

# **Ukrainians in Compulsory Military Service in the Polish Armed Forces (1921-1939)**

by  
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In the Second Polish Republic, as in many other countries, compulsory military service was introduced and enshrined in the constitution of 17 March 1921. Article 91 stated that “all citizens are obligated to military service”.<sup>1</sup> Originally, conscription matters had temporarily been regulated by the decrees of the Regency Council of Polish Kingdom, and by the decree of 7 March 1919, adopted by the Constituent Parliament. On 23 March 1924 the permanent Law on general conscription was approved. Article 5 stated that every citizen of the Polish Republic who had reached 21 years of age by 1 January of the calendar year was obliged to perform military service. According to this law, general conscription covered all men aged between 21 and 50 (60 years of age for officers), who were recognised as being capable of performing military duty. It provided for active duty, service in the reserves and service in the militia.<sup>2</sup>

In peacetime, active service in the army usually lasted for 24 months, while in the cavalry and horse artillery it lasted for 25 months and in the navy for 27 months. However, the Minister of War was authorised, if necessary, to reduce its terms. Thus, in practice, it took considerably less time: in the infantry – 17.5 months, in the cavalry and horse artillery – 22.5 months, in the artillery – 18.5 months. After completing active service, soldiers under 40 years of age passed into the reserves, after which they were automatically enlisted into the militia. Young men of a pre-military age (that is, under 17) could join the army as volunteers, but only if they were recognised as being capable of military service. Unlike recruits, volunteers enjoyed the right to choose their branch of service.<sup>3</sup>

Since about one third of Polish citizens belonged to ethnic or national minorities, the Polish army was also a multinational institution. One of the largest minority groups liable for military service was the Ukrainians. Therefore, the main goal of this article is to characterise the compulsory and volunteer military service of Ukrainians as Polish citizens within the Polish armed forces. Accordingly, the legal grounds for military service will be analyzed at

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<sup>1</sup> Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polski [Official Gazette of the Polish Republic] (1921), 44, pos. 267 [All translations are the author's].

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem (1924), 61, pos. 609.

<sup>3</sup> Polskie Siły Zbrojne w drugiej wojnie światowej. T. 1: Kampania wrześniowa. Cz. 1: Polityczne i wojskowe położenie Polski przed wojną [Polish Armed Forces in World War II. Vol. 1: The September Campaign. Pt. 1: The Political and Military Situation of Poland before the War], Londyn 1951, p. 148.

the beginning. This will be followed by a description of the organizational structure of the conscription campaigns, especially within the context of the establishment of state structures in Eastern Poland. Furthermore, the aim of this article is to study most of the specific features of the service of Ukrainians as a national minority in the Polish Armed Forces between the two World Wars.

## 1 Legal grounds for Ukrainians to Serve in the Polish Army

The conscription of Ukrainians was directly associated with their acquisition of Polish citizenship. The question of the eastern borders of the Second Polish Republic remained open for a long time, which meant that the issue of citizenship for the non-Polish population that lived on the disputed territories, i.e. today's Western Ukrainian and Western Belarussian lands, was also uncertain. With regards to the former possessions of the Tsar, the citizenship issue was only finally resolved after the signing of the Riga Peace Treaty on 18 March 1921, which ended the war between the Soviet Republics and Poland. Article 6 of this document introduced the right to choose one's nationality.<sup>4</sup> Within a year, everyone could decide whether he wanted to acquire Polish or Soviet citizenship. All those who did not exercise this right automatically became citizens of the state in which they permanently lived. Thus, from 1921 onwards, based on the Riga Peace Treaty, the Ukrainian population in the Volhynia, Polesia, Chełm and Podlachia regions could legally be drafted into the Polish army.

