the ambivalent position of Jews in Galicia (see e.g. Friedman 1929; Haumann 2004; Śliz 2006).

While the Supreme Ruthenian Council had reinforced the arguments in favor of their demand for partition by appealing to the history of national unity among the Ruthenian domains in Eastern Galicia, for the Polish counter-movement, a narrative of peaceful, conflict-free coexistence represented an important strategic direction. In order to reinforce this argument and in particular to prove the ethnic and religious diversity of Galicia, religious adherence was also noted on the signature forms after each individual name. In contrast with the case of the petitions in favor of the partition of Galicia, the religious affiliation of the signatories was in no way assumed to be self-evident in the counter-petition. Greek Catholic, Roman Catholic, and Jewish religions were all represented in substantial numbers. At the same time, the number of people on each list of names that simply had a cross beside their name rather than a full signature was smaller. Lists with a mixture of hand-written signatures and lists of names with crosses are, however, also present in the materials.

If one looks further into these details and into indications of religious adherence, then what emerges is on the one hand a story of coexistence in diversity and, on the other, a number of signs of disharmony. Thus it should be said that even in areas where the Ruthenian nationality as defined by religion was in the majority, a not insignificant section of the population wrote in Polish and adhered to the Latin rite. But yet the details on religious affiliations did give hints of the social divisions of the region. Precisely on those petition forms that contained a mixture of hand-written signatures and names accompanied by a cross it is noticeable that the adherents to the Latin rite were mostly literate, while those on the side of the Greek rite were more likely to be illiterate – an example of this phenomenon can be seen in several villages within the district of Zołkiew (ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 131, 3, 9, list nos 6, 8, 10, 10a, 13, 18, 20, 26 without folio number), but also in others within the Tarnopol district (ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 131, 136). Admittedly, this rule of thumb was not without its exceptions, there were also illiterates

among the Roman Catholics, and indeed competent writers among the Greek Catholic peasants (ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 131, district of Zol̄kiew, list nos 2, 3, 7, 25 without folio number), but this observation tends to be confirmed by contemporary statistics (Pacholkiv 2002, 12).

A further clue to the social status of the signatories is provided by the name of the person listed first on each petition form. This regularly corresponded to the person who had promoted the petition in the relevant community. While in the case of the petition *in favor of* the partition such people were mostly Greek Catholic clergymen, the signatures on the counter-petition were headed up mainly by landowners and by members of the middle class that was beginning to emerge at the time. We are given information on the rank and profession of these people, with the most frequently appearing stations in life including “posiadan ziemi” (estate owner), “ekonom” (landlord’s agent), “fabrykant” (manufacturer), “aptekarcz” (apothecary), or “mandatariusz” (an official appointed by the landlord). Only very seldom does one find a “rolnik” (farmer) as the first signatory of a petition form (ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 131, Zol̄kiew district, list no. 17 without folio number).

Interesting conclusions can be drawn from the signature forms on the social position and status of the Jews. On the one hand, the Jews were an accepted part of Galician society, as many petition forms show: Jews appear on precisely the same terms on a list with their Polish and Ruthenian neighbors (Figure 4).

On the other hand, they constantly had to reckon with hostility due to their special social and economic position (see e.g. complains in ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 131, Złoczów district, fol. 27). Clues to the social position of those Galician Jews who signed a petition form against partition can be found in the details provided on their professions. Amongst such professions are found trades typical of Jews in Galicia (Thon 1907; Friedman 1929, 8–17; Bartal 2010, 51) such as commercial dealers of the widest possible variety of specializations – timber merchant, cattle dealer, horse trader, salt dealer, flour merchant, flour distributor, spicer, grocer, peddler, inn keeper, tavern keeper, and “Pächter von Propinationen,” a tavern-keeper with propination rights; along with crafts common for Jews in Galicia, such as tailor, shoemaker, furrier, hat maker, and milliner (see e.g. ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 131, 65–69, 76–84). Some individual groups of craftsmen signed the petition as a corporate professional group; for example, the master butchers (ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 131, 74–75 [in Hebrew and Latin]), master furriers (ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 131, 76–77 [in Hebrew and Latin]), and even the porters (ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 131, 88–89 [in Hebrew only]) from the Brody municipality in the district of Złoczów. Rabbis rarely appeared as signatories (for an exception, see ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 131, 66). In addition to this, one also finds references to “rolnik religii hebreyskey” (see for the Złoczów district ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 131, 62), Jewish farmers, a fact of some significance even if only because according to Jewish self-perception that has survived right up until today and to a view that resonates through historiography, the Jews are often thought never to have been farmers (Haumann 2004, 35).

