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LIVES OF PRZEMYŚL: WAR AND THE POPULATION OF  
A FORTRESS TOWN IN GALICIA, AUSTRIAN POLAND, 1914 – 1923

by  
KEVIN J. STAPLETON  
B.A. University of Central Florida, 1981  
B.A. University of Central Florida, 1979

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of History  
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at the University of Central Florida  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper addresses the civilian perspectives of, and reactions to, the social, military and political changes that occurred in Przemyśl and Galicia during and immediately after the Great War. The fortress that surrounded Przemyśl, located on the San River, was designed to protect the approaches to Kraków and Budapest from the east. The military forces of the Austro-Hungarian, Russian and German Empires crossed Galicia several times during the course of the war, which caused great damage to the agricultural base and displaced millions of people. The war spread sanitary diseases throughout the civilian populations and destroyed several hundred towns and settlements.

This paper examines these changes through the use of diaries and memoirs of civilians in the town during the Russian sieges and occupation (1914-1915), and the battle between the Russian forces and the Central Powers to regain the fortress in 1915. Bombardments and infantry assaults targeted the ring of fortifications that surrounded the town. Military action destroyed the fortifications and inflicted damages to the infrastructure of the town. The more fluid nature of the fighting on the Eastern Front in Galicia caused damages on a larger scale than on the Western Front. Toward the end of the Great War and in the period of independence following the collapse of the imperial system in East Central Europe, a series of nationalist territorial disputes broke out, primarily among the Poles and Ukrainians (sometimes referred to as Rusyns or Ruthenians), over the undefined eastern borders in the lands of the former empires of Russia, Austro-Hungary and Germany. This period of conflict and instability lasted from the outbreak of war in 1914 to the final delineation of borders in 1923.

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## INTRODUCTION

The conflict over the town of Przemyśl was primarily a conflict between the forces of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires, with German support. The location of the town and military importance of the fortress that surrounded it made it a focal point for the fighting on the Eastern Front during the years 1914 and 1915. The effects of the Great War on the Eastern Front were very different than the effects of the war on the Western Front. The Eastern Front was more fluid and broader in scope. More civilians were caught in the movements of men and material, the breadth of the battlefield was far wider than in the west, and the scope and scale of the fighting was more widespread. The outcome of the war on the Western Front restored the political status quo, but the outcome on the Eastern Front ushered in a new political reality that resulted in further conflict and upheaval in East Central Europe.

The population of Przemyśl felt the war in three primary ways: damages to the infrastructure and economic base of the region; the reduction of the population by dislocation, starvation and disease; and the political freedom that emerged and resulted in nationalistic conflicts over territory and sovereignty. I analyzed the perspectives and reactions of civilians in Przemyśl through memoirs, diaries and other personal testimonials. This helped me to determine how these perspectives developed in response to both the military aspects of the war and the effects of the war on the economy and society in the town. The population of Przemyśl struggled against the conditions of war and, when the fighting ended, they struggled among themselves to define and retain territory that each side (Polish and Ukrainian) claimed to be theirs as the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires collapsed at the end of the Great War. As is often the case, the military outcome of war influenced the political and social actions of the post-war populations and their leaders.

Histories of the Great War are divided here into three broad categories: those pertaining to military history; those that look at the causes, consequences and memories of the war; and those that concern themselves with the societies and populations affected by the war. Authors from states on both sides of the conflict have produced important and influential works focused on the Western Front and the war there, while the other fronts and combatant states have been received much less attention. Only since the 1960's have historians published studies that dealt with the Eastern Front; this is particularly true for works in the English language. Most of the states and empires that fought in the east were reorganized at the end of the Great War, which resulted in information being lost or never recorded. The devastation of the Second World War and the imposition of the Iron Curtain overshadowed the consequences and memories of the Great War in the east. Post World War II governments behind the Iron Curtain restricted access to archives and documentation from the Eastern Front.

## **Historiography**

Norman Stone produced one of the first military histories of the Great War that focused on the conflict in the east.<sup>1</sup> This acclaimed volume, first published in 1975, analyzed the strategies and tactics of the three empires and provided commentary on the logistics and supply problems that plagued the Austro-Hungarian and Russian armies. Almost all historians of the Eastern Front have relied to some extent on Stone's work. Fritz Fischer, in his analytical work from the German point of view, was originally published in 1961 and translated into English in 1967.<sup>2</sup> He devoted large portions of the book to the actions of Germany in the East, both during and after the conflict. He was also one of the first historians to present the Great War as a war of

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917* (London: The Penguins Group, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Fritz Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (New York: W.W. Watson and Company, 1967).

aggression; this point of view was controversial when first published. It has, in recent years, been seen as an important work as historians have begun to re-examine the Great War. Sean McMeekin presented his analysis of the Russian perspective of the Great War in 2011. He devoted part of his book to an examination of the territorial goals of the Tsarist forces, which included Galicia and other lands, both in Europe and Asia.<sup>3</sup> Douglas Boyd also wrote about the war from the Russian perspective. His work examines the role of Russia from the beginning of the Great War to the end of the Russian Civil war in 1922.<sup>4</sup> Most recently, Prit Buttar produced two volumes of work that attempt to present a military history of the war of the Eastern Front.<sup>5</sup> There are two more volumes to come, making this work the most comprehensive study of the war in the east.

Some military histories of the Eastern Front have a narrower focus and include books that focus primarily on the conflict in Galicia and Przemyśl. Graydon Tunstall authored one book on the Carpathian front<sup>6</sup>; which was an attempt to relive the Russian siege at Przemyśl and Tunstall has a forthcoming book (tentatively titled *Przemyśl: Verdun of the East*) about the town and its role in the struggle for Galicia. Both volumes offer military histories of specific battles that were important struggles of the war in the east.

Military histories concerned with the fortress in Przemyśl and the fighting in Galicia were written and published in Poland and have examined the construction and specifications of the fortress. Three of these are titled *Twierdza Przemyśl* (Fortress Przemyśl), one published by the

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<sup>3</sup> Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Douglas Boyd, *The Other First World War: The Blood-soaked Russian Fronts, 1914-1922*. (Gloucestershire; The History Press, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Prit Buttar, *Collision of Empires: The War on the Eastern Front in 1914 and Germany Ascendant: The Eastern Front 1915* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2014 and 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Graydon Tunstall, *Blood on the Snow: The Carpathian Winter War of 1915* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2010).

Regional Centre for Cultural Studies in Rzeszów<sup>7</sup>; Franz Forstner published a second history in Warsaw in 2000.<sup>8</sup> The third work was published by Informator Regionalny in Rzeszów in 1999.<sup>9</sup> All of these focused on the specifications of the fortress and the role it played in the battles between the Russians and Austro-Hungarians. Photographs and technical drawings explain the design functions of this major fortress in Galicia. Aleksy Gilewicz authored a journal article that provided a critical analysis of the fortress in 1968.<sup>10</sup> It contained descriptions of the construction and military performance of the fortress and concluded that the fortress was already obsolete at the beginning of the war.

Battle histories of the sieges and assaults in Przemyśl published in Poland in recent years include works by Franz Stuckheil<sup>11</sup> and Tomasz Idzikowski.<sup>12</sup> Stuckheil focused on the second siege (the longest and most severe) that resulted in the surrender of the fortress in 1915 and the military activities that preceded that struggle. Idzikowski summarized the fighting and provided information on the individual structures of the fortress and directions to those structures that remain today.

Three histories of Przemyśl written in the second half of the twentieth century contain some information about the status and conditions of the town during the Great War. The authors

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<sup>7</sup> Regionalny Ośrodek Kultury, Edukacji i Nauki Przemyśla Studenckie Koło Naukowe Historyków Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, [Regional Centre for Education, Culture and Science in Przemyśl, Student Scientific Circle of the Jagiellonian University Historians.](Materiały z konferencji Naukowej Twierdza Przemyśl w Galicji Przemyśl, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Franz Forstner, *Twierdza Przemyśl*, [Fortress Przemyśl], (Warsaw: Dom Wydawniczy Bellona, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> Informator Regionalny, *Twierdza Przemyśl* [Fortress Przemyśl], (Rzeszów: Regionalny Ośrodek Studiów Ochrony Środowiska Kulturowego, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> Aleksy Gilewicz, *Twierdza Przemyśl w dziewiętnasty wiek (Budowa, Oblężenia, Rola w I Wojnie Światowej)* [Fortress Przemyśl in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (Construction Siege, Role in World War I)], *Rocznik Przemyski* 12, 1968.

<sup>11</sup> Franz Stuckheil, *Drugie Oblężenia Twierdzy Przemyśl I okres działań Ofensywnych* [The Second Siege of Przemyśl and the Period of Offensive Operations], (Przemyśl: Tomasz Idzikowski, 2006)

<sup>12</sup> Tomasz Idzikowski, *The Fortress of Przemyśl: A Pocket Guide* (Przemyśl: Department of Culture, Promotion and Tourism, 2009).

of the first two of these Polish volumes are Maciej Dalecki<sup>13</sup> and Franciszek Persowski, Zygmunt Felczyński, and Zdzisław Konieczny (as editors).<sup>14</sup> They discussed the significance and roles of the town and fortress in the progress of the Great War, However, neither looked in depth at the conditions that civilians endured during the sieges or after the re-taking of the town by German and Austro-Hungarian forces in May 1915. The third volume by Waław Wierzbieniec<sup>15</sup> is a history of the Jewish population of Przemyśl in the inter-war period. Chapters in this cultural history examined the politics, religion, demographics and economics of the Jewish community.

I also considered academic papers as part of this study. The most comprehensive is Curt Dunagan's<sup>16</sup> Ph.D. dissertation in which he examined the war in Przemyśl and the aftermath. He focused on Jewish responses and actions to the events of the war, and the differing factions within the Jewish community. The title referred to the relations between Jewish groups in the town as well as the activities of the Polish and Ukrainian groups immediately after the Great War. A second paper, a M.A. thesis by Kazimierz Robak<sup>17</sup> examines the nationalistic struggles of the Poles, Ukrainian, Russians and others as they attempted to define the eastern borders between the Polish and Ukrainian lands as the new Bolshevik state began to exert its influence during the Russian Civil War and the post war negotiations in the east.

I also examined Ukrainian actions and responses to the Great War and the period of instability in East Central Europe after that conflict. Paul Robert Magocsi authored a study of the development of Ukrainian history and nationalism and the attempts to establish a national

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<sup>13</sup> Maciej Dalecki, *Przemyśl w latach 1918-1939: Przestrzeń, Ludność, Gospodarka* [Przemyśl in the Years 1914-1919: Space, People, Economy], (Przemyśl: National Archive of Przemyśl, 1999).

<sup>14</sup> Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk w Przemyślu, *Tysiąc lat Przemyśla: Zarys historyczny* [A Thousand Years of Przemyśl: Outline of History], (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1974).

<sup>15</sup> Waław Wierzbieniec, *Spolecznosc Żydowska Przemyśla w latach 1918-1939* [The Jewish Community of Przemyśl in the years 1918-1939], (Rzeszów: Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej, 1996).

<sup>16</sup> Curt Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl: Interethnic Dynamics in a Galician Center, 1868 to 1921*, PhD diss. (Brandeis University, 2009).

<sup>17</sup> Kazimierz Robak, *World War I ended in Poland in 1923*, M.A thesis (University of South Florida, 2005).

identity and a unified territory.<sup>18</sup> Magocsi also co-edited a series of essays with Chris Haan that analyzed the attempts of and the divisions within the Ukrainian nationalists to form a state based on their ethnicity in the aftermath of the Great War.<sup>19</sup> Jan Kozik examined the beginnings of the Ukrainian national movement in which he looks at the use of language and culture in the development of Ukrainian identity when political and religious leaders attempted to create a state for a people who had never had political independence.<sup>20</sup> A collection of works by Ivan Rudnytsky (edited by his son Peter Rudnytsky)<sup>21</sup> provided a Ukrainian perspective of events over a period of several decades of the twentieth century.

As this paper also discusses nationalism and ethnicity in East Central Europe, I considered works of a general nature. The authors of the broadest of these include Benedict Anderson<sup>22</sup> and E. J. Hobsbawn.<sup>23</sup> I applied the theoretical underpinnings of Anderson's "imagined community" to both the Poles and the Ukrainians in the post war situation and stressed the difference between the two communities. Polish nationalism, with historic ties to the past Commonwealth, envisioned a future based upon the memory of their former state. Conversely, the Ukrainians sought to apply the ideas of nationalism to envision a future state, although it was without a historical precedent. Nationalism, according to Hobsbawn, must be a precedent to the creation of any state. It was during the war that the feelings of both groups of

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Paul Magocsi, *The Roots of Ukrainian Nationalism: Galicia as Ukraine's Piedmont*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> Chris Haan and Paul Robert Magocsi, *Galicia: A Multicultured Land*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

<sup>20</sup> Jan Kozik, *Ukrainian National Movement in Galicia: 1815-1849*. (Alberta: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1986).

<sup>21</sup> Ivan L. Rudnytsky, *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History*. ed. Peter L. Rudnytsky, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

<sup>22</sup> Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities*, New Edition, (London: Verso, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> E. J. Hobsbawn, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

people either reignited nationalism (in the Polish lands) or set in motion the characteristics which would determine the attempts to found a new nationalistic state (Ukraine).

Since the beginning of this century, four books have emphasized the civilian populations and the damages of the Great War to infrastructure and populations. The first of the books is authored by Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker.<sup>24</sup> They presented the Great War as a clash of French and German civilizations in which destruction of the enemy's culture was as much a focus of the war as the military and territorial gains. They emphasized atrocities against civilians in Belgium and France such as summary executions and forced labor as well as the moral and spiritual crusade of the French and Germans on the Western Front. A similarly themed book by Alan Kramer<sup>25</sup> looked at cultural mobilization and mass killings during the Great War. Although Kramer analyzed incidents and attitudes from the major theatres of war, he emphasized the effects on the Western Front but included some examples from the Eastern Front. Tammy M. Proctor<sup>26</sup> looked at the activities of the civilian populations thematically, going beyond the home front to tell the stories of the civilians that participated in the war by working on the fronts, caring for the wounded and bearing the consequences of the destruction in Europe. The progression of these works, from comprehensive military histories to studies of the populations involved in the Great War, led to the original idea for this project.

Primary sources used in this work consist of diaries and memoirs of residents of the town of Przemyśl. The diaries are dated and cover the period of time from July 1914 to August 1915. All but two of the diaries were published in Polish as journal articles or books, and consist of

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<sup>24</sup> Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14-18, Understanding the Great War*. Translated by Catherine Temerson. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002).

<sup>25</sup> Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> Tammy M. Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War, 1914-1918*. (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

excerpts with background information from the editors who assembled the texts from the original materials. Svetlana Palmer and Sarah Wallis<sup>27</sup> collected and edited diaries of soldiers and civilians on various fronts throughout the course of the war. One of their chapters in this English language book was devoted to the siege at Przemyśl and was the source of the writings of Josef Toman, the junior Austro-Hungarian doctor present during the sieges.

The Yizkor Book Project<sup>28</sup> published memoirs of Jewish witnesses to the Great War in Przemyśl. Chapter eight examined the period of the Great War and the siege of Przemyśl. Jerrold Landau edited and translated excerpts from the memoirs of three individuals present in Przemyśl. These memoirs by Y. Michelsburg, Dr. Victor Emmanuel Fordes (Pordes) and Yosef Altbauer, substantiated many of the events described by others in Przemyśl. They also provided additional details about the conditions and events in Przemyśl during this period.

Artur Frimm was a Jewish resident of Przemyśl, born there in 1896. He was present at the beginning of the offensives in Galicia and participated in the first evacuation to the west to escape the Russian army. He returned to Przemyśl sometime in mid-September 1914 and worked in various positions for the Austro-Hungarian army during the first siege. Orit Kamir (his granddaughter) recorded his memoirs in Israel during the 1970s.<sup>29</sup> The greater part of the experiences reflected the Second World War and the Holocaust, as well as the journeys that took Frimm and his family to Austria, back to Poland in the inter-war period, and finally to Israel, where he lived the rest of his life.

The principle diarists were three women, including an Austrian woman married to a sanitary officer and two Polish residents from Przemyśl with local family roots. The diary of the

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<sup>27</sup> Svetlana Palmer and Sarah Wallis, eds. *Intimate Voices from the First World War*. (New York: William Morrow, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> Arie Menczer, ed. *Przemyśl Memorial Book*, (Israel: Irgun Yotzei Przemyśl, 1964).

<sup>29</sup> Kamir Orit, ed. *Frimm Memoirs*, unpublished.



Austrian resident was first published in Germany and is complete. The diaries of the Polish women were published in Przemyśl, one as a book and one as a journal article. Each diary has an introduction and were edited before publication

Contessa Ilka Küniġl-Ehrenberg (1881-1940) was born in Maribor (now Slovenia) to a middle class family. She married Count Emil Küniġl-Ehrenberg, who came from an old noble family with roots in the South Tyrol. Before the outbreak of the Great War, the couple lived in Vienna. Upon mobilization in August 1914, the Austro-Hungarian Army assigned Ilka's husband as a sanitary officer to the hospital in the fortress of Przemyśl. Ilka received permission to accompany her husband and volunteered as a Sister of Mercy. Upon her arrival in Przemyśl, she worked in the ad hoc military hospital, located in the newly constructed Greek Orthodox Seminary at 13 Basztowa Street. Her husband worked in the garrison hospital on Slovakia Street, and the two lived in a private building on Franciscan Street. All three locations were near the *Rynek* (town square) on the right bank of the San River. The couple, who had no children remained in Przemyśl until April 1915 when the Russians sent Emil east as a prisoner of war and Ilka received permission from the Russian authorities to return to Vienna, by way of Lviv, Kiev and Romania. She published her diary in Leipzig at the end of 1915.<sup>30</sup> When Emil returned from the east after the war, the pair lived in the South Tyrol and moved to Graz in 1926. Ilka lived in a sanatorium near Innsbruck for a few years after her husband's death in the 1930's, most likely suffering from dementia and died in 1940. The publication of her diary led to several more literary works, as well as a set of songs for piano.

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<sup>30</sup> Hrabina Ilka Küniġl-Ehrenberg, *W Oblężonym Przemyślu: Kartki Dziennika z Czasów Wielkiej Wojny (1914-1915)* [In the Besieged Przemyśl: Official Cards of the Times of the Great War 1914-1915], (Przemyśl: Południowo-Wschodni Instytut Naukowy w Przemyślu, 1994).

While in Przemyśl, Ilka came into daily contact with the people who lived in the town. She was a sympathetic witness, at times going to great lengths to provide descriptions of the different ethnic groups in Przemyśl, treating each group with respect, and she wrote many positive reflections of the town and its occupants. She was particularly interested in Jewish religious rituals and spent a considerable amount of time in the Jewish district to the south of the *Rynek*. Her position as the wife of an Austrian officer in a provincial town provided her a higher standard of living than the residents of Przemyśl, but still subjected her to the harsh reality of life in a besieged town.