The citizenship problem was more complicated for the non-Polish population of Eastern Galicia. Before November 1918 the local Ukrainians had been subjects of the Austrian Emperor and they later became citizens of the Western Ukrainian People's Republic. The question of Eastern Galicia was placed before the Paris Peace Conference. In July 1919 the Western Ukrainian People's Republic was defeated militarily by Polish troops who occupied its territory. According to the decision of the Highest Council of the Allied Powers, Eastern Galicia was placed under Polish control as an autonomous region. However, this act did not require the non-Polish nationalities, mainly Ukrainians and Jews, to perform certain duties towards the Polish state. In particular, they were not required to serve in the Polish army. Nevertheless, despite these legal obstacles, the political and military leaders of Polish Republic still tried to conscript non-Poles in Eastern Galicia. This provoked various clashes with local Ukrainians and Jews. Trying to avoid conscription, they often changed their place of permanent residence or fled to Czechoslovakia or the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> Complaints and protests reached the Council of Ambassadors of the

<sup>4</sup> Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polski (1921), 49, pos. 300.

<sup>5</sup> For more about this issue see in ANDRII RUKKAS: Pryzovy ukrains'kogo i yevrejs'kogo naselennia Skhidnoi Galychyny do pols'koï armii (1920-1923) [The Conscription of the

Great Powers. Ukrainian representatives from Eastern Galicia strongly opposed this transgression of authority by the Polish civil and military authorities. Thanks to their energetic efforts, the western powers imposed an official ban on Poland's recruitment of non-Poles. In August 1921 the Minister for War issued the necessary order.<sup>6</sup>

Only two years later, on March 15<sup>th</sup> 1923, the Council of Ambassadors of the Great Powers made their final decision concerning Eastern Galicia. It was recognised as a part of the Polish state. Thus, the necessary legal basis for the conscription of local Ukrainians and Jews was established. From now on, service in the Polish army became obligatory.

## 2 Organisation of Conscription Campaigns

Every year young men of 21 years of age were conscripted into the Polish Army. Conscription campaigns took place in two stages. The first phase started in the county centers, where special medical commissions worked. They had to inspect all men of legal draft age and over who, for whatever reason, had not undergone this procedure before or who were recognised as temporarily incapable of service. In the second stage, all fully able conscripts were expected to appear before the County Replenishment Office (*Powiatowa Komenda Uzupełnień*). Here they were allocated to their military units and provided with transportation to their future places of service.

In December 1921 conscription was extended to cover the Ukrainian population of Volhynia and Polesia for the first time, who had received Polish citizenship under the terms of the Treaty of Riga. Documents show that this conscription was problematic. Activists in various communist, monarchist and nationalist Ukrainian organizations launched an extensive propaganda campaign in order to disrupt the draft. Although these activists were unable to achieve their goal, the compilation of accurate lists of men of conscription age became significantly more difficult.<sup>7</sup> In the following year, the geographical scope of conscription was further extended. In November 1922 the Cabinet of Ministers canceled the ban on the recruitment of the non-Polish population of Eastern Galicia. The first stage of the draft (the work of medical commissions) was held from 11 to 23 December, the second (the sending of

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Ukrainian and Jewish Population of Eastern Galicia into the Polish Army], in: *Visnyk Kyivs'kogo nacional'nogo Universytetu imeni Tarasa Shevchenka. Seria Istoriya* 43 (2000), pp. 49-53.

<sup>6</sup> TADEUSZ KOWALSKI: *Mniejszości narodowe w Siłach Zbrojnych drugiej Rzeczypospolitej (1918-1939)* [National Minorities in the Armed Forces of the Second Polish Republic (1918-1939)], Toruń 1998, p. 77.