But it is not just the details given on religious adherence and on rank, but also the script system and language chosen that allows one to make interpretations in relation to communal life in a diverse community. Cyrillic was almost completely absent from these signature forms and can be counted on one hand (ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 131, 47). While one could detect a certain level of practice in the way signatories switched routinely between Cyrillic and Latin script in the petition in favor of partition of the region, in the one against partition it is the use of Hebrew that is of most particular interest. Some

*Podpisy do protestacji przeciwko podziałowi Galicji  
na dwie części, zebrane w obwodzie Tarnobroskim.*

| <i>Imię y Nazwisko</i>    | <i>Miejscowość</i> | <i>Wyznanie religijne</i> | <i>Charakter</i>                       |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--|
| <i>Ferdynand Łozinski</i> | <i>Żbarnów</i>     | <i>rymsko katol.</i>      | <i>Mieszkan.</i>                       |
| <i>Karol Kondrowski</i>   | " "                | <i>rym. kat.</i>          | <i>Własniel grunt.</i>                 |
| <i>Jan Komarowski</i>     | " "                | <i>rym. kat.</i>          | <i>Własniel domu.</i>                  |
| <i>Antoni Szonke</i>      | " "                | <i>akolony</i>            | <i>Pracow. Policy.</i>                 |
| <i>Hippolit Szawski</i>   | " "                | <i>rym. katol.</i>        | <i>Konduktor Magistrali</i>            |
| <i>Hersch Kowler</i>      | " "                | <i>Judaizm</i>            | <i>Rupiec.</i>                         |
| <i>Tomasz Janowski</i>    | " "                | <i>rym. kat.</i>          | <i>Mieszkan.</i>                       |
| <i>Johann Włodarczyk</i>  | " "                | <i>rym. kat.</i>          | <i>Mieszkan.</i>                       |
| <i>Nikolaj Sawurynski</i> | " "                | <i>Rusyn</i>              | <i>Własniel Gruntu</i>                 |
| <i>Leopold Szwed</i>      | " "                | <i>Przyrządk.</i>         | <i>Własniel domu</i>                   |
| <i>Ignacy Rakwiczki</i>   | " "                | <i>r. l.</i>              | <i>Własniel domu</i>                   |
| <i>Wijdor Feldmann</i>    | " "                | <i>israelit.</i>          | <i>Mieszkan. i maister Stolarski</i>   |
| <i>Agnete Wahl</i>        | " "                | <i>r. l.</i>              | <i>Mechanik</i>                        |
| <i>Jan Siwicki</i>        | " "                | <i>r. l.</i>              | <i>Mieszkan.</i>                       |
| <i>Nicholbaum</i>         | " "                | <i>Pol.</i>               | <i>Własniel domu</i>                   |
| <i>Jan Janowski</i>       | <i>Bolesław</i>    | <i>r. l.</i>              | <i>Oficjal. Szpitalny</i>              |
| <i>Jan Sawczak</i>        | <i>Żbarnów</i>     | <i>grac. katol.</i>       | <i>Własniel gruntow.</i>               |
| <i>Bertha Rosenthal</i>   | " "                | <i>goralicki</i>          | <i>Grudki i Własniel domu</i>          |
| <i>Wojciech Gwarski</i>   | " "                | <i>rym. katol.</i>        | <i>Własniel domu i karczmy; miasta</i> |
| <i>Joseph Haronick</i>    | " "                | <i>Judaizm</i>            | <i>Id. Id. Id.</i>                     |
| <i>Jan Romanczuk</i>      | " "                | <i>Rufin</i>              | <i>Id. Id. Id.</i>                     |
| <i>Jan Szabrack</i>       | " "                | <i>r. l.</i>              | <i>Id. Id. Id.</i>                     |