Helena Seifertowa Jablonski<sup>31</sup> arrived in Przemyśl in August of 1914 from Sanok, a town not far south of Przemyśl, to take care of several buildings on Smolka Street. The properties belonged to her brother Eugene Grandowski, a colonel in the Austrian army. Eugene, his wife and his mother were all in Vienna for the course of the war. Helena's family was from Przemyśl and her father, brother and husband had been prominent citizens. Her husband, a senior doctor in the county, had died in 1912 and was buried in the town cemetery. The Austro-Hungarian Army rented the complex of buildings (16 to 26A Smolka Street) just southeast of the *Rynek*, and many of her diaries entries deal with the problems she encountered housing soldiers and her frequent visits to her husband's grave. This diary, edited and introduced by Hanna Imbs, shows the author's social interactions with soldiers (from both sides) and civilians in the town. It is also the diary showing the greatest amount of personal feelings and opinions of the author. She commented on the morality of war and the selfish and sometimes criminal acts of the people and

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<sup>31</sup> Helena z Seifertów Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla, 1914-1915*. [Journal of the Siege of Przemyśl, 1914-1915], (Przemyśl; Południowo-Wschodni Instytut Naukowy w Przemyślu, 1994).

soldiers in the town. She also made several anti-Semitic comments, but never advocated persecution of any ethnic group in the town.

Józefy Prochazka was born into a family with deep roots in the Przemyśl area.<sup>32</sup> She became a teacher, and several of her siblings were prominent leaders in the community. Her diary began in January of 1915 and ended abruptly on June 6, 1915 in mid-sentence. The editors (Maciej Dalecki and Andrzej Mielnik) speculate that the beginning of the diary disappeared and that perhaps there were more entries after June 6, but no other parts have ever been found. The pages examined in this article include fifty unnumbered and unbound sheets of paper kept in the State Archives of Przemyśl. Prochazka's entries expressed compassion for the people in the town as well as the soldiers who fought in the nearby battles. There were few political or social comments contained in the entries; she recorded events in a serious and even-handed way.

All of the diaries and memoirs considered here are from Polish residents, with the exception of Hrabina Ilka Königl-Ehrenberg and Dr. Josef Toman (the former an Austrian and the latter a Hungarian), and all the authors are women, with the exceptions of Josef Toman, Artur Frimm, Yosef Altbauer, and Victor Emmanuel Fordes. The civilian memoirs detail the events and conditions from a point of view seldom seen in works of history. They also show the civilian side of the war on the Eastern Front, about which there is little information available.

Documentation by Poles and Ukrainians was uncommon, and local governments functioned under the control of the military forces that occupied their territories throughout the war. Russian and Austro-Hungarian records were removed from the area or lost during the collapse of their empires. The Poles established a state in November of 1918 and the focus

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<sup>32</sup> Maciej Dalecki and Andrzej Kamimierz Mielnik, "*Dziennik Józefa Prochazki z Okresu Oblężenia i Okupacji Rosyjskiej Przemyśla w 1915*". [Daily Papers of Józefy Prochazka of the Siege and Occupation of Russia in Przemyśl], 1915 (*Rocznik Historyczno-Archiwalny* 17, 2003).

shifted immediately to the organization of the government and to attempts to solidify national borders in the east. The Ukrainians struggled against the Poles and the Bolsheviks as they tried in vain to establish a state of their own. The lands of the Poles and Ukrainians were officially divided into states in 1923 and the Ukrainian state was absorbed as a Soviet Socialist Republic. The war and its consequences on the population were not one of the foci of the new political structures of East Central Europe, which finally stabilized in 1923.

### **Research Questions**

The intent of this paper is the examination of the effects of the Great War on the population of the fortress town of Przemyśl and the immediate surrounding area of the province of Galicia. The Great War is often perceived as a struggle of military forces locked in a deadly battle that resulted in few gains and millions of battlefield casualties. During my course of study of the Great War, several authors were introduced to me who had examined the war from the perspective of the civilian populations and the societies directly impacted by the fighting. These authors, as part of the relatively new field of “history from below”, looked at the Great War from the civilian perspective rather than that of military and political figures. In the tradition of the Annales School, Palmer and Wallis, Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, Kramer and Proctor all produced studies that focused on individuals and societies and the effects of the Great War on their lives. These works were primarily about persons, conditions and events on the Western Front, but their work led me to consider a similar approach that looked at civilian populations of the Eastern Front. The experiences of the soldiers and the civilians in the Great War on the Western Front are well documented in both military and personal sources. The experiences in the east were very different for the people of the three empires. Marches were much more common

and longer and the supply situation was less well organized. Shortages of everything were also rampant, and disease was more prevalent. The residents of Przemyśl were non-combatants, but the shortages and disease in their town were even more prevalent than on the battlefields. The primary question I sought to answer was, “How did the residents of Przemyśl deal with and react to the two sieges and the damages to their town by the Russian forces?” As I continued my research, a second primary question arose; “What were the reactions of residents to the slow decline and eventual collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that had controlled the town since the partitions of Poland, and ultimately resulted in independence? The battles for Galicia, one of the most important on the Eastern Front, seemed to me to be the best place to start. The fortress of Przemyśl was the leading defense point of the Austro-Hungarian forces in the east. Both the Russian and Austro-Hungarian commands saw the fortress as a place that was essential to hold; it would help determine the success of the war for whichever the side was able to prevail in the sieges that begin in 1914 and ended in 1915. As in the west, civilian populations were caught in the middle of both the fighting and the conditions of war. Much of the study of the Eastern Front has occurred in the contemporary period as access to documents and other written works had been restricted before the political changes of the late 1980s and the opening of the borders in East Central Europe. During visits to Przemyśl and Lviv in 2011 and 2012, I came across published and unpublished diaries and memoirs of civilians that locked in place the idea that the previously untold story of the sieges of Przemyśl should be examined. Because Galicia has been and will always be a multicultural region, the post war conflicts over territory and sovereignty that are also an essential part of this study.

The combat histories of the fighting in Galicia detail the military activities of the empires of Austria-Hungary, Russia and Germany and the civilian diaries and memoirs examine the

effects of the war upon the residents of the town. I also considered works on the development of the forces of nationalism in the three dominant ethnic groups of the province and town – Poles, Ukrainians and Jews. The war damaged the infrastructure of the town and adversely effected the population through famine, sickness, death and political instability. The collapse of the empires that fought on the Eastern Front unleashed the nationalistic feelings of the people and their leaders; this resulted in several post war struggles over territory and sovereignty. The eventual destruction of the fortress surrounding Przemyśl led to a reduction in population during the war as well as a loss of stature after the town was no longer considered a major defense point for the collapsing Austro-Hungarian Empire. The failure of the Allied and Associated Powers to delineate boundaries for the newly independent states on the Eastern Front triggered the nationalistic conflicts that followed the Armistice in 1918.

This paper is divided into three chapters, each one concerned with a specific part of the history of Przemyśl from 1914 to 1923. Chapter One is a military history of the fight for the fortress between the Central Powers and the Russian Empire. The battle of Przemyśl occurred in three stages: the original Russian siege and assault in September and October of 1914; the second Russian siege that ended in the surrender of the fortress in April 1915; and the recapture of the fortress by German and Austro-Hungarian troops in June 1915. Chapter Two focuses on the residents of Przemyśl and the effects of the fighting on the people and infrastructure; the remaining population (about eighteen thousand) suffered from food shortages, disease and inclement weather during the six month siege. Chapter Three examines the relations between the three major ethnic groups in the town, (Poles, Ukrainians and Jews), both during the sieges and in the aftermath of the war that resulted in independence for the area. Their feelings of nationalism and ethnic identity led to a struggle over east Galicia, which was claimed by both the

new Polish government and the unrecognized and short-lived Western Ukrainian Republic. Local leaders on all sides formed militias and the struggle spread into the western lands formerly controlled by the Russian Empire. These border clashes, complicated by the claims of the Bolsheviks were not resolved until 1923.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE FORTRESS OF PRZEMYŚL

The outbreak of the Great War in August 1914 set into motion and re-defined the war plans of the Central Powers and Russia to defeat their enemies and to re-align the borders and peoples of the European Continent. Austria-Hungary wished to expand eastward into the Russian-controlled parts of the Polish lands south into the Balkans. The German Empire sought to diminish the power of France and take control of land along the English Channel. The Russians wanted to expand westward into the Polish lands controlled by the Austro-Hungarians and the Germans. The war plans of each of three Great Powers were revised as the war went on, but the goals remained expansionary in nature. The war plans of the Austro-Hungarians, Germans and Russians focused the fighting on the Eastern Front in the Polish and Ukrainian lands; this eventually brought the focus of the war to the fortress of Przemyśl, Austrian Galicia, in the southeastern part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire originally planned to wage a defensive war, and Przemyśl was the focal point of the defensive line on their eastern frontier. However by December of 1915, the chief aim of the war (as communicated to Franz Conrad von Hotzendorf, Chief of the Austro-Hungarian General Staff by Stephan Burian von Rajecz, then Hungarian minister to the Court of Vienna and soon to be appointed Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister), was to increase the power and security of the empire when things got rearranged. The conflict with Serbia and the other security issues in the Balkans were of paramount concern to Vienna at the beginning of the war, but another focus emerged, the potential attachment of the Monarchy of Congress Poland (*Kongresowka*). The acquisition of this area, currently under the control of the Russian Empire, would increase Austro-Hungarian holdings in the lands of the Poles (because Vienna already



controlled Galicia, adjacent and to the south). The Austro-Hungarians also desired the Russian-held lands of eastern Galicia and Bukovina.<sup>33</sup>

The German Supreme Army Command (OHL) received a list of war aims on November 4, 1916 from Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, German Imperial Chancellor. The aims included the recognition of the Kingdom of Poland. Germany planned to economically dominate the Kingdom after the re-alignment of borders at the end of the war; the plan also included administration of the rail system. The German Plans for Polish territory, as well as annexations of large areas of Courland and Lithuania, had been considered for some years. Field Marshall Paul von Hindenburg wanted to extend German territory all the way to Brest-Litovsk and make the Bug River the frontier between the satellite state of Poland and the Russian Empire. These plans were clarified by the German High Command by the end of 1916.<sup>34</sup>

The Russian Empire wished to extend its border south from Kongresowka to what they considered to be their natural border, the Carpathian Mountains. Russia had intended to take all of Galicia from the Austro-Hungarians in order to fill in territory south of the Polish salient that extended west almost to Silesia. Grand Duke Nicholas issued a proclamation (unsigned by the Tsar) in Kongresowka in August 1914 that promised *samoupravlenie* (self-government) to the Polish people, united under the scepter of the Russian Tsar. However, the word *samoupravlenie* could be translated several different ways; it was unclear what Russian intentions would be at the successful conclusion of the war.<sup>35</sup> The Russians had no plans for the German-held territories

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<sup>33</sup> Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War*, 310-311.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 313-314.

<sup>35</sup> McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War*, 86-87.

along the Baltic Sea. They were more interested in the Polish lands of Galicia and German-held Silesia and Posen to the west.<sup>36</sup>

The Great Powers in the west of Europe, France and Britain, were less interested in expansion in Europe and more interested in the control and exploitation of their colonies around the world. Exceptions to this were the desire of the English and French to diminish the power of Germany, and the French desire to regain the territories of Alsace and Lorraine, which had been lost to Germany in 1870. Their diplomatic positions on the continent demonstrated a defensive rather than an expansionary position.

Imperialistic attitudes and nationalistic actions preceded preparations for war in the later part of the nineteenth century as some states, particularly Austria-Hungary and Germany had consolidated lands into empires and moved beyond their borders to annex territories that enlarged their domains and empowered their leaders. France and Prussia had gone to war in 1870 over territories along the Rhine River; Prussia consolidated most of the German-speaking people into the new German empire. The Austrian Empire had pushed to the southeast into the Balkans, and as late as 1908, had annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Slavic people in the Balkans organized as independent states became anxious during the decades leading up to the war; they had first fought the Ottoman Empire for independence and then each other for territory and ethnic consolidation. The Russians had spent much of the nineteenth century expanding south and east and had succeeded in becoming the largest empire on the Eurasian continent. As alliances among the Great Powers coalesced at the turn of the century, most of the nations and some of the ethnic minorities in Europe had developed plans and goals in the events of a general European war.

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<sup>36</sup> McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War*, 82.

The situation in the northern and central parts of Eastern Europe was more stable. The lands between the Baltic and the Carpathians had been divided among the Austro-Hungarians, Germans and Russians, ever since the last partition of Poland in 1793. In these lands, the local population was dissatisfied with what they saw as foreign occupation. There were nationalistic movements, ethnic tensions and struggles for independence and/or autonomy among the multi-ethnic peoples of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The Poles, largest of these ethnic groups, were divided among the three imperial governments. Movements for independence and/or cultural autonomy had regularly been denied by both the Russian and German Empires. Revolts in the nineteenth century had been unsuccessful and sometimes violently suppressed, particularly by the Russians. In addition, the Poles were divided among themselves. Some desired political and cultural autonomy within their respective empire, while others worked for complete independence and the establishment of a Polish state. The imperial powers ruled the Polish lands, Poznan (Germany), Kongresowka (Russia) and Galicia (Austria-Hungary) in different ways. The Russian and German imperial governments had developed policies to culturally assimilate the Poles in their respective territories through bans on local languages and the suppression of cultural activities and expressions of ethnic identity. In Galicia, the Austro-Hungarians had granted some political and cultural autonomy as well as participation in a Galician legislature that represented Polish, Ukrainian and other ethnic groups in the territory. The three empires that ruled the Polish lands were dissatisfied with the boundaries, but knew that any re-alignment of borders could not be accomplished diplomatically; all three empires realized that any increase in individual holdings would be at the expense of the other.

A general European war between the Central Powers and the Russian Empire would almost certainly involve the lands of the Polish and Ukrainian people because the borders of the three empires converged in the Central European Plain between the Baltic Sea and the Carpathian Mountains. Ethnic Poles served in the armies of all three of the major powers, and ethnic Ukrainians served in both the Russian and Austro-Hungarian armies. In December of 1912, the Commission of Confederated Independence Parties (KSSN), an alliance of Polish political parties from Galicia was created in Vienna in 1912. They chose Jozef Piłsudski to command the KSSN military arm, based on the existing Riflemen's Association (*Strzelec*). This force consisted of different scouting organizations and volunteers from various places within the Polish lands. The political parties set up the commission to coordinate Polish independence movements in Kongresowka and to support Austria-Hungary in the event of a European war. In August of 1914, Piłsudski declared Strzelec to be the Polish Legion and divided it into eastern and western wings. The Austrian authorities in Galicia supported this move. The Legions marched out of Galicia into Kongresowka toward the town of Kielce with the intent of fomenting an insurrection against the Tsar. The underequipped Legions received lukewarm support from the civilian population. A Russian patrol drove the Legions from the town. This was the first offensive action on the Eastern Front<sup>37</sup> and led to the subjugation of the formerly independent Polish Legions to Austro-Hungarian command. During the course of the war, the Legions fought primarily against the Russian forces. After the defeat of the Austro-Hungarian forces in the Battle of Galicia on September 11, 1914 the Eastern Legions refused to fight on the Austro-Hungarian side and were disbanded. The Western Legions were divided into three brigades and

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<sup>37</sup> Davies, Norman. *God's Playground: A History of Poland* vol. 2. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 382.

continued to fight against the Russian forces, both in Galicia and the Carpathians. Piłsudski resigned his position in September of 1916 after failing to achieve freedom of action for his forces. The force was renamed the Polish Auxiliary Corps and, at the time, numbered about twenty five thousand men and officers. The Corps was transferred to German command after the Act of November 5 created the German Kingdom of Poland. A majority of the men refused to serve under German command and many were interned in Beniaminov and Szczypioro for participating in what became known as the 1917 Oath Crisis. The German command interned Piłsudski in the fortress at Magdeburg.<sup>38</sup> The Austro-Hungarian Army and the German *Polnische Wehrmacht* drafted many of the men and sent them to fight on the newly established Italian front. About seven thousand five hundred men remained in the Polish Auxiliary Corps. All told, almost two million Poles served in the Great War, suffering over one million casualties including four hundred and fifty thousand dead. In Galicia itself, sixteen percent of the eligible population served, primarily with the Austro-Hungarian Army.<sup>39</sup>

Austro-Hungarian plans for the defense of their eastern territories consisted of defensive works near the cities of Kraków, Lviv and Przemyśl. The work on the fortress at Przemyśl began in 1854 after relations between Austria-Hungary and Russia had deteriorated as a result of the Crimean War. Work ceased a year later when relations improved, but resumed in 1878 with the construction of wooden and brick barracks and, in 1881, artillery forts were installed. During the rest of the century, the Austrians improved the fortress with the addition of armored artillery positions and armor plating on some of the defensive works. By the turn of the century, Austro-

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<sup>38</sup> Halecki, O. *A History of Poland*. (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1993), 276.

<sup>39</sup> Davies, *God's Playground*, 382.

Hungarian defense efforts focused on the Tyrolean positions on the Italian border and only made minor modifications to the fortress at Przemyśl.<sup>40</sup>

Przemyśl was designated a first class imperial fortress (Festung) by 1914, exceeded in size only by the fortresses of Verdun and Antwerp. Two circles of forty-four forts of varying sizes and purposes surrounded the town of Przemyśl with an outer circumference of forty-five kilometers. There were six defensive zones situated on the hills surrounding the town, and the defensive works had been built to house 85,000 troops and nearly one thousand guns of varying sizes. At the outbreak of the war in 1914, the Austrian High Command sent twenty-seven thousand construction troops who quickly built seven new lines of defense and twenty-four strongpoints with two hundred more batteries as well as miles of trenches, barbed wire barriers and minefields in front of and between individual forts as the Russian mobilization made the threat of invasion seem imminent.<sup>41</sup> In the areas between and in front of the defensive works, the Austro-Hungarians established a field of fire by September 2; it involved the destruction of twenty one villages and twenty three hamlets, in addition to over two thousand acres of forest.<sup>42</sup>

On August 10, 1914, the Austro-Hungarian forces launched an attack into Kongresowka in an attempt to seize the initiative on the Eastern Front against Russia. Przemyśl was the point from which many of the forces were sent. A main objective was Lublin, a regional capital to the northeast. On August 17, Conrad and the command staff of the army arrived in Przemyśl to direct the forces sent against the Russians.<sup>43</sup> The Austro-Hungarians were initially successful, but after several defeats and the capture of Lviv, they were forced to withdraw on September 3.

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<sup>40</sup> Idzikowski, *The Fortress of Przemyśl*, 6-7.

<sup>41</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 282.

<sup>42</sup> Mieczysław Orłowicz, *Illustrated Guide to Przemyśl and the Surrounding Area*. (Krosno, Poland: Reprint of 1917 publication), 154.

<sup>43</sup> Sondhaus, Lawrence. *Franz Conrad von Hotzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse*. (Boston, Humanities Press, 2000), 114.

Russians then took control of most of Galicia. On September 4, military authorities in the fortress told the approximately fifty seven thousand civilians that, if they did not have three months of food in storage, they would have to leave the town and evacuate to the west of Galicia, toward Kraków.<sup>44</sup> However, the evacuation of the town was not enforced and most of the people who left were those of means. As part of the plan to defend the fortress, the rural population living in the villages within seven kilometers of the outer fortifications was evacuated to the west of the town. Many of these people ended up living inside the town or in camps to the west of Przemyśl.