<sup>7</sup> WALDEMAR REZMER: *Stanowisko i udział Ukraińców w niemiecko-polskiej kampanii 1939 roku* [The Position and Participation of Ukrainians in the German-Polish Campaign in 1939], in: *Polska – Ukraina. Trudne pytania. Tom 4: Materiały IV międzynarodowego seminarium historycznego "Stosunki polsko-ukraińskie w latach II. wojny światowej"*, Warszawa, 8-10 października 1998, Warszawa 1999, pp. 13-35, here p. 14.

recruits to the County Replenishment Offices) from 22 to 24 January 1923. All men born in 1900-1901 had to be tested, regardless of their nationality.<sup>8</sup>

The Inspector of the 5<sup>th</sup> Army, General Stanisław Haller, issued a special decree concerning the conscription campaign. He particularly emphasised that this action should take place peacefully and without any complication. He stressed that

“various anti-state elements, along with the communist Bolshevik terrorists, will try to prevent the conscription of recruits to the Polish Army, by agitation against the service, inciting them to desertion and even possibly to active resistance. According to information which is, however, unconfirmed, anti-state elements are waiting for recruits to be gathered in county centers or at County Replenishment Offices in order to organise riots. Ensuring peace in this period will be the main task of the state police”.<sup>9</sup>

In fact, General Haller’s concerns were somewhat exaggerated. Generally speaking, the work of the medical commissions proceeded quite calmly. The only notable incident took place in Lwów (L’viv), where unknown persons ripped conscription posters off the walls.<sup>10</sup> The second stage was also relatively peaceful when, at the end of January 1923, the County Replenishment Offices sent recruits to the military units. In this respect, the Army inspector reported that

“the situation in the 10<sup>th</sup> Corps District [Headquarters in Przemyśl] is calm. The situation in the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps District [Headquarters in Lwów] conscription campaign is peaceful. Delays with the arrival of recruits caused by snow. The County Replenishment Offices in Czortków [ukr. Chortkiv] and Buczacz [ukr. Buchach] report that the recruits are in a good mood. However, recruits who do not wish to go voluntarily are taken by force”.<sup>11</sup>

A variety of incidents took place during the conscription campaign, some of which were of a political nature. Young Ukrainians did not always willingly join the Polish army. They demonstrated, by different means and in various forms, their negative attitude towards the Polish state and its armed forces. Ukrainians often sang patriotic songs and shouted anti-Polish slogans. If the police could not restore order themselves, they received military support. However, it should be noted that such incidents were not very numerous. One of them took place on 22 January 1923 in the village of Torki in Przemyśl County. Here local conscripts, having broken doors and windows, spontaneously invaded the village office. There they organised a farewell feast with music and dancing. Two local policemen, the mayor and his deputy,

<sup>8</sup> Derzhavnyi Arkhiv L’vivskoyi Oblasti (DALO) [State Archives of the L’viv region], L’viv, fond 243, opys 1, sprava 374, arkush 6.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, arkush 14.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, arkush 28.

<sup>11</sup> Centr Khrańenya Istoriko-Dokumentalnykh Kollekcii (CKIDK) [Centre for the Preservation of Historical-Documentary Collections], Moscow, fond 308, opis’ 8, delo 94, list 47.

tried to restore order and escort the conscripts to the County Replenishment Office, but more than 300 local residents resisted. Villagers sang the Ukrainian national anthem "Ukraine is not yet dead!", and threw empty bottles and stones at the police. Some of the recruits began to shout anti-Polish and anti-state slogans, expressing their reluctance to serve in the Polish army ("We do not accept Poland here and we will not defend it!"). Some even threatened a massacre.<sup>12</sup> The policemen managed to convince villagers return to their homes and arrested 3 recruits, while 11 others escaped. Since the rural police could not fulfill its task in calming the villagers, the County mayor asked the headquarters of the 10<sup>th</sup> Corps District for help. The military authorities responded quickly, and the next day a cavalry squadron appeared in Torki, along with additional police forces. Finally, all the conscripts who had resisted were taken to the County Replenishment Office.<sup>13</sup>