Figure 4. Citizens from Tarnopol are petitioning against a division of Galicia, showing all a command Polish language. This list is a remarkable example of a continuous day-to-day contact of different groups: Jews and Protestants appear on the same terms like Catholic and Uniate believers and in a sequence not governed by their religious adherence.

Jews made use of German to designate their profession and religion, while others exclusively used Hebrew script for their signatures, and appeared not to have a command of Latin (or of Cyrillic) scripts. In the latter cases, the name of the person on the list was “translated” into Latin script by someone else (ÖStA HHStA ÖRT 1848–1849, 131, list no. 24 without folio number, Żółkiew district).

But the richest harvest yielded from these sources is the insight that the three large religious and ethnic communities were in continuous day-to-day contact with each other. There is no other explanation for the fact that members of all three communities participated in the signature collection initiative of the Polish Rada Narodowa, and did so in a sequence not governed by religious adherence. The colorful picture of daily coexistence in a multi-

national, multi-ethnic, and multi-confessional society is reflected in the colorful mix of Hebrew and Latin scripts on the petition forms.

We can only speculate about the exact location where these signature sessions took place. It is possible that the signatories got together at local markets or in local taverns (Haumann 2004, 43–51). Their daily connections and interdependencies implied a shared language of daily usage or vernacular. But that does not mean that, aside from that everyday language of communication, the written languages used at the time were not intermingled in the mix as well. Hebrew was indecipherable to the vast majority of Ruthenian and Polish speakers. And on the other side, it could be said that in the countryside some of the less-educated Jews were also hardly able to read and write in Latin script, to say nothing at all of Cyrillic. This state of affairs was not least the result of an education system that was segregated by religion and, in the case of Judaism, of the important role played by the traditional Cheder schools (Stanislawski 2007; Falkowska 2013; Grill 2013). Forms of written language and school systems therefore perpetuated the internal religious and ethnic boundaries that existed within these market, village, and town communities. This phenomenon of a split everyday culture and of a separate written and high culture can also be seen in other heterogeneous societies (compare e.g. for the Balkans, Sundhaussen 2014).

## Conclusion

The history of imperial diversity is exhibited in an exemplary manner in the petitions for and against the partition of Galicia that took place in 1848, one organized by the Supreme Ruthenian Council in Lemberg and one by the Polish Rada Narodowa and the Sobor Ruskyy. The Revolution of 1848 and 1849 provides our point of departure for the insight that the social conflict between Polish landowners and Ruthenian peasants was to develop into a conflict of nationalities between Poles and Ruthenians over the following few decades. The antagonisms between Poles, Ruthenians, but also Jews and Germans which was to become increasingly encoded in terms of nationality from 1848 on, was sharpened by social tensions and religious contradistinctions. In this political game of national, religious, and social roles, “Polishness” as a historically, culturally, and socially superior national identity, came together with “Western” rites, while the Ruthenians, who did not have their own high nobility, and whose lower ranking gentry had become Polonized, were characterized as a community of farmers of modest means under a clergy marked by its “Eastern” characteristics.