By September 8, the Russians attacked along the Vistula River and threatened Conrad's lines of communication with the German forces to the west.<sup>45</sup> The disorderly Austro-Hungarian retreat continued to the San River. Przemyśl was clogged with military traffic that soon became mired in mud from heavy rains. The Russian advances slowed for rest and re-organization, while the Austro-Hungarian retreat continued until mid-September. It finally ended at the Dunejec and Biala Rivers to the east of Kraków. Although Conrad had wanted to regroup at Przemyśl and counterattack, the German command advised him that they could not send forces to reinforce him. They informed Conrad that he should move to the west and reorganize his forces there. On September 12, on that advice, Conrad transferred his command from Przemyśl to Nowy Sacz approximately ninety miles west. During these early campaigns, the Austro-Hungarian forces suffered nearly fifty percent casualties (three hundred thousand lost and one hundred thousand prisoners) while the Russians had lost two hundred fifty thousand men with forty thousand prisoners, as well as one hundred guns. Przemyśl remained behind the line of battle as the

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<sup>44</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 289.

<sup>45</sup> Stone, *The Eastern Front*, 90.

Russians pushed the Austro-Hungarians toward the west and south into the foothills of the Carpathians. The Russians were able to occupy almost two-thirds of Galicia. General Hermann Kusmanek, commander of the fortress, called on the German commanders to the northwest for support. He also appealed to the central Galician population for volunteers by using one of the few wireless sets on the Eastern Front. The Second Austrian Army, which had been mobilized at the start of the war and sent to the Balkans, departed toward Galicia. Three thousand volunteers from the Polish Legions and an unspecified number of soldiers from the Sich Riflemen (a Ukrainian militia formed to support the Austro-Hungarian army against the Russians) began moving toward the town. These units arrived in the area too late to help, only to be caught up in the retreat of the Third Austrian Army as it was forced to the west.<sup>46</sup>

### **The First Siege (September 24 to October 11, 1914)**

By September 24, the Russian forces, under the command of General Radko Dmitriev, had closed in on Przemyśl and preparations began for an initial siege and assault on the fortress. Kusmanek refused an offer of surrender on October 4 and the next day, Dmitriev began bombarding the forts to the southeast of the town with the mobile field guns that his forces had with them (heavy guns were not available). As Dmitriev's guns bombarded the forts, the infantry worked its way toward the defenses, trenching and re-trenching until they were within 500 meters of the forts. On October 7, Dmitriev launched frontal assaults against Fort I/1 Łysiczka and Fort V Grochowce on the easternmost part of the outer ring. Austro-Hungarian artillery and infantry stopped the assault and the Russian units surrendered. The Russians assaulted the strongholds in the southeast around Fort IV Optyń and Fort XI Duńowiczki in the north during

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<sup>46</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 290.



the next few days; these attacks also failed. The Russian halted their assaults after three days, due to heavy losses and the failure to breach the defensive works of the fortress.<sup>47</sup> Estimates of Russian casualties vary from forty to seventy thousand in those first days of fighting at Przemyśl.<sup>48</sup> Austro-Hungarian losses were light. By October 11, units of the Third Austrian Army, as part of renewed Austro-Hungarian offensive were able work their way to the fortress ring from the southwest. Despite renewed efforts to take the fortress, the Russians fell back to set up defensive positions on the eastern bank of the San, and the first siege of Przemyśl was lifted on October 11, 1914.

Przemyśl contained no fewer than 128,000 soldiers and 21,000 horses. The number of civilians in the town can only be estimated at about thirty to forty thousand because of the chaotic nature of the evacuations. A considerable number of these civilians had been displaced from the surrounding area, and there were refugees from central and eastern Galicia as well. The Austrian Third Army, provisioned with supplies from the fortress, began the task of evacuating the wounded (fifteen thousand) and clearing the surrounding area of about fifteen thousand corpses.<sup>49</sup> By October 28, the western rail lines between Kraków and Przemyśl had been repaired, and the railroad bridge connecting Przemyśl and Chyrów to the south had been shored up and made functional. The Germans used the Kraków line to bring in reinforcements and supplies for the fortress and the town.<sup>50</sup> Reports of shortages and epidemics in the fortress first appeared in newspapers in the west at this time.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Idzikowski, *The Fortress of Przemyśl*, 9.

<sup>48</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 291.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>51</sup> *New York Times*, October 28, 1914.

During the period between the first and second sieges, the fortress was a focal point for the battles along the San front. The Austrian command pressed personnel and equipment into service to support the troops trying to push the Russian armies further to the east and win a victory for the Central Powers. Contrary to expectations, the supplies used in the offensive were not replaced in a timely fashion, and as the offensive stalled and the Austro-Hungarian forces withdrew to the west, the High Command demanded that provisions and material be returned so that the fortress would not be short-handed. Additional troops were billeted in the fortress to serve in a planned counter-offensive, but all the supplies were not delivered. The fortress was not completely re-supplied, although extra troops were garrisoned there to serve as counter-offensive.<sup>52</sup>

Przemyśl was also a center for the transport of wounded and prisoners of war. The Austro-Hungarians moved their wounded quickly to the west and the Russian prisoners accompanied the withdrawing Austro-Hungarian forces. There was also the problem of re-burying the corpses, many of which had been hastily buried in shallow graves or left exposed near the perimeters of the fortress.<sup>53</sup> During the first days of November, non-essential persons were evacuated from the town, leaving about eighteen thousand civilians in the town, in addition to the one hundred twenty-eight thousand soldiers in the fortress.

### **The Second Siege (November 8, 1914 to March 22, 1915).**

By November 9, 1914, the Eleventh Russian Army, newly formed under the command of General Andrei Selivanov, surrounded the fortress. Selivanov decided the Austro-Hungarian garrison would be placed under siege until they were forced to surrender. Direct assaults on the

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<sup>52</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 295.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

fortifications were not planned. By the second week of November, six Russian divisions had encircled the fortress. They were supported by the Eighth Russian Army, commanded by General Aleksei Brusilov. A lack of heavy guns may have influenced the decision not to attack the rings of forts, as sufficient artillery would not be brought to bear against the defenses until March 13, 1915.<sup>54</sup> Kusmanek responded to the second siege with counter-offensive plans to break through the Russian lines and link up with other Austro-Hungarian forces to the south and west. Since the beginning of the war, the Russians had much difficulty trying to move heavy equipment in many parts of Galicia because the lower lying and flat areas were often muddy and lacking rail lines. “Przemyśl had really been defended by mud – heavy guns could not be manoeuvred properly”.<sup>55</sup> Kusmanek decided an active defense would be the best way to tie down the Russian armies, so as to keep the forces of the Tsar from advancing on Kraków and the passes through the Carpathians into Hungary. Reports of cholera from news agencies in St. Petersburg and Bucharest surfaced at this time, as well as reports of the destruction of large quantities of provisions because of contamination.<sup>56</sup>

The sorties of the Austro-Hungarian forces were not very successful, and by January 5, it was reported from Lviv that pestilence was spreading among the garrison and that the forces were running low on supplies. The report considers decreasing morale as the reason for the decline in intensity of the sorties as the garrison began to realize the gravity of their situation.<sup>57</sup> The condition of the troops due to spread of disease and the food shortages, combined with the decreasing supplies of ammunition and bad weather, made future offensive actions by the garrison impractical during the late winter and early spring of 1915. On February 13, deserters

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<sup>54</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 306.

<sup>55</sup> Stone, *The Eastern Front*, 181.

<sup>56</sup> *New York Times*, November 21 and 23, 1914.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, January 5, 1915.

from the fortress reported to the Russians that the only meat available was preserved horsemeat. This report was dispatched to the *London Daily News* from Saint Petersburg.<sup>58</sup>

During the first and second sieges, the military command communicated with headquarters through the use of a wireless radio and almost daily flights by Austro-Hungarian military planes into the airport within the fortress ring. The outward flights carried mail from the town and fortress and the incoming flights were able to bring mail and small amounts of supplies. Pigeons and balloons also carried correspondence. Some of the mail landed in Russian occupied territory and the Russian authorities forwarded the mail to the intended recipients after it was scrutinized. According to an interview with one of the flyers, three airplanes were left in the fortress on February 17, 1915. Two other planes had been shot down by Russian forces.<sup>59</sup>

The Russian forces maintained an incremental strategy in their attempts to conquer the fortress. They began to tighten the ring of troops around the fortress as a prelude to their attempts to break through the outer perimeter. By March 13, the Russian heavy guns were in place and they began a systematic bombardment of the fortress on the north part of the ring. Four days later, the Russian command offered the civilian population free passage out of Przemyśl. There are no official reports, but the majority of the new refugees were Poles and Jews who had remained in the town until this time. Still, the evacuation left about twenty thousand civilians in Przemyśl and the town remained relatively undamaged. The successes of the Russians began to affect the morale of the troops and Kusmanek, after consultation with his superiors by wireless, decided that the hardest troops would attempt a breakout of the fortress. On March 22, sorties were made in three directions out of the fortress. None of these efforts were successful and the

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<sup>58</sup> *New York Times*, February 13, 1915.

<sup>59</sup> Boyd, *The Other First World War*, 88.

Russians took up to six thousand Austro-Hungarian soldiers, mostly Hungarian Honveds, prisoner. The Russians reported that many of the soldiers were miserably underfed.<sup>60</sup> Kusmanek had no options left except to surrender the fortress to the Russians. He ordered the plans to destroy the fortified positions, ammunition, military equipment and anything that could be of use to the Russian carried out. Kusmanek offered surrender the same day. The explosions shattered many windows in the town. Russian patrols and mounted Cossacks entered the town. The Austro-Hungarians had laid waste to the fortress and the Russians took almost one hundred twenty thousand prisoners – including nine generals, ninety three superior officers, two thousand lower-ranking officers and officials, one hundred thirteen thousand eight hundred ninety rank-and-file soldiers, and six thousand eight hundred sick and wounded.<sup>61</sup> Reports from Saint Petersburg said that nine generals, three hundred officers and fifty thousand men were taken prisoner.<sup>62</sup> Three days after the surrender of the fortress, Tsar Nicholas and his royal party dined at the former residence of General Kusmanek, held an inspection of parts of the fortifications and, after a parade, returned to Lviv. As an example of their intentions to remain in Przemyśl, the Russian government changed the name of the town to its Old Russian form – Peremyshl – and began the deportation of prisoners to the east by train.

### **The Third Siege (May 16 to June 3, 1915)**

During the brutal winter of 1915, the Austro-Hungarian forces moved into the Carpathians to the south of Przemyśl in order to keep the Russians out of the passes into Hungary and to relieve the fortress. Conrad had become almost obsessed with the recapture of

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<sup>60</sup> *The New York Times*, March 22, 1915.

<sup>61</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*. 309.

<sup>62</sup> *The New York Times*, March 23, 1915.

Przemyśl as a way to restore the declining prestige of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its military command.<sup>63</sup> The offensive opened on January 23, 1915, when the first Austro-Hungarian force moved into the passes, followed three days later by a combined force of Austro-Hungarian and German troops. The combined forces of the Central Powers made advances through the mountains much more slowly than expected, taking territory by the end of January that they had planned to take the first day. They finally reached the Dniester River in Bukovina to the southeast of Przemyśl in mid-February. A Russian counterattack threw Conrad's forces back into the mountains, where many of the soldiers surrendered due to exhaustion and shortages of supplies. The Russians then encountered the same problems with the weather and the terrain that had bedeviled the Austro-Hungarians. The changes in the weather turned the ground to mud or ice, depending on the temperature, and a series of blizzards stopped armies in their tracks. The mountain fighting in the dead of winter caused horrible losses for both sides, and more troops were lost to frostbite and cold in what became known as the "White Death" than were lost in battle.<sup>64</sup> Conrad, desperate to relieve Przemyśl, ordered two more offensives that winter, using the same strategies and the achieving the same results. Hundreds froze to death every day. Morale sank and indifference turned to despair, driving many to surrender and, in some cases, commit suicide by purposely exposing themselves to enemy fire.<sup>65</sup> The fighting shifted back and forth during the last offensives, with the Russians forces gradually gaining the upper hand. Austro-Hungarian morale fell further when they learned that the fortress at Przemyśl was surrendered on March 22. The Austro-Hungarian forces still held some of the ridges on the Hungarian side of the mountains, thereby preventing the Russians from entering the plains

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<sup>63</sup> Stone, *The Eastern Front*, 109.

<sup>64</sup> Tunstall, *Blood on the Snow*, 70.

<sup>65</sup> Tunstall, Graydon. Carpathian Mountain Catastrophe, 1915, *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History*. 26.4 (Summer 2014): <http://www.historynet.com/magazines/mhq>. (accessed September 4, 2015).

leading to Budapest. On April 10, the Russians halted their offensive, citing high losses, exhaustion, impassable roads that hindered supply and snow as reasons they could not continue. By the end of April, the Austro-Hungarians losses had risen to over eight hundred thousand men in the three campaigns in the Carpathians. Russian casualties were never accurately determined, estimates were above one million.<sup>66</sup>

A renewed offensive on May 2, 1915, along a line between Gorlice and Tarnow, swept the Russians to the east on a front that extended across the plains from the Carpathians toward the Vistula. A new combined force was formed of Germans (the Eleventh Army transferred from the Western Front) commanded by General August von Mackensen and the Austro-Hungarian Fourth Army, under Archduke Joseph Ferdinand. Mackensen launched a massive artillery barrage against the poorly constructed Russian trenches, driving the Russians east and advancing eight miles in two days. The Russians were caught off guard and began an initial retreat. The Austro-Hungarian forces moving north from the Carpathians then outflanked the Russians. General Nikolai Ivanov requested orders to retreat but General Yuri Danilov denied the request. After the German wing of the offensive mauled the Russian forces On May 10, Ivanov's chief of staff declared that the situation was "hopeless," that Przemyśl must be given up, Kiev fortified, and Russian activities ceased, until the armies had time to recover. Ivanov dismissed him. By mid-May, the Austro-Hungarians had gained parts of Bukovina and the Germans had crossed the San. On June 4 German troops entered Przemyśl. The Russians had held the fortress long enough to evacuate their forces and join the general retreat to the east. The Russian retreat continued and by September, the front stabilized seventy miles east of Lviv on a more or less straight line all

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<sup>66</sup> Tunstall, *Blood on the Snow*, 12.

the way to the Baltic.<sup>67</sup> The war had moved out of Galicia and the German and Austro-Hungarian military authorities took control of the town and the devastated fortress, a situation that persisted until the end of the Great War.

The number of casualties resulting from the battles around and near Przemyśl has not been established with any degree of certainty. Reports from both sides are incomplete, sometimes exaggerated, and often lacking in detail. Some units did not submit reports; other units did not make reports. On November 4, 1914, published accounts put Russian losses in Galicia, up to that date at four hundred twenty thousand, as well as three hundred forty thousand Russian casualties on the entire Eastern Front from disease. The published article used statistics as computed by the *Wiener Rundschau* and was re-printed in various German newspapers.<sup>68</sup> A similar report on December 6, 1914, put total Russian losses in the Galician area at four-hundred twenty thousand against the Austro-Hungarian armies; the semi-official *North German Gazette* reported these numbers.<sup>69</sup> According to Norman Stone, after the withdrawal in September 1914 the Austro-Hungarian forces suffered three hundred thousand casualties (killed and wounded) and one hundred thousand men taken prisoner. The Russian army saw two hundred fifty thousand casualties (killed and wounded) and forty thousand captured.<sup>70</sup> In the Carpathian campaigns, initiated as an attempt to relieve Przemyśl, Graydon Tunstall claims the Austro-Hungarian forces suffered one hundred thousand dead, two hundred twenty thousand wounded, and one hundred thousand taken as prisoners. The Russians sustained over one million casualties

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<sup>67</sup> Vincent J. Esposito, ed. *The West Point Atlas of War, World War I*. (New York: Tess Press, 1995), 55.

<sup>68</sup> *The New York Times*. November 27, 1914.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, December 6, 1914.

<sup>70</sup> Stone, *The Eastern Front*. 91.



of all kinds.<sup>71</sup> The *Spectator* reported the Austro-Hungarian casualties in the Carpathians were two hundred thousand dead and over one hundred thousand taken prisoner.<sup>72</sup>

Casualties in the immediate vicinity of the town of Przemyśl and the fortress are difficult to ascertain. The Austro-Hungarian records of casualties are incomplete, some having been lost or destroyed (many in the fortress at the end of the second siege). The exhibits of The National Museum of the Przemyśl Land, located in Przemyśl, state that during the second siege, the Russians had forty to fifty thousand dead and the Austro-Hungarians had thirty-five to fifty thousand fatalities. In the fighting around the town during the third siege, there were sixty-five thousand dead on both sides. The museum also stated that during the third siege, there were ten to thirty-nine thousand Russians taken prisoner.<sup>73</sup> Curt Dunagan estimated that the fighting between the two armies for control of the fortress led to between ninety-five and one hundred and five thousand Russian dead, and sixteen to twenty thousand Austro-Hungarian fatalities. A significant number of the deaths on both sides were due to disease and exposure.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Tunstall, *Blood on the Snow*, 10.

<sup>72</sup> *The Spectator*, March 27, 1915, 431

<sup>73</sup> Muzeum Narodowe Ziemi Przemyskiej, [National Museum of the Przemyśl Land], Second Siege Exhibit.

<sup>74</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 320.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE TOWN OF PRZEMYŚL

By the middle of September 1914, tens of thousands of Austro-Hungarian soldiers, many wounded, filled the streets of Przemyśl. The armies of Colonel General Viktor Dankl and General Moritz von Auffenberg sought refuge in the fortress town. Soldiers and refugees had arrived, mostly from areas to the east of Przemyśl. Many showed signs of hunger, exhaustion and dysentery. The streets were filled with the wounded, sick and hungry, as the military had begun the confiscation of food and materials to meet the needs of the army. Few shops were open because there were numerous reports that Russian forces were beginning their approach on the fortress. People were still leaving the town, some on foot and others by rail. The only operative railroad service was the line going west to Kraków.<sup>75</sup> An Austrian Sister of Mercy, Ilka Künigl-Ehrenburg, who worked in one of the hospitals, wrote in her diary that the banks and court had been closed and that some merchants had been ordered to stay in Przemyśl to provide essential services. She also noted the presence of the Red Cross in the town. She spoke of shortages of milk, bread and coffee and much confusion in the streets. The crowds were like a “swarm of locusts in town”.<sup>76</sup> Two days before the onset of the second siege, Ilka reported that only officers were able to get milk. She said that the civilian population had been unable to find milk for the last fourteen days; in fact, there was little to buy in the town at all.<sup>77</sup> Artur Frimm recounts that these developments had made it clear to the population what war was like. As the fighting in Galicia ebbed and flowed across the plains, the situation of the Jews steadily deteriorated. On February 13, 1915, Nicholas II issued an order that, because of the increase in the amount of espionage activities by the Jews, no Jews would be allowed to enter Galicia or move from one

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<sup>75</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 42

<sup>76</sup> Künigl-Ehrenberg, *W Oblężonym Przemyślu*, 49-51.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

district of the province to another, under threat of fines and imprisonment.<sup>78</sup> This proclamation led to increased violence against Jews as the Russian forces moved back and forth across the province, up to the end of 1915. Looting, burnings of structures, murder and rape plagued the Jewish settlements until the Austro-Hungarians forced the Russians out of Galicia. When the Russians returned to the province in 1916, the repercussions in the Jewish communities were not as severe as at the beginning of the war. As the Russians once again retreated from Galicia in 1917, units of the army carried out pogroms against the Jews in many locations, particularly in Tarnopol and Kalusz.