Seeking to avoid conscription, many recruits managed to flee to neighbouring countries. Most such cases occurred in the early 1920s, when the border was still quite transparent. For instance, the police commissariat in Tarnopol (Ternopil) reported that, on 21 January 1923, a secret congress of Ukrainian students had taken place in the city. Young men decided not to serve in the Polish army. For this purpose they were ready to leave for the Soviet Union or Czechoslovakia, or even to start an uprising in Eastern Galicia. In January 1923 the situation was similar in other regions of Eastern Galicia. For example, before sending recruits to the military units, the deputy commandant of Lwów County police reported that, according to secret information from his confidant, Ukrainian conscripts in the towns of Winniki (Vinnyky) and Szczerec (Shchyrets) who did not want to go to the army had a plan to hide in the woods until things calmed down.<sup>14</sup> Seven Ukrainian conscripts from Humeniec (Humenets) village in Lwów County had the same plan. Later they intended to flee abroad, to Czechoslovakia or the Soviet Union.<sup>15</sup>

However, it is necessary to emphasise once again that the cases of evasion of conscription or confrontation between conscripts and police did not occur all too often. Later on the situation even changed in this regard. In the late 1920s, local Ukrainian nationalist leaders even began to advise young men not to resist conscription but rather to go quietly into the army, and to study military matters carefully, since such knowledge would be useful in the future in their fight for an independent Ukrainian state. In 1928 the illegal nationalist magazine *Surma* (The Trumpet) published an appeal addressed to Ukrainian recruits.

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<sup>12</sup> DALO, fond 1, opys 4, sprava 300 (619), arkush 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, arkush 6.

<sup>14</sup> DALO, fond 1, opys 4, sprava 295, arkush 5.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, arkush 6.

“With clenched teeth, but with great dignity, you will go to the barracks, where an enemy of our people calls you. You will leave your families and homes. Maybe they will send you far away to the alien lands. You will put on a cap with the Polish eagle. In any case, wherever you will be sent by Poland, always remember that you are forced to go to the enemy army ... Boys! You will be told to take the oath of allegiance to Poland. This is a violent oath and it is not valid! In your hearts, give another oath: to fight for the freedom of the Ukrainian people! Swear that you go to the Polish army only for the uniform and weapons! Swear that when the time comes you will use the uniform and the weapons against Poland! Swear that when the time comes, you will turn your guns against the Polish officers!”<sup>16</sup>

Young Ukrainians were instructed not to desert from the Polish army, but rather to listen to and closely observe what the Poles were doing or going to do.<sup>17</sup> They were encouraged not to serve as cooks, batmen etc., but to volunteer for non-commissioned officers schools. Those who did not obey these instructions could be even punished when visiting home during holidays and vacations.<sup>18</sup>

Even at the peak of the political confrontation in Eastern Galicia, which followed the so-called “pacification” of autumn 1930, conscription campaigns remained quite calm and peaceful there, without any open hostility or violence. In 1931, for instance, during the spring draft campaign in Lwów province, there were relatively few cases of “anti-state propaganda of a Ukrainian national character”.<sup>19</sup> The only noteworthy incident took place in the city of Drohobycz (Drohobych), where some newly conscripted recruits shouted anti-state slogans.<sup>20</sup> Generally, it can be noted that the number of people who avoided conscription constantly decreased year by year. This was a strong trend, since the Ukrainians in the Second Polish Republic finally realised the compulsory character of military service.

### 3 Ukrainians – Soldiers of the Polish Army

Minorities within the Polish army averaged about 25 per cent of the total, and Ukrainians numbered around 10-12 per cent. More detailed information is presented in the following table.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Surma (1928), 6, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> LUCYNA KULIŃSKA: *Działalność terrorystyczna i sabotażowa nacjonalistycznych organizacji ukraińskich w Polsce w latach 1922-1939* [Terroristic and Sabotage Activities of Ukrainian Nationalist Organizations in Poland in the Years 1922-1939], Kraków 2009, p. 266.

<sup>18</sup> KOWALSKI, *Mniejszości narodowe* (as in footnote 6), pp. 112-113.