It is the history of emerging nationalism that has so far been in the foreground in historiography of the revolutionary events in Galicia in 1848 (see e.g. Bonusiak and Stolarczyk 1999; Wica 1999; Turij 2002 for Polish and Ukrainian perspectives). However, if we restrain ourselves from appealing to the paradigm of nationalism, then the picture of societal groupings that emerges is a different one: that is, one in which the *practice of ambiguity* takes on an important role. The “bottom-up” perspective chosen in this paper puts into doubt the applicability of the set of objective criteria (e.g. territory, language, script usage, denomination), that was used by contemporary nationalists and is thought useful even by today’s historians of nationalism to define a national community. It would seem that the ethnic, denominational, and linguistic affiliations that individual signatories perceived for themselves do not add up to a community whose characteristic features and boundaries are clear-cut.

In contrast to the fuzzy lines that existed in *practice*, the *claims* of national activists were indeed very clear-cut. The initiators of the petition in favor of the partition of

Galicia were trying to tell a convincing narrative of national, linguistic, and religious separateness. The claims of their opponents were equally clear-cut. Even where they did not deny from the outset the existence of a Ruthenian nationality and culture, simply labeling that category as a branch of the wider Polish nation, the narrative emphasized by the initiators of the counter-petition consisted firstly of a “gente rutheni, natione poloni” type of argument and secondly of a vision of coexistence and harmony within protection of the empire.

However, an analysis of the various lists of actual signatures, which reflected the contrasting religions, languages, styles of script, professions, and social hierarchies of the region, enables us to recognize the blurred lines, ambiguities, and overlaps between the various groups. Those who signed one or other of the petitions differentiated themselves, either intentionally or unintentionally, from other groups by leaving indications as to religion, nationality, and social rank, as well as through the language and script form they chose – Cyrillic, Latin, or Hebrew. However, no unambiguous parallels between religion, nation, and script were created in this process. None indeed existed in any of the three largest communities. Who was “Ruthenian” and who was “Polish” could not be definitively identified on the basis of the index set by the nationalist movements involving language, script form, and religious adherence. Signatories who declared themselves to be “Ruthenian” wrote in Polish or Ukrainian, with Cyrillic or Latin script, professed themselves to be Greek or Roman Catholics, and signed for or against a partitioning of Galicia. It is impossible either to draw a universal definition of “Ruthenianness” or to identify any collective political interest from this complex of categories. Additionally, evidence has shown that more than just a few exceptional inhabitants were in the habit of switching and changing their use of language and/or script. The most frequent and strongest identifiable connection that appeared in the sources – though it could by no means provide a one-to-one definition – was between Greek Catholicism and “Ruthenianness,” which would appear to identify the Ruthenian community through the use of denominational rather than ethnic, territorial, or linguistic characteristics.

Instead of using the petition materials to look for traces of the nationalism that was emerging at the time, I suggest interpreting these source materials as an illustration of the Galician village and market communities of the period. These communities certainly experienced divisions and surely cultivated stereotypes of the “other,” but, in spite of their fissures, there was also quite obviously a very different sense and practice of co-existence whose specific character is much harder to make sense of today. The way in which the petition forms contained a colorful mixture of written scripts, languages, religious, and ethnic affiliations does allow one to make important inferences.

The diversity in the visual appearance of the petition initiatives would be unthinkable in the absence of the daily experience of imperial diversity and indicates the existence of a vernacular and of numerous “places of encounter” through which the various communities were connected to one another. In many regards, the petition lists reveal a situation prior to the emergence of nationalism. Whenever a Ruthenian-minded citizen made the case for Ruthenian-language schools, but expressed that case in Polish, it provided an example demonstrating the fact that linguistic, denominational, and ethnic diversity was quite apparently thought of as very much a natural feature of the province’s villages. The history of this pre-nationalist setting is seldom told. The social diversity that existed in the village setting produced both various practices within which ambiguity played a role as well as great naturalness in how such practices were performed. This story of living together in diversity was then pushed to the background by the subsequent years of national conflict. However, it is well worth remembering with greater force in historiography. As Austrian

writer Joseph Roth wrote in an essay on Galicia, mourning the consequences of modern nationalism: “National and linguistic uniformity can be a strength; national and linguistic diversity is always one” (Roth 2015, 18).

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