### **The First Siege**

The first siege began on September 24, 1914, as the Third Army, under General Radko Dmitriev, surrounded Przemyśl. Other Russian forces had pushed the Austro-Hungarians west of the town. Because of the previous evacuations and the movement of refugees, it is difficult to determine exactly how many civilians were in the town at the time it was surrounded. The pre-war population of fifty thousand had been reduced, with most sources estimating that only about thirty to forty thousand people remained in the town at the beginning of November. These people were accompanied by no less than one hundred twenty thousand Austro-Hungarian forces, with a few units of local Polish and Ukrainian militias.<sup>79</sup> The assault on the fortress cost Dmitriev forty thousand casualties (other estimates are as high as seventy thousand), while the fortified positions of the Austro-Hungarian forces caused them to lose far fewer men. The Russians

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<sup>78</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 271.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

shelled the left bank of the San (Zasanie) with several shells fired from within the outer ring of defenses on October 6.<sup>80</sup>

The first siege lasted eighteen days and the fighting focused on the outer fortifications to the southeast and north of the town. Shelling could be heard on a regular basis, sometimes rattling the windows of buildings. Residents reported that the Russians fired at the food warehouses and the garrison hospital on Słowackiego Street, which was destroyed. Funerals were cancelled on September 8 because of the danger of shrapnel<sup>81</sup>, but people could leave the town if they desired. The civilian and military authorities provided musical performances in Przemyśl. About five thousand civilians were able to leave and pass through the Russian lines during this period.<sup>82</sup> More reports of disease (dysentery and cholera) circulated around the town.<sup>83</sup>

The first siege ended on October 11 when the German and Austro-Hungarian forces, after heavy fighting on the eastern part of the fortress ring, were able to push the Russians to the east and away from the town. The Austrian Third Army was responsible for evacuations of the wounded and captured, as well as removal of the dead. The hastily buried bodies of the soldiers gave rise to outbreaks of cholera, dysentery and typhus. A resident reported cases of tuberculosis. Basic hygiene among the military forces in the garrison was substandard, and the dead from the battles of the first siege were still not properly buried or disinfected. The same resident reported that the entire town was infected, including the streets and water supplies.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 291.

<sup>81</sup> Künigl-Ehrenberg, *W Oblężonym Przemyślu*, 82.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>83</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 52-54.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 70.

The army began to rebuild the defensive works and rail lines.<sup>85</sup> The fortress sent military provisions to the Austro-Hungarian forces that were, by then, fighting in the region of Lviv. In four weeks between the first and second sieges, the civilian population of Przemyśl declined to approximately eighteen thousand. Of these, around eight thousand were Jewish, mostly merchants and artisans. On November 3, due to impending food shortages, the authorities ordered an evacuation of the “superfluous” population and provided trains to Moravia for the refugees. The authorities ordered some professionals such as restaurant and cafe owners and leading industrialists to stay. The evacuation became chaotic as the police herded people into trains and allowed few belongings to be taken. Many families were separated as they were pushed into the trains by police. It was described as “heartless” by a resident of the town who stayed behind.<sup>86</sup> The Austro-Hungarian command resupplied the town and garrison with food and military equipment.<sup>87</sup> Counting the military forces (increased after the first siege), there were now about one hundred forty thousand persons in the fortress and the town.<sup>88</sup> Some people who did not evacuate on November 3 now tried to leave the half-empty town and move to south through Olszan (which was in ruins), but there were rumors that marauding Cossacks had blocked the road to Sanok. The refugees decided to return to Przemyśl, due to concerns for their safety.<sup>89</sup>

## The Second Siege

The Austro-Hungarian and German offensive that relieved Przemyśl in October turned into an all-out retreat that caused the entire front to shift just to the east of Kraków. By

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<sup>85</sup> Orłowicz, *Ilustrowany przewodnik po Przemyślu i okolicy*, 158.

<sup>86</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 299.

<sup>87</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 75.

<sup>88</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 298.

<sup>89</sup> Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*, 73.

November 9, six Russian divisions surrounded the fortress; four days later the Russians entrenched themselves in a 48 kilometer circle around Przemyśl. The Russian strategy changed with this siege; it became an attempt to starve the garrison into submission.<sup>90</sup> On November 10, residents received word that the Russians had surrounded the town and fortress<sup>91</sup>, and airplanes dropped ten bombs in different parts of Przemyśl.<sup>92</sup> Four airplanes were stationed in the fortress; they made two flights a day that brought messages and some supplies to the fortress, mostly for the military command.<sup>93</sup> The situation in the town, particularly the food supply, deteriorated. The garrison was put on restricted rations of bread, rice and ersatz coffee. Bribery and corruption characterized the commission that was supposed to be in charge of the food supply for civilians.<sup>94</sup> The authorities had also destroyed a substantial amount of supplies because of contamination from the epidemics in the town.<sup>95</sup> Authorities issued ration cards to the residents for bread and sugar, but the bread was mixed with sawdust and corn flour. Some shops closed for fear of marauding troops searching for food and on November 18, the City Board of Directors warned the citizens that they should not attempt to defend themselves against looters seeking food by force, and that any such instances should be reported to the office of the Magistrate. Military forces from the fortress searched villages inside the ring for food and other supplies in the first months of the siege. They gave priority to the military and the hospitals; they placed the civilian population last. Peasants in the square from some of these same villages were selling supplies that they still had on hand.<sup>96</sup> At the end of November, residents saw Russian prisoners

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<sup>90</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 298.

<sup>91</sup> Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*, 75.

<sup>92</sup> Menczer, *Przemyśl Memorial Book*, 173.

<sup>93</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 88.

<sup>94</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 300.

<sup>95</sup> *The New York Times*, November 23, 1914.

<sup>96</sup> Künigl-Ehrenberg, *W Oblężonym Przemyśle*, 120-121.

digging trenches and cutting wood while the shops in town remained mostly closed. People had money to buy food but supplies were scarce and basic commodities were often unavailable at any price.<sup>97</sup> On November 30, the command reduced rations in the fortress and the Sister of Mercy stated in her diary that it was hard to feed the patients properly. She went on to say there were large stores of beer and cheese in the warehouses, but these items were not made available to the public.<sup>98</sup>

December brought heavy fighting at the fortress as Kusmanek ordered sorties out of the fortress to try to link up with the field army to the south. These sorties achieved little, as the Russians were generally able to push the Austro-Hungarians back behind the fortifications. Russian and French airplanes dropped bombs in the town, damaging streets as well as the cemetery and starting several fires. Ground fire responded to the attacks from the air, and rumors spread that one Russian plane was shot down.<sup>99</sup> People put the fires out quickly and the authorities forbade shooting at airplanes, as there was a danger in the bullets falling to the ground and causing more injury.<sup>100</sup> The shelling of the fortress increased in severity, and residents could constantly hear and feel vibrations when some of the shells landed in different parts of the town.<sup>101</sup> On December 17, authorities arrested several officials for taking payments from citizens for favors, and pro-Russian citizens (called Muscovites by the diarist) came out of hiding and attacked several places in Zasanie on the left bank of the San. Several hundred oxen arrived in the town from Hungary. More prisoners also arrived, a result of the fighting to the south. Residents felt ignored by the military command as prices rose, and homes and other buildings

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<sup>97</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 92.

<sup>98</sup> Künigl-Ehrenberg, *W Oblężonym Przemyśle*, 126.

<sup>99</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 95.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>101</sup> Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*, 75.

went without water and coal.<sup>102</sup> The same resident also reported that one of the suppliers to the army was a Russian spy who absconded with large supplies of goods, and stories of increased bribery and corruption plagued the town.<sup>103</sup> There were more reports of sickness, this time cases of flu or typhus among the doctors in the hospital.<sup>104</sup> The inconclusive fighting had slowed by the end of December and food coupons were issued in early January. The first of a series of horses (thirteen thousand) were slaughtered for food. The command promised more food from the warehouses. According to one resident, an earlier distribution of food was declared to be “disgusting”.<sup>105</sup> Soldiers roamed through town and residents accused some of them of stealing from the population. The supplies issued to the field armies during their withdrawal before the second siege had begun to run out; the resupply before the siege had been inadequate and the garrison contained more troops than had been originally planned.<sup>106</sup>

The food supply was becoming the focal point of the civilian population in Przemyśl as well as in the fortress. New Year’s Eve 1915 brought a cease fire to the fortress when the Russians allowed some Austro-Hungarian troops to go into the areas between the lines to look for food.<sup>107</sup> Jews from Lviv told rumors about two hundred wagons of food waiting for the roads to Przemyśl to open; at the same time, there were reports that the Russians were consolidating their positions and making travel impossible.<sup>108</sup> Barter was now common in the town, and much of the horsemeat available was smoked or packed in lard, as there was no metal for cans.<sup>109</sup> The

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<sup>102</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 106.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>104</sup> Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*, 76.

<sup>105</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 110.

<sup>106</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 302.

<sup>107</sup> Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*, 77.

<sup>108</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 112.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 114.



officers still had food but the rations were getting smaller.<sup>110</sup> January 18 in Przemyśl brought more Russian bombings, damaging the barracks in Bakonczyce and causing deaths and injuries on Grodzka and Jagiellonian Streets.<sup>111</sup> Three days later, bombs fell on Maja 3 and Zielona Streets, some of the heaviest bombings of the siege. Warehouses, bridges and command structures seemed to be the targets of the Russian planes.<sup>112</sup> Warehouses re-opened for civilians on January 23; two people received thirteen kilograms of food for the next four weeks. Grains, sugar, root vegetables and two kilograms of meat (horse or beef) were part of the distribution. Soldiers were subsisting on small portions of rice, bread and soup. Many of the soldiers were in the streets seeking to buy food from the civilians. A teacher noted in her diary that science classes were cancelled because the authorities required some teachers to work in the hospitals. She went on to say that military music played in the square and the cinema was still open despite the continued artillery fire at the fortress, and that some factories were still operating. She worked in a factory making underwear for soldiers and, according to her account, did so to save the troops from the exploitation of the Jews.<sup>113</sup>

The stalemate between the Russians and the fortress continued into February. Military activities on both sides slowed, due in part to the inclement weather. A steady stream of soldiers arrived for treatment for frostbite and conditions related to the lack of proper nourishment, as well as battle wounds from the shelling of the fortress. The field guns of the Russian forces did little damage to the fortress but they did provide harassing fire that killed and wounded a substantial, but not great number of troops. *The New York Times* printed a report that stated that fortress was on reduced rations. The paper also reported that the military sold food to the

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<sup>110</sup> Künigl-Ehrenberg, *W Oblężonym Przemyślu*, 140.

<sup>111</sup> Dalecki and Mielnik, *Dziennik Józefy Prochazka*, 273.

<sup>112</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 116.

<sup>113</sup> Dalecki and Mielnik, *Dziennik Józefy Prochazka*, 275.

merchants who resold the food to citizens at prices below pre-war levels. The military used a system of fixed prices to sell food to the population, and distributed two meals a day to the poor.<sup>114</sup> Kusmanek learned on February 23 that efforts to relieve the fortress from the south were suspended; the Russians had managed to drive the Austro-Hungarian forces back into the passes over the Carpathians. Relations among the various ethnic groups, both in the town and the garrison, began to deteriorate during the harsh winter that affected the fighting all over the Galician and Carpathian fronts. There were reports of conflicts among units of German, Slavic and Hungarian units. The military command had assigned Jewish soldiers to a regiment of their own, perhaps in an attempt to prevent ethnic discord in the fortress. The Austrian and German soldiers earned a reputation for brutal punishment of Slavs, especially those suspected of sending messages to the Russian forces. There were dozens of executions and hangings of the alleged spies. An Austrian doctor at the hospital complained that the officers were “fat in the midst of the starvation,” and that they often cavorted with teenage girls that they had hired as nurses.<sup>115</sup>

By mid-March 1915, there were reports that Polish and Ukrainian soldiers refused to go on the sorties that were trying to bring relief to the fortress.<sup>116</sup> Instances of pillaging, looting and violence in the town began to increase as people and soldiers could imagine a future when the town would be conquered by the Russians. People sold pets as food and the supplies of horsemeat were running out. On March 15, residents reported that the Russians were burning outlying villages and taking anything that they wanted from the peasants.<sup>117</sup> The same Austrian doctor in the hospital reported in his diary that the officers were still getting preferential rations and gifts from some citizens for favors, and continued to lead leisurely lifestyles. Many had

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<sup>114</sup> *The New York Times*. February 17, 1915.

<sup>115</sup> Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*, 78.

<sup>116</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 303.

<sup>117</sup> Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*, 81.

reported to the hospital with cases of venereal diseases.<sup>118</sup> On March 17, the Russian command offered free passage to civilians if they would leave town without weapons and if the fortress was not destroyed. Chaos increased in the town, with some people taking whatever they wanted, hiding valuables and resigning themselves to what they saw as the inevitable and imminent surrender.<sup>119</sup>

The week before the surrender on March 22, people, in haste and confusion, began to prepare for an unknown future. Some people destroyed documents and loaded belongings into carts they would pull down the streets, passing by men described as skeletal soldiers and chubby officers.<sup>120</sup> As the week wore on, the bombardments increased in severity; the Russian siege artillery arrived with the large guns necessary to diminish the concrete forts. By March 20, most of the outer fortifications had been reduced to rubble. During the next two days, another breakout ended in disaster and a large number of Hungarian troops were captured by the Russians at the western fortifications.<sup>121</sup> Other soldiers began destroying supplies, dumping liquids (kerosene and liquor) into the San.<sup>122</sup> As the destruction of material continued, some citizens tried to take items but the soldiers were not allowed to give them away. Soldiers threw weapons and ammunition into the river.<sup>123</sup> People and soldiers moved in all directions through the crowded streets; they passed by damaged buildings and streets littered with broken glass from the bombardments.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*, 78.

<sup>119</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 307.

<sup>120</sup> Dalecki and Mielnik, *Dziennik Józefy Prochazka*, 132.

<sup>121</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 306.

<sup>122</sup> Dalecki and Mielnik, *Dziennik Józefy Prochazka*, 278.

<sup>123</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 135.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-133.

## The Russian Occupation and the Third Siege of Przemyśl

On the evening of March 21, the police ordered all civilians to leave their windows open and move into the nearby fields. The military detonated the explosives under the remaining guns, fortifications and military supplies that were left. Broken glass from the concussions of the powerful explosions soon covered the entire town. Bridges were blown up; some had no military value. On March 22, the Austrian Chief of Staff handed over a letter of capitulation and Cossacks and patrols of Russian soldiers entered the town and the fortress. In the fortress, officers and enlisted men, along with the sick and the wounded, totaled just over one hundred twenty three thousand. They were soon dispatched to the east at a rate of ten thousand a day.<sup>125</sup> *The New York Times* reported that nine generals, three hundred officers and fifty thousand men surrendered.<sup>126</sup> The Russians told officers, including the Sanitary Officer husband of one of the diarists, that they could bring fifty kilograms of personal possessions and one orderly when they reported for transfer into captivity to the east.<sup>127</sup> The following day, the paper published a report from Russian officials stating that the original strength of the garrison was one hundred seventy thousand. Of that number, forty thousand troops had been killed and one hundred twenty thousand had surrendered. There were fifteen thousand cases of typhus and cholera in Przemyśl.<sup>128</sup> Austro-Hungarian soldiers roamed the streets where they continued to loot and damage property. Some Polish residents said that most of the damage was done by the Hungarians.<sup>129</sup> Colonel Viktor Artamanov distributed a leaflet containing a proclamation that “The civil inhabitants of Przemyśl are invited to consider themselves under the protection of the

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<sup>125</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 310.

<sup>126</sup> *The New York Times*, March 23, 1915

<sup>127</sup> Künigl-Ehrenberg, *W Oblężonym Przemyślu*, 183-184.

<sup>128</sup> *The New York Times*, March 24, 1915

<sup>129</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 145.

Russian Empire...and those Jews who fled the city should return in peace to their homes.”

Kusmanek, on the other hand, in a notice to the Jewish residents of the impending surrender, expressed his regrets at handing over defenseless Jewish citizens to the Russians’ mercy.<sup>130</sup> On March 25, the Russian authorities issued a set of rules that prohibited the removal of specified articles from Przemyśl, and ordered clocks to be set at St. Petersburg time. Hospitals began evacuating the wounded and reported more cases of typhus and cholera.<sup>131</sup> Within a few days, the Russian soldiers began searching for weapons in the town and robbing shops, particularly jewelry shops and wine cellars. The Russians also set up facilities to sell food to the population and Austro-Hungarian soldiers who were still in the town.<sup>132</sup> A Russian soldier, one of a group that was searching for liquor reportedly stabbed a Jewish resident for money.<sup>133</sup> On March 27, Artamanov (now governor of Przemyśl) allowed the Russian army to sell food at reduced prices, as well as distribute food to the poor. On March 30, the Russians ordered Jews out of some of their shops; some of those shops were sold to Catholics. In other shops, they told Jews that they could only sell existing stocks and a resident expressed the opinion the Jews had been “kissing up” to the Russians.<sup>134</sup> Russian soldiers threatened Jews with long sentences in Siberia, as the Catholics opened the shops and rumors of Jewish speculation still circulated.<sup>135</sup>

A witness to some of these activities, correspondent Stanley Washburn, who accompanied Russian forces for the *London Times*, published a report carried by *The New York Times*. He was the first foreigner (other than military personal) to arrive in the town after the fall. He stated that Przemyśl was “garrisoned with patient haggard soldiers, starving in trenches, and

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<sup>130</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 322.

<sup>131</sup> Künigl-Ehrenberg. *W Oblężonym Przemyślu*, 186.

<sup>132</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 145.

<sup>133</sup> Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*, 85.

<sup>134</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 150.

<sup>135</sup> Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*, 86.

sleek, faultlessly dressed officers living off the fat of the land in fashionable hotels and restaurants.” He also reported that during the days of his visit, the Austro-Hungarians troops slaughtered two thousand thoroughbred horses and ate the horseflesh raw while their officers dined in luxury, smoking cigars and drinking. He continued to report the population received the Russians with enthusiasm and that the Austro-Hungarian forces, relieved to be out of the war, cooperated with the Russian command and moved to transport stations to go into captivity. He went on to further disparage the Austro-Hungarian officer corps and quote several more citizens who said they were quite happy with the surrender of the fortress to the Russian command, who in turn were gracious in every situation.<sup>136</sup> Leonard Adelt, correspondent of the *Tageblatt*, disputed Washburn’s report from Austrian General Headquarters. He stated that the officers and men shared the same rations and that neither bread nor cereals were supplied to anyone, even Kusmanek. The most painful deprivation in the garrison was the lack of tobacco felt by both officers and troops.<sup>137</sup>

In early April, the Russian command in the town began to consolidate its control over the civilian population. The Russians were still moving prisoners east and the Russian Red Cross, staffed with nuns and secular women, began to operate in Przemyśl.<sup>138</sup> The Russians began confiscating property and moving it out of town. Chief of Police Tschagin had many items seized for his personal use, and other officials had belongings of the residents shipped out by rail.<sup>139</sup> On April 8, several Jews were beaten in the streets as work parties were formed to clean

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<sup>136</sup> *New York Times*, April 3, 1915. It should be noted that Washburn was an American military officer assigned to the Russian Army as a correspondent for The London Times. Although his reports and writings are reputed to be accurate his bias toward the Russians is evident in many of his reports.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, April 14, 1915

<sup>138</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 156.