<sup>19</sup> DALO, fond 1, opys 3, sprawa 721, arkush 41v.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>21</sup> KOWALSKI, *Mniejszości narodowe* (as in footnote 6), pp. 118-119.

Year	Poles		Minorities altogether		Ukrainians	
	Men	%	Men	%	Men	%
1922	147 443	78.31	40 847	21.69	14 886	7.91
1923	168 945	66.12	86 606	33.88	43 261	16.90
1924	139 898	77.75	40 043	22.25	20 024	11.12
1925	185 725	79.58	47 722	20.42	21 086	9.03
1926	150 397	79.44	38 731	20.56	17 115	9.10
1927	153 072	72.32	58 604	27.68	25 834	12.20
1930	240 257	79.55	61 761	20.45	31 636	10.47
1936	156 116	76.39	48 257	23.61	22 955	11.23
1937	154 310	75.23	50 818	24.77	24 319	11.86
1938	117 422	74.81	39 546	25.19	15 729	10.02

Therefore, about 23 000 to 24 000 Ukrainians served annually in the Polish Army. Taking this into account it can be said without any great exaggeration that approximately 420 000 to 430 000 Ukrainians passed through military service in the Polish Army between 1921 and 1938.

Every year, the Minister for War set the maximum percentage of soldiers from national minorities who could hold service in the various branches, and even in some particular military units. This practice functioned until the Second World War. The following table shows the national composition of the different branches of service in 1 April 1922. Note that the word “Ukrainians” stood only for those soldiers who came from Volhynia, Polesia, Chełm, Podlachia and the other areas that had previously belonged to Tsarist Russia, while “Rusyns” were Ukrainians from Eastern Galicia.<sup>22</sup>

	Poles	Ukrainians	Rusyns	Belarusians	Russians	Czechs	Germans	Jews
Infantry	71.10	9.34	1.61	7.92	1.29	0.14	1.20	7.40
Cavalry	53.89	13.84	1.76	21.69	3.49	0.22	0.65	4.51
Artillery	73.51	11.99	1.20	5.40	2.40	0.50	1.30	3.70
Engineers	71.79	4.66	6.16	6.37	1.93	0.34	4.76	3.99
Air Force	87.40	3.07	0.06	6.81	0.25	0.03	0.46	1.90
Communications	86.37	0.73	0.57	6.57	0.40	0.14	1.12	4.10
Tanks and railway troops	90.40	1.10	1.28	2.43	0.71	0.05	0.95	3.08
Trains	68.64	6.32	1.86	9.89	0.50	0.17	1.07	11.52
Gendarmerie	97.85	0.26	0.36	0.13	0.06	0.09	0.00	1.25
Sanitary units	86.24	0.60	1.62	4.46	0.55	0.09	0.86	7.56
Logistical units	76.54	1.00	1.75	1.24	2.39	0.14	1.34	15.56

<sup>22</sup> DARIUSZ MATELSKI: *Mniejszości narodowe w Wojsku Polskim w 1922 roku* [National Minorities in the Polish Army in 1922], Poznań 1995, p. 27.

By October 1923 Ukrainian soldiers constituted: in the infantry – 15.41 per cent, in the cavalry – 22.96 per cent, in the artillery – 23.25 per cent, in the engineering troops – 13.03 per cent, in the Air Force – 6.7 per cent, in communications – 8.15 per cent, in the railway troops – 10.55 per cent, in the trains – 21.72 per cent, in the gendarmerie – 1.99 per cent, in sanitary units – 14.6 per cent, and in logistical units – 2.23 per cent.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, in comparison with the previous year, the share of Ukrainian soldiers had significantly grown in all branches of service. This can be explained by the fact that, in 1923, the conscription campaign now covered all the Western Ukrainian lands under Polish rule, including Eastern Galicia, where the non-Polish population had previously been exempted from conscription for political reasons.