<sup>139</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 321. This incident was part of a description of the activities of the Russians after fall of Przemyśl. The chief of police was identified only as Chief Tschagin (Chagin). The report first

the debris that was everywhere in the town. The Austrian doctor wrote that typhus was endemic in the hospital.<sup>140</sup> The Russians seized documents and keys to apartments, and took many household items. The Russians put some residents under house arrest and restricted civilian movements; they detained other residents for short periods of time.<sup>141</sup> Several days later, the Russians issued identification documents and organized more work parties.<sup>142</sup> After Easter, Russian officers and troops raided Zasanie and arrested every male between the age of eighteen and fifty. The Russian authorities held them overnight and said were looking for Austro-Hungarian soldiers who had evaded capture. At the end of that investigation, the Russians transported about fifteen hundred men of military age to Russia.<sup>143</sup> Repairs to the infrastructure of the town continued, particularly the bridges (Przemyśl was on both banks of the San River), but high water on the river caused the only temporary bridge to be washed out. The diary of the Austrian doctor reported that there was still typhus in the hospital and that he was suffering from gastroenteritis, due to some bad goulash.<sup>144</sup> Other residents again reported illness and death from typhus, including the death of a friend of one of the diarists. The diarist wrote that she was unable to attend the funeral because of the washed-out bridge.<sup>145</sup> More reports of cholera surfaced, people blamed the shallow graves in Zasanie as the source. On April 16, it was noted that shops were open and there were enough goods on hand.<sup>146</sup> The following day, the Russians dismissed Jewish doctors (seventy two of one hundred twenty six) from the hospital. According

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appeared in the *Berlin Tageblatt* under the signature of its special correspondent Leonhardt and was carried by the *Washington Post* on September 19, 1915. Helena Jabłońska also reported the removal of private property by Russian forces.

<sup>140</sup> Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*, 87-88.

<sup>141</sup> Jabłońska *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 157.

<sup>142</sup> Dalecki and Mielnik, *Dziennik Józefy Prochazka*, 281.

<sup>143</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 321.

<sup>144</sup> Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*, 87.

<sup>145</sup> Dalecki and Mielnik, *Dziennik Józefy Prochazka*, 202.

<sup>146</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 162.

to the diaries of two of the residents<sup>147</sup>, Russian pogroms began in the town as the soldiers rounded up Jewish residents and drove them with whips to the barracks at Bakonczyce. One resident commented that art and furniture was removed from buildings. She also stated that those Jews hiding in cellars would soon be caught.<sup>148</sup> The pogroms intensified as Russian expelled Jews from the town and forced others, including children, into labor parties. The Russians also forced Poles and Ukrainians into labor parties, in many cases for the most demeaning of tasks.<sup>149</sup> The Russians also required the Jewish community to celebrate the Sabbath on Sundays.<sup>150</sup> Over the next few days, Russians arrested Austrian officials and continued to search for weapons among the population. The authorities detained some Polish residents.<sup>151</sup> On April 24, Tsar Nicholas and Grand Duke Nikolai, accompanied by staff, visited Przemyśl to examine the forts and to attend a reception in their honor. By April 28, the Russians ordered all Jews to leave Przemyśl within 10 days, which began a frantic process of the sale of their belongings. A circular sent to army commanders by Nikolai Ianushkevich, Army Chief of Staff, in January 1915 authorized the expulsion of “all Jews and suspect individuals” from the areas where Russian troops were present. The Russians reiterated this policy several times during the war and it was not retracted until 1917.<sup>152</sup> One resident reported that her husband was jailed and later visited by other members of the Jewish community who offered help and money for travel.<sup>153</sup> Polish doctors reported to the typhus wards at the hospital to care for the sick.<sup>154</sup> Stories of Jews being robbed on the roads leading out of town circulated in Przemyśl and Russian nobles (the

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<sup>147</sup> Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*, 87.

<sup>148</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 162.

<sup>149</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 325.

<sup>150</sup> Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*, 88.

<sup>151</sup> Dalecki and Mielnik, *Dziennik Józefy Prochazka*, 282.

<sup>152</sup> Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 138.

<sup>153</sup> Menczer, *Przemyśl Memorial Book*, 177.

<sup>154</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 166.



memoirist's term, she may be referring to officers) told the same Jewish woman that Jews were not allowed in any Russian fortress town. She heard this news while standing in line for travel permits. She was later able to travel by train to Lviv and saw many other Jews traveling on foot in the same direction.<sup>155</sup>

The Russians distributed a publication listing the maximum prices for many goods in Polish and Russian. The span of dates on the poster covered a period from April 28 to June 7, 1915. Prices varied significantly during the second siege. Sugar is an example; residents reported prices (per kilogram) of twenty-seven korunas in January, seven korunas in March, twelve korunas at a point in the second siege (not specifically dated), and four to five korunas in June. The maximum price set for sugar on the poster was one koruna, thirty-three halers.<sup>156</sup> The Russians provided more food during the occupation, but there were several times when there was no sugar available at all. Food availability and prices were a major topic in the diaries and memoirs of the residents.

On May 2, 1915, a proclamation appeared in Ukrainian and Polish that regulated the activities of the citizens of Przemyśl. It contained the following instructions:

1. It is forbidden to be on the street after nine o'clock in the evening
2. It is forbidden to gather on the streets in groups. By the same token, it is forbidden to stop to watch passing troops, etc.
3. Strolls in the neighborhoods of Gory Zamkowej, the city park on Lipowica, and the city in park in Zasanie are forbidden
4. Individuals are forbidden to use binoculars or other similar instruments
5. One is forbidden to light fires or sparklers indoors. No fireworks or other devices, etc.
6. By the onset of dusk, windows must be closed and thickly-curtained so that no light may be seen from the outside
7. All basements and attics must be locked. They can be accessed only by a responsible party in charge of the building, and only for household needs

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<sup>155</sup> Arie Menczer, *Przemyśl Memorial Book*, 177.

<sup>156</sup> Archiwum Państwowe w Przemyślu. *Informator o Zasobie Archiwalnym*. Akta miasta Nowe Miasto, nr zespolu 129, unnumbered.

8. Attic and dormer windows must be locked and access is allowed only by permission or awareness of the police
9. Sales of all kinds must close by eight o'clock in the evening
10. Those guilty of not obeying the points of this announcement will be held strictly responsible by wartime laws regardless of excuse or explanation

From the Head of Przemyśl Powiat,  
Cavalry-Captain Staff Sergeant Bobrinskii  
Przemyśl, 2 May 1915<sup>157</sup>

A Russian language teacher had arrived in the school by May 3.<sup>158</sup> Polish was now forbidden in schools and offices: only Russian and German were to be used.<sup>159</sup> The Austrian doctor, who had become ill, had recovered to some extent but fell sick again and made his last entry by May 4. He died twelve days later in the hospital where he had worked and written his diary.<sup>160</sup> On May 8, one of the residents wrote that, with the Jews gone, the population of the town was then about four thousand.<sup>161</sup> The Russian command, besides expelling the Jews, had done little to keep other members of the community from leaving. The occupation strained ethnic relations as some of the Ukrainians and pro-Russian Poles moved into empty buildings and seized some property from their former residents. Russian authorities did little to stop this practice. By the end of the occupation (about ten weeks), the Russian military authorities demanded one million three hundred thousand kronen in bank notes from the city authorities and seized currency from other municipal funds as well.<sup>162</sup> The middle of May brought movements of Russian troops through Przemyśl to the east, and the rumors in the town told of the Russian defeats at Gorlice-Tarnow and the Carpathian Mountains. The next day, the stories told of

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<sup>157</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 328-329.

<sup>158</sup> Dalecki and Mielnik, *Dziennik Józefy Prochazka*, 254.

<sup>159</sup> Muzeum Narodowe Ziemi Przemyskiej [National Museum of Przemyśl Land], Przemyśl under Russian Occupation Exhibit.

<sup>160</sup> Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*, 90.

<sup>161</sup> Dalecki and Mielnik, *Dziennik Józefy Prochazka*, 284.

<sup>162</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 329-330.

impending liberation and a general retreat of the forces of the Tsar. The residents faced a new and perilous situation; increased aerial bombing of the town from Austro-Hungarian planes seeking to drive the Russian army out of the fortress and town. On May 12, several bombs fell in the square, causing casualties,<sup>163</sup> and a report to *The New York Times* from Vienna declared that the Russians were in full retreat toward Jarosław and Przemyśl, and the Austrians were approaching the town from the south. Russian soldiers and supplies continued moving through the town, and the Russian soldiers began ransacking homes and business looking for material to move to the east.<sup>164</sup> More planes flew over the town, some carrying leaflets that stated that the German forces had no evil intentions for the residents. On May 18, the Russians issued a declaration that the ruble was now the required currency and that the exchange rate was one ruble for three and one third Austrian korunas. The Russians, still trying to remain in control of the town, arrested civilians and had thirty people shot for disobedience on May 18.<sup>165</sup> Bombs fell on Mickiewicz Street, Court Street and in the neighborhood of one of the diarists.<sup>166</sup> One resident observed that the Austrian bombs were causing more damage than the previous Russian air raids. Another resident reported bombs on Wilczu and Dworski Streets and audible fighting in the distance as Russian forces began leaving the town.<sup>167</sup> As the fighting moved closer to Przemyśl, centering on Radymno and Żurawica (both suburbs of the town), the Russians opened warehouses and sold goods at high prices. Cossacks were said to have shot and buried peasants in graves they had been forced to dig themselves. There was no apparent incident that sparked

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<sup>163</sup> Dalecki and Mielnik, *Dziennik Józefy Prochazka*, 285.

<sup>164</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 180-181.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>166</sup> Dalecki and Mielnik, *Dziennik Józefy Prochazka*, 287.

<sup>167</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 185.

these murders.<sup>168</sup> Rumors circulated on May 25 that Italy was to enter the war against Austria-Hungary, but this rumor was thought to be started by the Russians in order to affect Galician and Austrian morale. The rumor was confirmed two days later by the *Polish Daily*. Bombing continued as the train station was hit, killing seven and wounding dozens. The squatters continued to move into the empty apartments while looting other buildings.<sup>169</sup>

The month of June brought an end to the fighting over Przemyśl. The remaining Russian troops had retreated to the east. As the Austro-Hungarian planes flew low over the town people, they were greeted by cheers from many of the residents.<sup>170</sup> Residents accused Kusmanek of bribery and corruption when stores of food were found; some called for his hanging.<sup>171</sup> On June 3, units of the Eleventh Bavarian Infantry Division decorated themselves with oak leaves, and made bouquets in the Bavarian colors of blue and white from corn flowers and wind flowers. They marched into Przemyśl with unfurled banners and singing songs. They had just marched through fields littered with the bodies of men from both sides.<sup>172</sup>

The liberation of Przemyśl brought the town under control of the Austro-German military forces. At this time in the war, due to differences in strategy between the German and Austro-Hungarian High Commands and the ineffectiveness of the Austro-Hungarian forces on the battlefield, the Germans were nominally in charge of operations on the Eastern Front. This is demonstrated by the fact that German General Mackensen was put in charge of the new Eleventh Army made up of German and Austro-Hungarian forces. It was this army that made the initial

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<sup>168</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 189.

<sup>169</sup> Dalecki and Mielnik, *Dziennik Józefy Prochazka*, 287-288.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 289. This is the last entry Józefy Prochazka diary.

<sup>171</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 204.

<sup>172</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 317.

breakthrough at Gorlice-Tarnow and pushed the Russian forces far to the east in what has become known as the Great Russian Retreat.

The residents of the Przemyśl, much relieved by the presence of Austro-Hungarian and German forces in the town, began to pick up the pieces of their lives while the military government consolidated power and prepared to assist their forces still fighting the Russians as the front moved east. Also, in early June, Archduke Ferdinand visited the fortress and mail service resumed. The Austrians arrested several hundred Muscovites (mostly Poles) and detained them for suspicious activities. They also distributed identity cards to other residents.<sup>173</sup> Order had been restored but there was violence in the lines for documents on June 14, as well as reports of fraud among some who were trying to obtain identification cards. Authorities began the disinfection of some properties, but there was little water to be had and few qualified men to make repairs. The phone and telegraph were still out of order. Public salaries were paid for the first time since the surrender.<sup>174</sup> Later in the month, more Jewish residents began to return and the town seemed to be returning to some normalcy. On June 23, news came to Przemyśl that Lviv had been freed, although there was still fighting in the streets. Przemyśl was decorated with flags. On June 27, committees began to search buildings for food and supplies and reported that some people had more than their share.<sup>175</sup> There was talk among some German soldiers that Galicia was not worth defending; a resident wondered why the soldiers did not want to defend the territories of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 208-209. The diarists used two terms to describe pro-Russian civilians, Russophiles and Muscovites. Sometimes these terms were also used to describe Ukrainians, but that is less common.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>176</sup> Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*, 93.

The Great War had devastated much of Galicia. Kraków and its environs were the only territories in Galicia that did not suffer tremendous losses in population, resources and agricultural production. The onset of the war in the late summer of 1914 occurred just before the fall harvest and destroyed the agricultural output of Galicia valued at two hundred million dollars annually. As Austro-Hungarian and German forces pushed the Russians to the east in April and May of 1915, they disrupted the planting season and caused a second season of crop shortages. The war also disrupted industrial output, valued at one hundred million dollars.<sup>177</sup> One hundred cities and towns suffered cruelly, and two and one half thousand villages virtually disappeared, including the ones razed by the Austro-Hungarian forces in the immediate vicinity of Przemyśl just before the onset of hostilities. Refugee counts from Galicia were estimated to be over one million in the various parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the counties of Przemyśl, Rzeszow, and Jarosław, towns reported that starvation and death were still a problem in June of 1915; reports at the same time stated that twenty-three percent of the total area of Galicia was partially ruined and that seventy percent was totally ruined.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Figures in U.S. dollars were quoted in *The New York Times*.

<sup>178</sup> *The New York Times*, July 2, 1915. These figures were part of an article that was based upon an Associated Press report filed from Warsaw on June 15, 1915.

Table 1: Food Prices during the Second Siege of Przemyśl

ITEM	PRE-WAR	SECOND SIEGE
1 kg of beef, front - 1 k 60 h	1 k 60 h	2 k 10 h
1 kg roast calf - 1 k 20 h	1 k 20 h	2 k 10h
1 kg roast beef - 1 k 60 h	1 k 60 h	unattainable
1 kg of pig lard - 1 k to 80 h	1 k 80 h	unattainable
1 kg butter- 2 k 40 h	2 k 40 h	10 k
1 kg flour - 40 h	40 h	1 k 10 h
1 kg of rice - 44 h	44 h	1 k 60 h
1 kg of salt - 20 h	20 h	4 k
1 kg of sugar - 84 h	84 h	20 h
1 egg - 7 h	7 h	20 k
100 kg of potatoes - 8 k	8 k	1 k
1 loaf of bread - 56 h	56 h	80 h hard to get
1 l of milk - 20 h	20 h	unattainable
1 liter of beer - 52 h	52 h	unattainable
1 liter of spirits - 56 h	56 h	3 k 20 h hard to get
1 liter of kerosene - 24 h	24 h	1 k 20 h
matches (10 parcels) - 14 h	14 h	1 k but hard to get
1 kg of apples - 30 h	30 h	1 k 60 h
100 kg of carbon - 3k 50 h	3 k 50 h	unattainable
1 m wood hundredweight	3 k 20 h	unattainable

Austro-Hungarian currency units: k = koruna; h = halers

Designation: "unattainable" pertains to free trade, not to the army food stores, where there were still considerable resources.

At the end of the first siege, it was hard to get products such as branded butter, rolls, bread, and all kinds of sausages, ham, cheese, wine, beer, vodka, rum, cognac, cigarettes, and various types of winter things for men.

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The three sieges<sup>180</sup> of Przemyśl had altered the condition of the town and the fortress in ways that no one had foreseen. After June 2, 1915, the Eastern Front shifted further to the east and the Russians began a retreat that pushed the front three hundred miles further into Russian territory. The only other significant military activity in the region of Galicia was the Brusilov Offensive that began in early June of 1916. The Russians made significant gains in Galicia and

<sup>179</sup> Künigl-Ehrenberg, *W Oblężonym Przemyślu*, 151.

<sup>180</sup> Polish documents and articles describe three sieges, western documents and articles generally refer to the third siege as the liberation or the retaking of the fortress and the town.

Bukovina but they halted their offensive and, by the end of October, the front stabilized on a north to south line extending from the Gulf of Riga to the Pruth Delta.<sup>181</sup> Przemyśl was still used as a transfer point for men and material to the east, primarily German forces, as the Austro-Hungarian Army was bogged down on the Italian Front. Other than that, Przemyśl was not affected by the fighting up to the end of the war in 1918. The Bulgarian declaration of war against Serbia on October 14, 1915 and the subsequent fighting in the Balkans also had little effect on the fortress or the town of Przemyśl. Przemyśl remained under German control until October 1918.<sup>182</sup>

The reasons for the surrender of the fortress of Przemyśl in March of 1915 are still under debate. The prominent factor in the surrender was the shortages of food and supplies for the military forces. There were numerous civilian accounts of starving soldiers begging for food and, in the official surrender of the fortress Kusmanek stated that, “In consequence of the exhaustion of provisions and stores, and in compliance with instructions received from my supreme chief, I am compelled to surrender the Imperial and Royal Fortress of Przemyśl to the Imperial Russian Army.” An official statement from Vienna asserted that the surrender was ordered because the garrison had only three days of rations remaining.<sup>183</sup> On April 5, *The Independent* reported that the soldiers received an abundance of food, new clothing and boots a few days before they made a final attempt to break out of the fortress. The story went on to say that the food had run out two months before and that soldiers were eating leather straps to ease their hunger.<sup>184</sup> The Austrian command estimated before the war that the defense of the fortress would require a maximum of

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<sup>181</sup> Esposito, *The West Point Atlas of War, World War I*, 55.

<sup>182</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 319.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 309.

<sup>184</sup> *The Independent*. The Six Months Siege: How the Fall of Przemyśl Affects the Strategy of the Great War. April 5, 1915, 23-24.



sixty thousand troops, but by the onset of the second siege there were approximately one hundred thirty thousand soldiers in the garrison and eighteen thousand civilians in the town.<sup>185</sup> The Austro-Hungarian command used some of the additional soldiers in counter-offensive maneuvers to tie down as many Russian forces as possible during the battles in Galicia. The incomplete re-supply of food and equipment between the first and second sieges was not enough for the larger number of men in the fortress. The military supplied the civilian population with some amounts of food that was sold in the town but, in general, they left the residents to their own devices to secure food and other essentials. The correspondent of the *London Times* filed a report March 22, 1915, saying that peasants from adjacent villages were passing in and out of the town, at times bringing food that was sold to the population.<sup>186</sup>

Several reports by observers, such as the Austrian doctor Josef Toman and correspondent Stanley Washburn, state that the Austro-Hungarian officer corps was well fed and at that toward the end of the second siege, were dining in restaurants and cafes while the soldiers and civilians went without adequate food. At the same time, soldiers were dying at the rate of three hundred a day from malnutrition and disease: still the officers continued to live well.<sup>187</sup> Other accounts state that supplies were found after the surrender that the command was corrupt, and some officers had been bribed by civilians in return for supplies of food. The commanding officer of the victorious Russian forces, General Selivanoff, was quoted as saying, "It is incorrect to say that Przemyśl was forced to surrender owing to starvation, as stores sufficient for two weeks were found there."<sup>188</sup> An officer on the staff of British military attaché, Alfred Knox, reported on May 15 to the War Office that the Austrian officers in Przemyśl acted indifferently to the

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<sup>185</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 297.

<sup>186</sup> *The London Times*, March 22, 1915.

<sup>187</sup> Buttar, *Germany Ascendant*, 60, 138.

<sup>188</sup> *The New York Times*, April 22, 1915.

surrender. He said they sat in the cafes sleek, well-fed and complacent while their men begged for bread in the streets. According to reports from local sources, the officers had lived in luxury, including female society of the most “aggressive sort.”<sup>189</sup>

The information about the quantities and distribution of food came from three perspectives. The Austro-Hungarian administrative sources contend that the food shortages were severe enough to bring about the fall of the fortress. Russian sources, including media reports from western correspondents posted with Russian armies, dispute the claim that the food crisis was that acute. The reports of corruption and unequal distribution of food also came from the Allied side. The Austro-Hungarian doctor (Hungarian by ethnicity) and the Sister of Mercy (an upper class Austrian) and Polish residents authored diaries and memoirs that describe the severe shortage of food and other necessities, as well as instances of corruption and ineffective administration on the part of fortress command structure. These civilians, although they were subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, were less partisan than the military authorities of either side. They were the people caught in the middle of the struggle and their works describe their survival from a personal point of view.

The food supply and distribution had been an issue from the beginning of the sieges. As early as August 14, 1914, a letter to the Magistrate of the City of Przemyśl stated that one Wiktor Legucki had failed to supply the garrison with food. The city commission suspended Legucki from his duties and asked him to leave the town. The letter went on to ask for his reinstatement after all the other officials were allowed to stay on.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Boyd, *The Other First World War*, 95.

<sup>190</sup> Archiwum Państwowe w Przemyślu, Informator o Zasobie Archiwalnym. Akta miasta Nowe Miasto, nr zespolu 129, 3.

Overall, exaggerated reports of the food shortage from both the military sources seem to be the case. Kusmanek and Selivanoff took official positions that justified their military decisions. The food spoken of by Selivanoff was quite possibly the food that was set aside for the officers. The doctor and the Sister of Mercy, both subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, served in the officer class and wrote of instances where the shortages were less severe, relative to their status. The class system also promoted differential treatment of the officer class and the enlisted men; this was the case in all the armies of the Great War. The military often excluded civilians from distribution process, and their testimonies about the condition of some of the soldiers are consistent and convincing. Based on the overall evidence, it seems that the scarcity of food supplies was a reality (among enlisted soldiers and civilians) and the officers received preferential treatment by the command structure. Graydon Tunstall, author of a soon-to-be-published book on the battles for Przemyśl, stated in a conversation that there were quantities of food available at the time of the Austro-Hungarian surrender.<sup>191</sup>

The close proximity of civilians and soldiers was another factor in the lives of the people of Przemyśl. The Austro-Hungarians billeted troops in the town, often in neighborhoods that were primarily residential. There were not enough barracks to hold the soldiers and many of the fortifications were rudimentary, having been designed to hold soldiers in defensive positions and not designed for long-term living. The officer's casino and club was on the main square and soldiers of many different nationalities were present in the town at all times. One of the residents had come to Przemyśl to handle her family property and had housed soldiers in her building. She often detailed damages done by soldiers, both through carelessness and bad behavior. At times,

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<sup>191</sup> Graydon Tunstall, February 7, 2015. The forthcoming book is titled *Written in Blood*. It will be available in August 2016.

soldiers used the hallways as latrines and damaged the interiors of the structures.<sup>192</sup> Although the fortress and the town were separated (by several miles in some places), soldiers were a common sight in the town. The command structures billeted soldiers in residents' homes and rented a substantial number of private buildings in the town.

The estimates of the damages to the town Przemyśl are not conclusive. The Austro-Hungarian command reduced the status of Przemyśl from a first class Festung to a bridgehead; it was deemed to be useless as a point of defense. The Austrian and later by the Russian commands destroyed much of the fortifications and many of the guns. There was serious damage to the infrastructure of Przemyśl, particularly the bridges and rail network. Damages to the housing stock were less severe, many buildings were damaged but only a few were unusable. Many buildings had suffered damage from looting by some civilians and troops of both sides. Still more buildings had broken windows and damage from explosions and bombs.

In the county of Przemyśl from the beginning of the Great War to June 1915, many factories, apartment blocks and workshops were destroyed. Many of these were in the outlying villages of Przemyśl and towns nearby such as Sanok, Rzeszów and Jarosław. In the general area of Przemyśl more than seven thousand residential buildings and fourteen thousand commercial buildings were damaged or destroyed. In addition, thirty-six of ninety-seven schools were in ruins.<sup>193</sup> Religious and fraternal organizations provided aid to citizens in need. Various organizations had a long history of providing orphanages and shelters, as well as training facilities for people who required community help. Most of the organizations were Catholic and supported by the church, although the Jewish agencies dealt with the needs of their communities

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<sup>192</sup> Obarzanek, Emilia. *Życie Codzienne w Oblężonej Twierdzy Przemyśl w Latach 1914-1915*. ["Daily Life in the Besieged Fortress of Przemyśl in the Years 1914-1915."] *Rocznik Przemyski* 1 XLV 2009 4 [Year of Przemyśl History] 45 Z.4. Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk w Przemyślu, Przemyśl, 2009, 119.

<sup>193</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 353.

through different organizations. There is less evidence of Ukrainian welfare agencies, perhaps because the population was more rural and residents provided unofficial assistance in the villages and hamlets outside the town. The Catholic Church, in 1910, set up St. Joseph's Nursing Home to care for orphan boys aged seven to twenty. The organization dedicated a large and spacious building. During the occupation, the Russians severely damaged the facility and arrested an official for spying, although he was released through the intervention of the Bishop. St. Hedwig's Orphanage also provided children without parents with food, clothing or shelter. Many of these organizations closed during the sieges because of the early evacuations and chaos caused by the fighting. By 1918, the new Polish government set up a regional facility for disabled veterans in Przemyśl that provided help and employment assistance for victims of the war.<sup>194</sup>

The major effects on the civilian population came from the unsanitary conditions and shortages of food in the town. Disease caused most of the three thousand eight hundred and eleven civilian deaths in the town during the Great War. Tuberculosis was common and there were constant epidemics of cholera, typhus and dysentery, both in the town and the fortress.<sup>195</sup> Refugees from the environs of Przemyśl and parts of Galicia contributed to the conditions in the town and those people were also victims of the diseases. The water supplies were contaminated by civilians, the soldiers and the many corpses left on the battlefields or hastily buried in shallow graves. The residents of the town began the process of cleaning and fixing buildings and infrastructure, but their efforts were constrained by the German military authorities who were distracted by the continuing war further to the east against the Russians. When the fighting in

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<sup>194</sup> Tłuczek, Ryszard. *Opieka Społeczna w Przemyślu w latach 1860-1918*. ["Social Security in Przemyśl in the Years 1860-1918."] *Rocznik Przemyski 1 vol.38 1 Historia*, 2006. [Year of Przemyśl History 1 vol.38 1] Przemyśl: (2006), 21-25.

<sup>195</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 297.

and around the fortress Przemyśl ended, the civilian population was left on their own to deal with the conditions of war.

### CHAPTER THREE: THE INDEPENDENCE OF PRZEMYŚL

Przemyśl had long been a significant town in the Polish lands, serving as a trade route along the San River since the Middle Ages. After the partitions of Poland in the eighteenth century, the town served as an important transportation link between Lviv, the capital of Austrian Galicia and Kraków, the ancient capital of Poland and one of the centers of cultural life and Polish identity. The Austrian fortifications made the town a status as an important link in the chain of defenses against an incursion of the forces of the Tsar. In 1910, according to an Austrian census based on linguistic preferences, Przemyśl had fifty four thousand and seventy eight residents. These residents were divided into four groups: Poles (seventy-two percent), Ukrainians or Ruthenians (twenty-seven percent), Germans (three percent) and speakers of others languages (three tenths of one percent).<sup>196</sup> The same census looked at the population from the standpoint of religious affiliation. The town contained Roman Catholics (forty seven percent), Greek Catholics (twenty-two percent), Jews (thirty percent) and other affiliations (less than one percent). The Austrian crown based the census on linguistic and religious preferences; ethnicity was not considered as a component. There were nine thousand six hundred and eighty four military personnel in Przemyśl in 1910, including dependents.<sup>197</sup> There were twelve thousand two hundred and ten housing units, both homes and tenements.

The Poles dominated the administration of the town because they were able to sustain majorities in both the Galician and municipal elections. The authorities in Vienna were content with Polish control of the town as long as the Poles administered the area within general Austrian guidelines. In practice, this meant domination by Poles of the provincial government (including

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<sup>196</sup> Hebrew and Yiddish were not recognized as national languages of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

<sup>197</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 211.

the Galician diet) and its school administration, as well as the university and other centers of learning and publishing in Lviv.<sup>198</sup> A large majority (ninety-three percent) of Jews in Galicia spoke Polish as their everyday language, and even Yiddish-speaking Jews identified with the Polish language during the census. A fraction of Jews (three percent) spoke German. The Jews were prominent in trade and manufacturing, and the Ukrainian population tended to be more prominent in the rural areas. The socio-economic distinctions and population percentages in Przemyśl and Lviv were representative of the population of Galicia in general.

In the pre-war period, there was a striking difference in the economic roles played by the three main ethnic groups in Galicia. In 1910, the Ukrainians (ninety two percent) and the Poles (sixty two percent) dominated in the agricultural sector. The Jews controlled eighty eight percent of the commercial sector and held twelve of the twenty manufacturing plants in Przemyśl and all but four of the twenty-one other commercial enterprises.<sup>199</sup> In 1910, the largest sectors of the economy in Przemyśl were industry, trade and military, although the communications and railroad industry had begun to grow rapidly in the first decade of the twentieth century. This was due in part to the strengthening of the fortress and the effects of the military on the economy of the town. Although there were stark economic differences in the ethnic groups in Przemyśl, it must be said that there were significant numbers of people within each group who relied on local religious groups and charities for assistance.

Przemyśl, because of its increasing importance as a Festung, underwent a period of modernization that began in the late eighteenth century and lasted up to the start of the Great War. The Austro-Hungarian crown completed infrastructure improvements, due to the strategic

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<sup>198</sup> Magocsi, Paul Robert. *Ukraine: An Illustrated History*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007, 179-180.

<sup>199</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 204.



location of the town and the influence of the military. The town modernized the electrical system by 1911 and built a small gauge rail to bring coal to the new power plant by 1913. They also planned a modern gas plant for lighting in the town, and replaced the light posts using iron instead of the original wood posts. The town cancelled the construction of a proposed gas power plant due to the outbreak of the war. The Austro-Hungarian military had expanded the water supply but many homes and structures still relied on wells to supply their needs. In 1910, there were over six hundred wells, both private and public, in all parts of the town. These improvements were not available to all residents; most of the public works projects were located in the center of town and available mostly to the wealthier classes and the military buildings in the town. This was more or less standard practice; rural Galicia was still considered to be a less important part of the empire and its level of economic development trailed the other regions. The area was still highly agricultural, supplying grains and other agricultural products. Peasants and their landowners made up the majority of the population in rural areas.<sup>200</sup>

The onset of hostilities between the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires in 1914 was initiated by Piłsudski's Polish Legions. The Austro-Hungarian Army advanced into Kongresowka after the Legions failed to gain support of the population of Kielce. Russian forces quickly turned back the advance and as the Austro-Hungarians retreated to the southwest, the Russian were able to enter Galicia and take the capital of Lviv. During this advance, Russians surrounded and then by-passed the town of Przemyśl. In one of the first actions against civilians on the Eastern Front, Hungarian Honveds took revenge on some Galicians whom they considered to be spies of the Tsar. Several hundred people were shot, hanged or sent to

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<sup>200</sup> Dalecki, Maciej. Rozbudowa Urzędzeń Komunalnych w Latach 1867-1914. ["Extension of the Municipality of Przemyśl in Years 1867-1914."] *Rocznik Historyczno Archiwalny VI* [Year of Historical Archives 7] 1989 Archiwum Państwowe w Przemyślu, Przemyśl, 1989, 53-54.

concentration camps. There were also reports of arrests and hangings of Ukrainians on September 4. Some of the people in the town blamed the early military setbacks on the activity of spies in and around Przemyśl.<sup>201</sup> The most infamous camp was at Talerhof, near Graz, in Styria. Austro-Hungarian troops made arrests from previously prepared lists, without any additional investigations.<sup>202</sup> In another incident on September 15, 1914, residents beat a column of prisoners while the escort of five Austro-Hungarian soldiers did nothing. The prisoners, all civilian, were killed by saber blows and pistol shots after they encountered a patrol of Hungarian Honveds. The justification for this attack, according to the police, was that a Honved identified one of the prisoners as a person who fired at his group in a previous skirmish. The prisoners were in fact from a different area of Galicia, where there had been no fighting. Some Austro-Hungarian troops assumed that the local Ukrainians harbored pro-Russian sympathies, as their language more closely resembled Russian than the mix of other languages spoken by the troops. Ukrainians would often identify themselves using the word Rusyn, a term for Ruthenian. That sounded much like Russian to those who did not speak Polish or Ukrainian. This cultural confusion led to many cases of mistaken identity and arrest. Fortress commander Hermann Kusmanek, the commander of the fortress, in the middle of the investigation that followed said, “Good for the traitors”.<sup>203</sup> A local historical journal published a list of the forty-four victims.<sup>204</sup> There were also a number of executions by firing squad in Winna Gora, a suburb of Przemyśl. Reports of spies and local Russophiles aiding them ran rampant in the town at the beginning of the war, and many more people were suspected of espionage, interned and dispossessed of their

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<sup>201</sup> Jabłońska, „Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla”, 40.

<sup>202</sup> Dalecki, Maciej. Samosąd na moskalofilach w Przemyślu podczas pierwszej wojny światowej. [“Frontier Justice on Russian Sympathizers in Przemyśl during the First World War.”] *Rocznik Historyczno-Archiwalny*, Vol. 7-8, 1994. [Annual Historical Archives, 7-8], (1994), 151.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 157.

property. Many of these early victims were Ukrainians who were routinely distrusted by the Polish officials and Austrian intelligence services.<sup>205</sup>

As the Russians entered Galicia for the first time on August 18, 1914, many refugees began to flee to the west, including large numbers of Jewish residents. The Galician Jews were well aware of the differences in treatment of their people in the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empire and perceived Russia to be the opponent of Judaism as well as the enemy of the Austrian crown. The urban Jews generally supported the war against Russia and considered themselves to be loyal subjects of Vienna.<sup>206</sup> The flight of the Galician Jews was an attempt to escape what they were sure was to be harsher treatment if the Russians were able to gain territory in Galicia. The estimated number of Galician Jews living in Europe as refugees was calculated by the American Jewish Committee in 1916 to be half a million.<sup>207</sup>

Artur Frimm described the flight of some Przemyśl Jews from the Russian forces in his memoirs. After burying valuables under a chicken coop, Frimm's party evacuated to the southwest with their other valuables loaded onto carts. Cossacks chased the refugees, who had abandoned their carts, which distracted the soldiers as they fled to the inn of a friend. Russian cavalry units demanded to see the "boarders" who were now dressed in peasant clothing, allowing them to escape detection. After a few days in this location, the looting subsided, the soldiers moved on and the activities in the town began to return to some degree of normalcy. Some of the party proceeded to the west, hoping to get to Vienna, where they assumed they

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<sup>205</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 286.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

would be safe, while the Frimm group returned to Przemyśl after the wave of Russians had moved on.<sup>208</sup>

Frimm described the preparations of the fortress for the upcoming battle, including the Austro-Hungarians' scorching of the land between the town and the fortress ring up to a diameter of seven miles. Affluent families evacuated the almost-surrounded town, leaving Przemyśl with about twenty thousand inhabitants, including eight thousand Jews.<sup>209</sup> The Austro-Hungarian military command called upon the remaining citizens to help the war effort; some men entered the army, and others loaded military supplies for five crowns a day. A Hungarian officer approached a group of young men and asked if they would slaughter herds for eight crowns a day. Some of the men accepted the offer, including Frimm. Wages paid, including from the rights to sell offal in the markets, came to more than twenty crowns a day. Other Jewish groups also collected funds in order to provide assistance to the distressed.<sup>210</sup>

As the Russians consolidated their control over most of Galicia, a civilian government under Count Georgii Bobrinski began to coordinate civil affairs with the support of local Russophiles and pro-Russian Poles. In the half century up to the beginning of the war, Russian Pan-Slavists had established contacts with Galician Russophiles and had emphasized the cultural and ethnic similarities between Russians and the Ukrainians who lived in Galicia. Ivan Goremykin, the chairman of the Council of Ministers, shortly before the outbreak of the Great War referred to Galicia as the "last diamond to the Tsar's throne".<sup>211</sup> At the same time, the government in Vienna decided during the first days of August 1914 that Polish Galicia would be

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<sup>208</sup> Kamir, *Frimm Memoirs*, 10.

<sup>209</sup> The population figure of twenty thousand is also displayed in the National Museum of the Przemyśl Land in Przemyśl, Poland.

<sup>210</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 41.

<sup>211</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 253-254.

combined with Kongresowka into one region (with some degree of autonomy) that would have a place within the Austro-Hungarian Empire after a successful conclusion of the war. A Ukrainian province, made up of Eastern Galicia, Bukovina and additional Russian lands gained in the war, would counter-balance the political influence of the Poles.<sup>212</sup>

The conditions in Przemyśl exacerbated ethnic tensions already evident from the lynching and deportation of suspected Russophiles and the heavy handed actions of the Austro-Hungarian forces against the civilian population before the siege. People began to place blame for their suffering on others. Some of the citizens thought that the Jews who had left the town were unpatriotic, and the Jews that remained were soon accused of hoarding goods and manipulating prices to their own advantage.<sup>213</sup> Rumors highlighted ethnic tensions. A letter written by a defender and published in *The New York Times* stated that the Russians preferred to let Poles and Jews take the heavy losses so that Poland would suffer. He claimed that the Russians had forced Poles and Jews to make the assaults of the fortress ring. He went on to say that many of these soldiers were whipped and forced to go into battle, and that the Russians had plundered everything in the district around Przemyśl. The letter was sent to the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and later carried by *The New York Times*.<sup>214</sup> The examples in the above letter cannot be verified and may have been used as propaganda by newspapers in the Central Powers. Instances such as these increased the focus of many of the civilians on the ethnic differences in Galicia and Przemyśl, and would lead to other discriminatory acts as the war went on.