In the following years, the national proportions in different branches remained largely the same, but some specific trends occurred. Thus, the share of national minorities, including Ukrainians, slightly increased in the infantry and cavalry, while in the technical troops (such as communications, air forces, armoured units) it decreased. There were certain situations where in some infantry regiments, stationed in Western or Central Poland, soldiers from national minorities constituted more than half of the personnel of the unit. For example, according to Army inspector General Mieczysław Norwid-Neugebauer in January 1937, non-Poles reached up to 70 per cent in the rifle companies stationed in Wadowice, near the Krakow 12<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment.<sup>24</sup> In October 1938 another Army inspector General Tadeusz Piskor was painfully forced to admit that

“our infantry – ‘the Queen of the Army’ and the pride of the Polish army – is in deep crisis. Because of the very limited budget, the quantity of troops remains the same. The constant development of aviation, armored troops, communications, engineers and artillery have naturally impacted upon the quantitative status of the infantry, taking from its ranks the most valuable national [Polish], physical and intellectual elements. In this respect, the infantry regiments have a low number of personnel and a high percentage of non-Poles. The infantry now gets ever worse human material, both in physical and intellectual aspects. Similar processes also took place within the infantry regiments. Here, technical and training detachments such as artillery, pioneers, sappers, reconnaissance, and anti-tank platoons have developed very intensively, as have various courses for non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and reserve officers. They have absorbed the regiment’s most precious physical, intellectual and national human material. The further reorganization of anti-tank, artillery and communication platoons into companies will deepen the weakening process of the infantry. Such a double screening of annual contingent of recruits for the infantry, firstly in favour of the other branches and secondly within the regiment itself, will render the contingent quantitatively limited, and therefore even less valuable in terms of human material. Thus, the assignment

<sup>23</sup> REZMER, *Stanowisko i udział Ukraińców* (as in footnote 7), pp. 19-20.

<sup>24</sup> EUGENIUSZ J. KOZŁOWSKI (ed.): *Wojna obronna Polski, 1939. Wybór źródeł* [The Defensive War of Poland in 1939. Selection of sources], Warszawa 1968, p. 115.



of soldiers to training and machine-gun companies often puts the regimental commander in a hopeless situation.”<sup>25</sup>

On 4 August 1936 the Minister for War approved a national structure for infantry regiments, which were divided into five groups. Detailed information on this can be found in the following table.<sup>26</sup>

Unit	Garrison town	Division	Poles	Minorities
43. Inf. Reg.	Dubno	13. Inf. Div.	90%	10%
44. Inf. Reg.	Równe	13. Inf. Div.		
45. Inf. Reg.	Równe	13. Inf. Div.		
78. Inf. Reg.	Baranowicze	20. Inf. Div.		
84. Inf. Reg.	Pińsk	30. Inf. Div.		
86. Inf. Reg.	Mołodeczno	19. Inf. Div.		
III/50. Inf. Reg.	Sarny	27. Inf. Div.		
48. Inf. Reg.	Stanisławów	11. Inf. Div.	80%	20%
49. Inf. Reg.	Kołomyja	11. Inf. Div.		
79. Inf. Reg.	Słonim	20. Inf. Div.		
80. Inf. Reg.	Słonim	20. Inf. Div.		
83. Inf. Reg.	Kobryń	30. Inf. Div.		
85. Inf. Reg.	Nowa Wilejka	19. Inf. Div.		
1. Inf. Reg.	Wilno	1. Inf. Div.	75%	25%
5. Inf. Reg.	Wilno	1. Inf. Div.		
6. Inf. Reg.	Wilno	1. Inf. Div.		
24. Inf. Reg.	Łuck	27. Inf. Div.		
41. Inf. Reg.	Suwałki	29. Inf. Div.		
54. Inf. Reg.	Tarnopol	12. Inf. Div.		
76. Inf. Reg.	Grodno	29. Inf. Div.		
77. Inf. Reg.	Lida	19. Inf. Div.		
81. Inf. Reg.	Grodno	29. Inf. Div.		
51. Inf. Reg.	Brzeżany	12. Inf. Div.	70%	30%
52. Inf. Reg.	Złoczów	12. Inf. Div.		
Other Infantry Regiments			60%	40%