Several instances of anti-Semitism occurred during the second siege, between November 1914 and March 1915 that showed the increased level of tension in the town. A resident accused

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<sup>212</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*. 257.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 67-68.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 296.

the Jews of selling ten wagons of wheat at exorbitant prices, contrary to official price regulations.<sup>215</sup> The Russian occupation gave residents more opportunities to accuse the Jewish residents of opportunism and cooperation with the Russian authorities. Jews were removing signs from shops and one resident stated that the Jews “had gotten rich and now wanted to run”.<sup>216</sup> May 15 brought reports that the peasants (possibly Ukrainians) were acting haughtily and that the Russians were now destroying any useful items that could not be moved out of town and harassing residents with German names, accusing them of being spies. The last ten days of May brought more bombs and stories of peasants taking items from Jewish apartments, wearing the clothes of former tenants, and acting outlandishly.<sup>217</sup> One diarist was told by “the Kikes” that a damage report needed to be filed for relief; she could not verify this procedure as official.<sup>218</sup>

During the last months of the war, the attitude of other Poles shifted to a stance of suspicion against the Jews. Some Poles and other residents accused the Jews of disloyalty to the Austrian crown and felt that the Jewish population opposed the establishment of an independent Polish state. Even though many of the Jews had always lived in poverty, some Poles believed the Jews had amassed huge profits during the war. According to one Polish resident, the Jews began “popping up like mushrooms after a rain and some of the hags in the market refused to sell to Germans.” In her opinion, she could feel the ill will of the Jewish “hags” toward the Germans and their regret at the departure of the Russians, with whom they must have sympathized.<sup>219</sup> A Jewish resident, returning with others to town, noted the empty streets and houses and said that

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<sup>215</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 301.

<sup>216</sup> Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*, 82.

<sup>217</sup> The disparaging comments made about the behavior of the peasants are evidence that there were probably Ukrainians celebrating the presence of the Russian forces and the absence of the Jews.

<sup>218</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 213.

<sup>219</sup> Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*, 92.

they were missing beds from their homes. The housekeeper said that the Russians had taken them, but they were later found in the custody of the Polish guardian of the building.<sup>220</sup>

Galicia was the focal point of the fighting and destruction up until the final Russian retreat in 1916. Ethnic Poles and Jews had fought on all sides on the Eastern Front divided between the German, Austro-Hungarian and Russian commands. Ethnic Ukrainians had fought in both the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Armies. The war displaced millions were destroyed vast swaths of property, both in the course of military actions and the sometimes willful destruction of lives and properties by individual units of soldiers. All three commands considered Galicia as foreign, and made little effort to protect those lands from the effects of war.

The Poles in Galicia saw things from their own perspectives. Some thought that a major conflict such as the Great War provided opportunities for autonomy or independence. As the war ground on, all three empires had made vague promises to the Polish leadership about political arrangements that could come into effect after the war. During the war, Polish political groups were generally divided between the activists led by Jozef Piłsudski, who had hoped to gain independence for Poland by helping to defeat the Russians, and the pacifists under Roman Dmowski, who sought diplomatic support from the Allies to gain their ends. By January 1915, France, the United Kingdom and the United States had all publically declared their support for an independent Poland. The Russians had considered Galicia to be part of a Greater Russian Empire and began a program of Russification in March 1915 that would soon end as they were forced to retreat after the success of the Gorlice-Tarnow Offensive. Russian influence ended in all parts of the Polish lands by September 1915. The Germans began to withdraw from the eastern territories on Armistice Day 1918, and the German-appointed Regency Council of October 17 left in

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<sup>220</sup> Menczer, *Przemyśl Memorial Book*, 175.

control entrusted power to Jozef Piłsudski, who became the leader of the Second Polish Republic. Anti-Jewish riots and pogroms followed the withdrawal of the Central Powers from Galicia in several towns across the region.<sup>221</sup> The French recognized the republic as a *gouvernement de fait* for military and foreign policy purposes, but it was not recognized by Great Britain or the United States. Poland had come into existence, but it had no constitution, no organized government, and no delineated territory.<sup>222</sup> The movement for the establishment of nation-states based on ethnicity had been building in Europe for the last several decades. The collapse of the empires in East Central Europe accelerated this movement, and the ethnic groups' territorial claims came into conflict as soon as the war was over.

The Polish nationalists based their claims for sovereignty on traditions they could trace back to the end of the first millennium and to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary divided the Commonwealth between them by the end of the eighteenth century. Linguistic and religious continuity and a literary tradition had survived the partitions, and there had been a series of revolutionary movements in the nineteenth century that had, although unsuccessful, kept alive the hope that the future would bring back an independent Polish state. Toward the end of the sieges, residents began to express their weariness of the war and their hopes that it would soon end. A resident's entry in a diary, dated June 8, 1915, three days after the recapture of Przemyśl, and a telegram confirming the Russian retreat from Warsaw, expressed her hopes that the Poles would regain their capital and their state. She also described the victory celebration in Przemyśl.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 275.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 331-332.

<sup>223</sup> Jabłońska, *Dziennik z Oblężonej Przemyśla*, 238.



Ukrainians, the second largest ethnic group in Galicia had, by the end of the nineteenth century, established a comprehensive infrastructure for national life that in turn prompted demands for more political autonomy. The Ukrainians in Galicia had been under pressure to Polonize, as that was the only way to achieve any kind of social advancement. Under the Hapsburgs, higher education was almost exclusively in Polish or German. The Greek Catholic Church also helped reinforce a unique cultural identity by placing Ukrainian religious practices outside of both the Hapsburg/Polish sphere (Catholic) and the Russian sphere (Eastern Orthodox).<sup>224</sup> Polish nationalists opposed the idea of the development of a Ukrainian national identity in Galicia. The Ukrainians in Galicia were not treated as equal partners.<sup>225</sup> There was no tradition of political independence in the Ukraine, but the Slavic Congress in Prague in 1848 had recognized the Ukrainians as a distinct group.<sup>226</sup> In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Ukrainian radicals began to call for a separate state focused on east Galicia (from the San River to the Caucasus).<sup>227</sup> By 1916, the Ukrainians were divided into two main political factions. The General Ukrainian Council supported the idea of an independent state in the Dnieper region within the Russian Empire and national autonomy for Galicia within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Ukrainian Parliamentary Representation, supported by the Sich Riflemen, sought the separation of Galicia and a guarantee of Ukrainian autonomy. On October 19, 1918, several Ukrainian leaders gathered in Lviv stating their intention to declare an independent western Ukrainian state composed of northern Bukovina, north-eastern Hungary and eastern Galicia. Political differences, based on territory and culture, had developed by this time: an independent

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<sup>224</sup> Kubicek, Paul. *The History of Ukraine*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2008.

<sup>225</sup> Rudnytsky, Ivan. *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987, 380.

<sup>226</sup> Magosci, *The Roots of Ukrainian Nationalism*, 16-18.

<sup>227</sup> Potulnytskyi, Volodymyr. "Galician Identity in Ukrainian Historical and Political Thought". In *Galicia: A Multicultural Land*, edited by Paul Robert Magocsi 82-102. Toronto: University of Toronto, 2005.

Ukraine would be centered in Galicia and a more eastern state would be based on the Dnieper River.<sup>228</sup> Differences between these positions would come to a climax after the end of the Great War.

The Jewish population in Galicia divided themselves was divided along sociopolitical and religious lines. There were Orthodox Jews, liberals (integrationists) and a smaller number of Zionists. The traditional Jews tended to remain apart from political processes; a significant number wanted autonomy within any political system that resulted from the collapse of the empires in which they lived. Liberal Jews were urban and Polonized; they sought political rights within an independent state whether it was Polish or Ukrainian. Discussion of an independent Jewish state in East Central Europe was not a priority among any of the Jewish groups.

Most of the people in Galicia, regardless of their ethnicity, shared an identity as Galicians. They based their cultural identity on relatively stable borders and enhanced by a literary tradition that had existed for almost eight centuries. Language differentiated the groups; each group used regional preferences in describing themselves and were so described as such by co-nationals living elsewhere: Galicia's Poles were Galicyjanie, Galicia's Ukrainians were Halychany, Galicia's Jews were Galitsiyaner, and Galicia's German's were Galiziendeutsche.<sup>229</sup>

Relations between the ethnic groups in Galicia in the period before the Great War had been relatively stable. The area was highly agricultural and somewhat isolated from the rest of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Poles dominated the urban centers and political processes under Austrian supervision; the Ukrainians and Jews, although having some representation in local affairs, tended to work within the socio-economic status quo. The majority of all groups

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<sup>228</sup> Magocsi, *The Roots of Ukrainian Nationalism*, 26.

<sup>229</sup> Magocsi, *Galicia: A Multicultured Land*, 16.

supported the Empire and remained loyal throughout the war, even most of the Poles who sought independence. The Great War focused the attention of the Galicians against the Russian Empire, whom the majority saw as the enemy. Individual Poles and Ukrainians, as well as some Jews, sought alignment with Russia as part of the Pan-Slavist movement of the time and believed that cooperation with the Tsar was the way to a better future. The setbacks suffered by the Austro-Hungarian forces in the war and the capture of Lviv and Przemyśl caused some Galicians to doubt the validity of the Empire and to search for enemies within their own populations. The Russian threat was over by the end of 1916, and the revolutions in Russia the next year brought an end to the fighting in Galicia. The continuing dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire led many to believe that independence was probable and that all of Galicia would be able to determine its own fate. Diplomacy toward the end of the war favored an independent Polish state and many Ukrainians began to aspire for independence also. The 1918 Armistice set in motion similar movements across the former Austro-Hungarian and Russian lands as political leaders sought territory for their newly declared nation-states. The inconclusive territorial arrangements in the east and the Russian Civil War led the political leaders to accelerate their plans to take territory that was often broadly heterogeneous; this led to a continuation of armed conflict that lasted almost four years after the end of the Great War.

The machinations of the different groups of Polish nationalists, primarily the followers of Roman Dmowski (National Democrats, ND, *Endeks* or *Endecja*) and those led by Jozef Piłsudski (Socialist Party) came into play, with each trying to gain political control over the vaguely defined Polish state. Piłsudski had taken command of the Polish military forces and a cabinet, headed by Ignacy Paderewski, was oriented to the center-right although most of its members were not clearly aligned with any political party. Elections, held in that same year, produced a

division between the people in Kongresowka and Galicia. Kongresowka was dominated by the Endeks while Galicia gave a majority to several different Polish peasant parties. The nationalist claims over territory differed between the two major groups. The Endeks were in favor of gaining territory in the west, at the expense of the Germans, as well as lands to the east including Lithuania, parts of Volhynia and Podolia, as well as all of Galicia. The Socialists were focused on the eastern lands, planning to set up a confederation containing Lithuania, Belarus and parts of Ukraine. These territories would be linked to Poland as part of a federation under the control of the government in Warsaw. Piłsudski led a series of military campaigns that tried to establish a Ukrainian state after a series of diplomatic impasses with the Russian Bolsheviks. Poles, Ukrainians and Bolsheviks reached a settlement after a series of wars over territory in the east. The Ukrainian nationalists were not represented. The Poles gained western Belarus and eastern Galicia, including Lviv.<sup>230</sup>

Economic and territorial issues drove the political situation from 1916 to 1921 in Galicia, as local governments tried to lead attempts to restore agriculture, industry and commerce to a region devastated by the Great War and the subsequent fighting between newly created states and traditional ethnic groups. The Board of the Polish Federation of Societies (the Union) in March 1916 notified the public that efforts were underway to restore trade and commerce in Przemyśl, and offered to provide legal help. The Union began efforts to restore the library of the Catholic University and provided a series of lectures that were held in the Municipal Hall. They solicited funds and volunteers were asked to help with the re-building process. This was part of a national appeal to restore Polish society (and dominance). Felix Przyjemski, President, and several other officials signed this Union document, dated March 1916. Przyjemski signed a

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<sup>230</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 333.

second and similar appeal that is not dated and makes a broader appeal for unity and cooperation to restore the Polish way of life and begin a series of social welfare programs.<sup>231</sup> A six-page set of directions instructing individuals how to apply for reparations for damages was issued. It also spelled a detailed process to follow in order to receive assistance. The origin of this document is Kraków and is dated June 15, 1916.<sup>232</sup> The Union distributed financial papers on August 23 1916; the documents concerned disability payments and loan repayment processes.<sup>233</sup> Food ration coupons for the last two months of 1916 for fats and oils allowed holders of the coupons to redeem them for quantities of goods.<sup>234</sup> Galicia was considered by Austria-Hungary to be a breadbasket and the area was required to supply the Central Powers with resources until the end of the Great War.

A percentage of the Jewish population supported the Austro-Hungarian and German regimes and their control over Galicia. During the war, local Poles and Ukrainians appropriated Jewish property and goods as the Russians expelled the Jews or as the Jews sought refuge in the west of the empire. When Austrian authorities in Galicia forced the return of some of those properties to the Jewish owners, animosities began to rise as Polish and Ukrainian individuals were forced to turn over the property they had gained during the last years of the war. The tensions increased as some Jewish refugees returned to Galicia and the number of claims began to rise.<sup>235</sup> The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, signed by the Central Powers and the Ukrainian National Republic on February 9, 1918, made the Poles feel isolated. The land to the west of the Bug River, which the Poles had always considered to be their territory, was given to the Ukrainians.

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<sup>231</sup> Archiwum Państwowe w Przemyślu. *Informator o zasobie Archiwalnym*. Akta miasta Przemyśla, nr zespolu 129, unnumbered.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., nr zespolu, 129, 9-14.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., nr zespolu, 129, 1-2.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., nr zespolu 844, unnumbered.

<sup>235</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 339.

This also increased anti-Jewish sentiment as many Poles believed that the Jews had collaborated with the Central Powers. Anti-Jewish riots broke in Kraków, Lviv, Przemyśl and other locations in Galicia. Protests against the treaty and the recently formed Ukrainian People's Republic broke out in the Przemyśl marketplace and many Poles, including the Bishop of Przemyśl, participated. There was a Polish strike on February 18, organized in the town as a show of solidarity among the Poles. The next week, the Ukrainians of Przemyśl organized their own strike against the parts of the treaty that they thought were unfair to their national group. Relations between Poles and Ukrainians deteriorated over religious differences between the Greek and Roman Catholics, and whether the district of Chelm would be Polish or Ukrainian.<sup>236</sup> Many Poles saw the joint protests of Jewish and Ukrainian parliament members in Vienna against the attacks, to be proof of Jewish-Ukrainian collaboration.<sup>237</sup>

Political mobilization, often along ethnic lines, began to occur in all parts of Galician and Polish society. The decline of the Central Powers during 1918 mobilized ethnic divisions along cultural, economic and religious lines. Poles and Ukrainians began to divide into groups based on their perceived nationalities, putting the Jews in the middle of the struggle for territory and political control. The Poles saw the Jews using Ukrainians as a counter-balance to the rising power of the Polish nationalists.<sup>238</sup> The creation of the Ukrainian National Council (UNR) in the fall of 1918 coincided with actions by Polish groups, such as the Polish Liquidation Committee of Galicia and Silesia (PKL) that was set up as a temporary governing body. Czesław Maczynski and others, who had ties to the Endeks, led the Polish Military Organization (POW) in Lviv. Chaos ensued as the Austro-Hungarian Army collapsed and deserters flooded towns and villages

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<sup>236</sup> Chelm was incorporated into the Polish state in 1918.

<sup>237</sup> Dunagan, Curt. *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 340-341.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 342.

from all the ethnic groups in the Empire. On November 1, Ukrainian forces in Lviv arrested Polish officers and detained the Austrian military governor; they then declared Ukrainian statehood and guaranteed political rights and equality for all national groups. This set off a wave of rioting and looting in Lviv and Przemyśl, many Jewish properties were singled out. Local police were powerless; some of the officers joined the rampaging crowds. The Poles responded to the declaration of the Ukrainians in Lviv by organizing the Polish Civil Committee, and students barricaded themselves in schools and barracks for protection. The Polish National Council (PRN) established a branch in Przemyśl to promote Polish goals in the nationalistic struggle for the identity of the town. This group, headed by local leaders like Felix Przyjemski, Leonard Lieberman and Leonard Tarnawski, coordinated the activities of the Polish militias in the upcoming fight for control of the town. They aligned their efforts with the Polish Liquidation Committee and at times asked for financial support. Initially, the Polish National Council issued calls for peace and cooperation but as the militias began to mobilize, they became involved in the coordination of military movements and attempts to control civil disorder. Ukrainians set up a group allied with the Ukrainian National Council in Lviv that served a similar purpose, although they promoted claims of the Ukrainians in Przemyśl. The Jewish groups formed a Committee for Public Safety in association with the Jewish People's Council, and declared neutrality in the increasingly hostile environment. All three of the ethnic-based political organizations led local diplomatic and military efforts to resolve the political differences and protect property.<sup>239</sup> The Poles saw the neutrality of the Jews as an act of treachery. Moreover, Poles saw the struggle as one of superior Polish cultural against underdeveloped Ukrainian peasants who had usurped

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<sup>239</sup> Wanda Kaput. "Akta Dotyczące Działalności Polskiej Rady Narodowej w Przemyślu Listopad 1918 - Luty 1919." [Files of Related Activities of the Polish National Council in Przemyślu November 1918 - February 1919.] Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne Oddział w Przemyślu, Przemyskie Zapiski Historyczne. [Polish Historical Society Branch in Przemyśl, Przemyśl Historical Records.] (1974), 156.

power in Lviv, considered by many Poles to be their city. By this time, fighting had erupted between Poles and Ukrainians in Lviv. It soon spread to Przemyśl, and other locations in Galicia.<sup>240</sup>

On November 11, the Poles cleared the Ukrainians from Przemyśl and militia and police groups began to search Jewish and Ukrainian dwellings. Major Julian Stachiewicz dispatched officer patrols to the Jewish quarter, and stopped many of the violent excesses that had occurred in other places. On November 21, 1918, Polish forces, with units from Przemyśl, drove the Ukrainians from Lviv. Some of the Polish militia and citizens attacked the Jewish district, indiscriminately killing and looting. The pogrom continued over the course of the next few days with grenade attacks and assaults (physical and sexual) against the Jews in Lviv. The Polish commanders did little to prevent the violence. During this same period, similar events occurred in Przemyśl. The Ukrainians had attempted a takeover of the town and the Jewish militia mobilized to protect their part of town. The Polish Liquidation Commission, a temporary Polish government body, was set up by October 28, 1918, in Galicia and headed by Wincenty Witos and Ignacy Daszynski. Their goal was to maintain order during the re-establishment of an independent Poland. The Commission was able to dispatch men to aid the Poles of Przemyśl. The Jews in Przemyśl had declared their neutrality; but were again accused of supporting the Ukrainian efforts to control the town.

By early 1919, the forces of the recently created Western Ukrainian National Republic (ZUNR) controlled most of eastern Galicia, except for the Lviv and Przemyśl districts. The ZUNR recognized Jewish neutrality, although the Jewish political parties did not share much in the way of a political agenda. They were split between the Zionists, the Integrationists and those

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<sup>240</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 344-348.



who demanded autonomy within Poland or Ukraine. The Jewish groups organized themselves into the Central Jewish National Council (CZRN), which was to represent the interests of the Jews in the Ukrainian government and at the peace conference in Paris.

In late spring and summer of 1919, Polish troops went on the offensive in east Galicia and several hundred Jews enlisted in the Ukrainian army. Violence against Jews by peasant groups caused some Jews to cease cooperation with the ZUNR, and Ukrainian forces responded with searches of dwellings and confiscation of personal property. The ZUNR was short-lived, failing to gain any of its diplomatic objectives; the efforts of the Poles to discredit the Ukrainian Republic were effective among the Allied powers of Europe.<sup>241</sup>

Despite the differences among the ethnic and religious groups in Przemyśl, the PKL, the PPSD and the ZUNR agreed upon the construction of a city council made up of four Poles, four Ukrainians and one Jew. The council attempted to restore order and set up a militia, made up of an equal number of Poles and Ukrainians (two thousand in total). The PRN proceeded to rearrange the council, removing some members and installing others in order to consolidate Polish gains and bring political order to the town.<sup>242</sup>

The creation of the ZUNR on October 19, 1918 entailed inclusion of Przemyśl in the new Ukrainian state. Polish leaders in Przemyśl protested to the World Congress that the Austrian government had unlawfully divided Galicia. The Ukrainian members of the Austrian Reichsrat refused to take up the issue, and both sides began military preparations in order to gain control of Przemyśl. On November 1, 1918, news that the Ukrainians had taken control of Lviv launched a

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<sup>241</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 349-353.

<sup>242</sup> Maciej Dalecki, "Wspomnienia Jana Porembalskiego 'Przemyśl w Przedświcie Wolności' - Interesujący Przekaz Źródłowy ze Zbiorów Archiwum Państwowego w Przemyślu." [Memories of John Porembalskiego "Przemyśl in the Dawn of Freedom" - An Interesting Source in the National Archive in Przemyśl.] *Rocznik Historyczno-Archiwalny 20 Przemyśl* [Yearbook of the Historical Archive of the twentieth century in Przemyśl 20] (2007-2008), 170.

Polish offensive in Przemyśl, securing the main rail station and the post office. The ZUNR mobilized Ukrainian troops and the Jews mobilized militias to protect their property in the town. Both sides accepted the neutrality of the Jews as long as they agreed to only protect themselves. On the evenings of November 3-4, Ukrainian troops mobilized in nearby towns and, with the assistance of the some Przemyśl Ukrainian troops, captured the right bank of Przemyśl that included most of the Jewish-held property. Five fatalities were reported; the Polish Liquidation Committee annulled the agreement on the makeup of the town council. The Greek Catholic bishop gave a sermon that same day, saying that Przemyśl must and will be included in the West Ukrainian National Republic. The fighting continued through November 6, causing more casualties on both sides. The Jews reinforced the right bank of Przemyśl fearing more reprisals from the Poles and the Ukrainians. After the Ukrainians were able to take control of a major part of Przemyśl, the allegiance of the Jews, according to some sources, began to shift to the Ukrainian side because their district was now under their control. The unofficial change in the position of the Jews in Przemyśl was part of the effort to protect their districts and cooperate with the side that was in control. The town was in effect divided until November 11 when the Polish militias were able to gain control. The Poles presented the Ukrainians with an ultimatum stating that Przemyśl was primarily a Polish town, that the occupation of the town by Ukrainians violated of the common agreement, and demanded their surrender. The ultimatum also stated that the Poles were not proclaiming the supremacy of one nation over another. The Ukrainians rejected the ultimatum; fighting continued until the Poles gained control of the town on November 12. Casualties for the series of skirmishes amounted to thirty-one dead, including five civilians and scores wounded. About two hundred Ukrainians were taken prisoner.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 357-361.

Polish troops, now in command of the town, entered the right bank and began a pogrom against the Jewish population, claiming that the Jews had fired machine guns at the Polish troops and that they had aided the Ukrainian forces. Poles looted Jewish business and assaulted individuals, forcibly cutting beards from some of the men. The pogrom resulted in fifteen deaths. Reports from the Polish authorities of Jewish gunfire, possibly fabricated as a means to extract revenge on Jews for siding with Ukrainians, led to a proclamation from the District Commander Teodor Tokarzewski that ordered the Jews to deposit three million kronen as a guarantee that Jews would not take further action against the Polish troops. The Polish command transmitted the conditions of the proclamation to the Jewish National Council of Vienna, which protested the provisions. The Poles withdrew the proclamation and recalled Tokarzewski after intense discussions between the Jewish and Polish authorities. The ZUNR was forced to sign a declaration assuming responsibility for violating the neutrality of the Jewish population as a condition of dropping the monetary punishment. The pogroms in Przemyśl and eastern Poland were widely reported in the western press.<sup>244</sup>

Jews in Lviv and throughout Galicia protested the pogroms, and leaders called upon the Jewish population to boycott the November 1918 elections. Most potential candidates withdrew except for Herman Lieberman and Leonard Tarnawski; they were elected to the Sejm and represented the Socialist and the Endek parties respectively. Several thousand Jews voted in the election and, in the course of the campaign, the Zionists accused Lieberman of condemning Jewish nationalism and dividing the Jewish community. After the Polish national elections in 1919, the Polish military rounded up Jews and sent them to the barracks at Czarnieckiego Street where a doctor examined them. They were drafted into the Polish army and required to swear an

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<sup>244</sup> *The New York Times*, June 1, 1919

oath to the Second Republic. Soldiers beat those who did not comply and sentenced them to a period of forced labor. A Polish student group expelled Jewish students and told them to leave the gymnasium. The Jews transferred to the Ukrainian Gymnasium in Przemyśl to complete the last year of study. An attempt at a Jewish gymnasium in the town failed for lack of financial support in March 1919. After the conflict in Przemyśl, the Polish National Council and the Polish Council of Workers and Soldiers (PRR-Z) set up a new council. The plan was to set up a council of fifty members that represented the ethnicity of the city. The final composition included thirty Poles, seven Ukrainians, and thirteen Jews, but according to population studies later in the century, the council should have had twenty-three Poles, eight Ukrainians and nineteen Jews.<sup>245</sup> Civic life gained degrees of normalcy after the conflict between the Poles and Ukrainians ended. Tensions were still strained at times and there were incidents of discrimination and prejudice among all the ethnic groups from time to time, but the borders of Poland and the Ukraine were finally settled at the Treaty of Riga in March 18, 1921. The Polish-Soviet War had come to an end and Przemyśl and the lands to the east past Tarnopol to the Zbruch River in Podolia had become part of the Polish state.<sup>246</sup> The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was recognized as the representative of the Ukrainian people. The nationalist government in Warsaw and the Bolsheviks deemed the creation of an independent Ukraine as contrary to their national interests.<sup>247</sup>

By 1921, the population in Przemyśl had reached almost forty eight thousand. The abolition of developmental restrictions on the land near the fortress made possible the beginning of economic development and expansion. Statistics show that the town was forty-six percent

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<sup>245</sup> Dunagan, *The Lost World of Przemyśl*, 365-366.

<sup>246</sup> Paul Robert Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe*. Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2002, 131.

<sup>247</sup> Kazimierz Robak, In *Poland World War I ended in 1913*. MA Thesis University of South Florida, 2005, 22.

Polish, thirty-nine percent Jewish and sixteen percent Ukrainian. The total population was twelve percent less than it was in 1910. The absence of military forces in Przemyśl after 1918 caused significant economic distress in the town; much of the commerce before and during the war depended on the military and these opportunities evaporated. Many Jews suffered losses as they were the dominant force in commerce. There was also a period of high inflation and unemployment in the non-agricultural sectors during the years 1921-1924. Przemyśl lost much of its stature after the Great War; it was no longer a first class Festung. Lviv remained the most important city in east-central Galicia.

The last two years of the Great War in Galicia saw the beginning of the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The German occupation and the revolutions in Russia brought about territorial changes that gave Galician political leaders opportunities to influence the eventual territorial settlements. The Allied Powers supported the idea of nation-states based on ethnicity and specifically identified the restoration of the Polish state as a priority at the end of the war. After the armistice in 1918, Poland declared its independence and the western Ukrainians soon followed suit. Nationalists on both sides had conflicting claims to land which quickly led to skirmishes in the towns of east central Galicia. The Poles were able to dominate and gain most of Galicia in the end. The Ukrainian forces were less unified, had less military experience and smaller numbers.

The absence of agreed upon borders in East Central Europe provided opportunities for political and military leaders to occupy lands that they considered to belong to their respective ethnic group. Galicia was heterogeneous, inhabited by Poles, Ukrainians and Jews. The Poles and Jews were dominant in Przemyśl, Lviv and the other towns. The Ukrainians were dominant but less organized in the rural communities and villages. The military efforts of the Poles were

successful in the towns and, as they consolidated control, the outlying communities had little say in administrative affairs in Galicia. The new Polish state and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic filled power vacuum left by the collapse of the empires.

## CONCLUSIONS

The effects of the Great War on the more dynamic Eastern Front were radically different than those on the more static Western Front. Severe damages occurred in broad areas across the Eastern Front, and the scope and scale of the fighting was much more widespread. The Great War affected the civilian population of Przemyśl and east central Galicia in three primary ways: damages to the infrastructure and economic base of the region; the reduction of the population by dislocation, starvation and disease; and the emergence of political freedom which resulted in nationalistic conflicts.

Most of the troop movements in Galicia were movements of men and materials in easterly and westerly directions; as those forces rolled back and forth across the plains of Galicia, they severely damaged villages and towns, destroyed infrastructure and caused agricultural losses in the millions. The armies displaced masses of people and caused the spread of diseases like typhus, cholera and tuberculosis. The militaries forced many civilians into labor parties to clear the fields of bodies and clean up debris in the towns and villages. The armies swept bare some residential areas of dwellings and trees so that lines of fire could be established. Generally speaking, the Russian attackers caused more damage and disruption in Galicia than the Austro-Hungarian or German forces. All the imperial powers viewed Galicia, an Austrian-governed territory as foreign. It was seen by all the imperial commands as a place to be conquered, controlled and annexed.

The town of Przemyśl, besieged and occupied for eight months in the years 1914 and 1915, bore witness to the effects of the war that hovered over the town. Most of the fighting was for the ring of forts that surrounded the town, but the people felt the effects of the shelling and air attacks that often occurred in their neighborhoods where the Austro-Hungarians and Russians

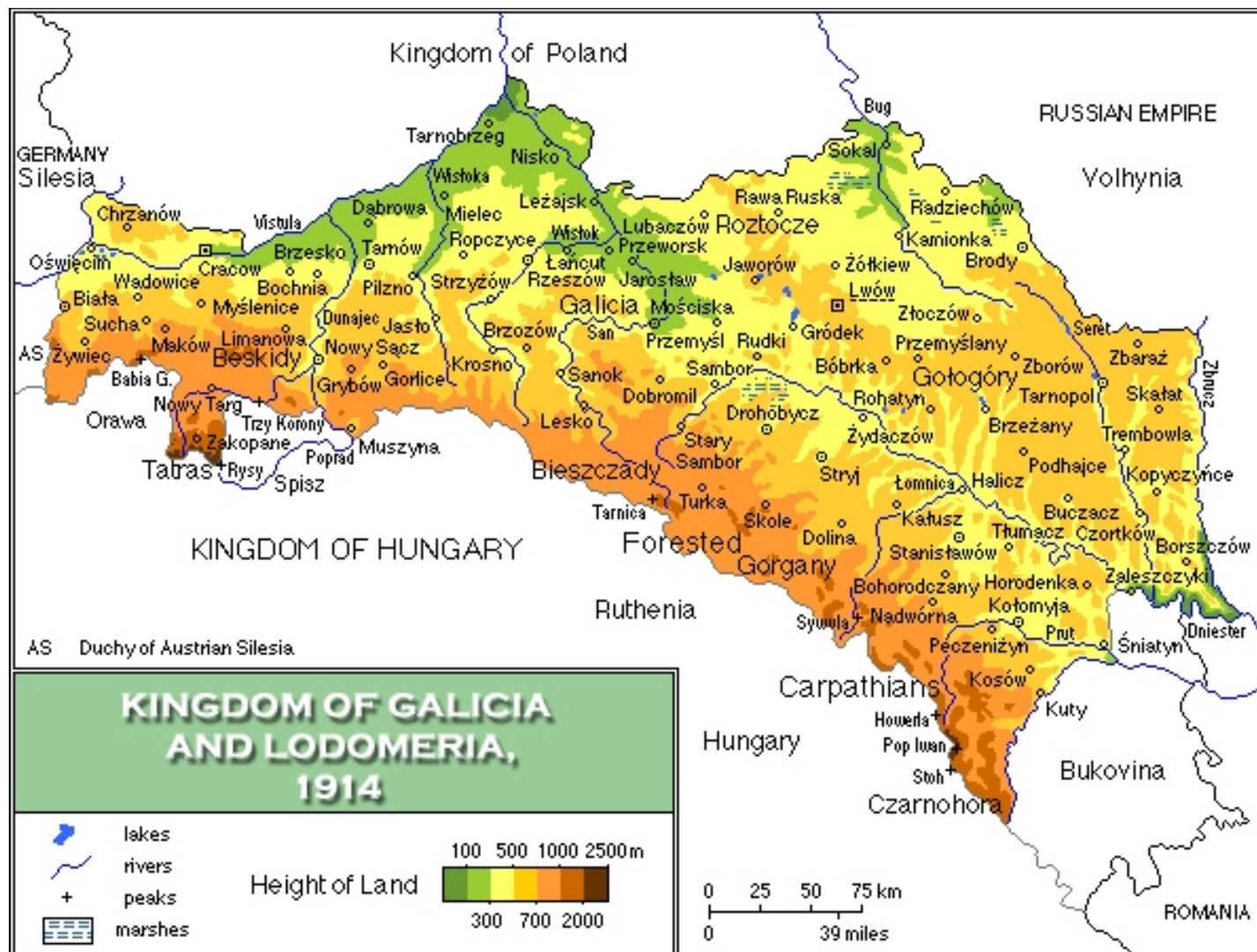
garrisoned soldiers and war materials were stored. The town was not heavily damaged but the residents were directly involved in the course of the battles and sieges. Thousands of civilians were evacuated, sometimes by force, by both the Austro-Hungarians and the Russians. Almost four thousand civilians died in the town during the war, some from the effects of the fighting but many more from the diseases that took advantage of the malnourished bodies of the people of the town. Based on the common estimate of eighteen thousand civilians in the town during the sieges, the death rate of the civilian population was twenty percent. Civilians in Przemyśl and Galicia were victims of the conditions of war, more so than from the fighting of it.

The collapse of the Central Powers and Russia, and the end of German control in East Central Europe gave many of the people freedom from subjugation by the imperial powers. Poles and Ukrainians populated Galicia, as well as people who identified as Jews. Poland declared its independence in November 1918 and other nationalities in the broader region followed suit soon after. The Allied and Associated Powers supported independence of nations to the west of the Polish lands, as well as Poland itself, but never defined boundaries in the east. The incomplete delineation of borders opened up a series of conflicts over national identity and territory. The forces of nationalism, present in Galicia for decades, drove both Polish and Ukrainian militias and volunteers to strive to consolidate their lands and their populations. This opportunistic nationalism ignited by the collapse of empires was encouraged by the contemporary discussion of the idea of the ethnic-based nation-state. The rise of the Bolsheviks in Russia contributed to this instability as they attempted to regain land that had been lost to the Germans. The instability in Russia also postponed the establishment of borders in large parts of East Central Europe, giving the nationalists the opportunity to try to define the borders themselves. In a multicultural and heterogeneous area such as Galicia, it was almost inevitable that the lines would be



established by force or coercion. The conflicting claims of the Polish and Ukrainian militias led to military clashes, first between themselves and later with the resurgent forces of the Red Army. The Poles, considered the victors by many in these struggles, re-established boundaries largely based on their irredentist claims. The state of Poland annexed Galicia and parts of Bukovina. The Ukrainians, after struggles with both the Poles and the Bolsheviks were incorporated in the U.S.S.R. The legacy of these conflicts continued through the rest of the twentieth century, and one can find evidence of conflicts caused by nationalism in this same part of Europe today.

## **APPENDIX: MAPS**

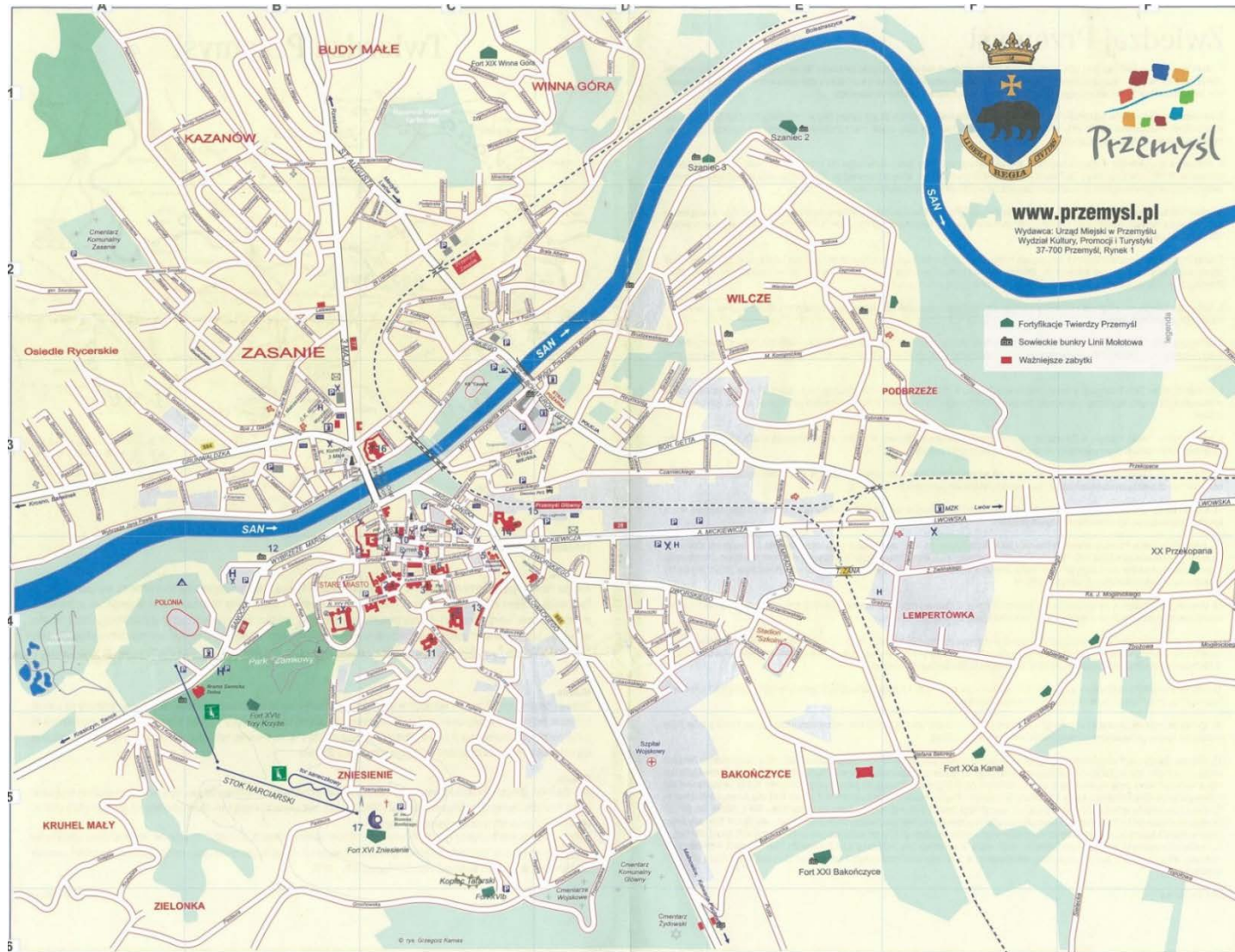


Source: Wikipedia

Figure 1: Galicia 1914







Source: [www.przemysl.pl](http://www.przemysl.pl)

Figure 3: Contemporary Przemyśl

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