Apparently, the Minister for War paid special attention to the regiments stationed in the eastern regions of the Second Polish Republic. The maximum percentage of Poles (90 per cent) was to be found in seven units, located in close proximity to the border with the Soviet Union. The limitation on non-Poles in these regiments could be explained by the fact that these units would have to secure the border in the case of war against the Soviet Union. Their battle actions would secure a normal deployment of the main forces of the Polish army. Clearly, the results of the first battles would have a great impact on the troops' morale and on the soldiers' determination to keep fighting.

The presence of a large number of soldiers from non-Polish nationalities in the border regiments (especially Ukrainians and Belarusians) could – in the

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, p. 168.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, p. 116.

view of the military authorities – significantly reduce their fighting ability. Realizing that they are fighting against their brothers, Ukrainians or Belarusians might have doubts concerning the loyal conduct of their military duties. However, in a war against Germany their morale would be much higher. The same motives forced the Polish authorities to introduce tight restrictions on the recruitment of non-Polish nationalities to serve in technical troops, which were to be mobilised first in the event of a war alarm.

The vast majority of Ukrainians served in military units stationed in central and western regions.<sup>27</sup> For example, in 1935, infantry units received 10 309 recruits of Ukrainian nationality, 386 of whom (3.7 per cent) were allocated to regiments stationed in the Warsaw Corps District, 1031 (10 per cent) to Lublin, none to Grodno, 1378 (13.4 per cent) to Łódź, 2342 (22.8 per cent) to Krakow, 1174 (11.4 per cent) to Lwów, 1960 (19 per cent) to Poznań, none to Toruń, 291 (2.8 per cent) to Brześć, and 1747 (16.9 per cent) to Przemyśl.<sup>28</sup> It is important to emphasise that the Polish military authorities always strictly followed the rule that residents of Galicia and Volhynia should not serve in together in one unit and sometimes not even in the same detachment. According to the informational report “Foreign nationalities in the Polish Army”, issued in October 1923 by the Second Department (intelligence) of the General Staff of the Polish army,

“[the] Ukrainian recruit is a positive human material if he is directed to the units stationed in the western Corps Districts and does not have contact there with Rusyns [Ukrainians from Galicia]. However, another phenomenon is observed. When the same recruit is serving together with Rusyns, who are superior to him in national and political self-consciousness, he falls under the influence of agitation clearly aimed, if not against the existence of the Polish state, at least against its current borders. As a result, we see an increase in desertion and aversion to military service.”<sup>29</sup>

Once the recruits arrived at their units, they began with an initial general training course, which lasted for three months. Among the newly-arrived replenishment there were many illiterates, and special compulsory courses in the Polish language were organised for them. Having completed the courses, soldiers passed final exams and received certificates of education (two years of primary school). Many illiterate soldiers came from the Eastern and Central regions of the Second Polish Republic, the former possessions of the Russian Empire. A significant percentage of them were representatives of national minorities – Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians and others. As an example here is information about the national structure of students who

<sup>27</sup> MATELSKI (as in footnote 22), pp. 16-26; REZMER, *Stanowisko i udział Ukraińców* (as in footnote 7), p. 20.

<sup>28</sup> *Wskazówki do rozdziału i wcielenia rocznika poborowego 1914 (wcielenie wiosenne)* [Directions to the Distribution and Units Assignment of Recruits Born in 1914 (Spring Assignment)]. See: REZMER, *Stanowisko i udział Ukraińców* (as in footnote 7), p. 22.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

attended a course of literacy, organised in the Warsaw Corps district in 1937.<sup>30</sup>

Divisions	Allowed to pass the exam					
	Poles	Ukrainians	Belarusians	Jews	Lithuanians	Others
Warsaw Cav. Division	203 (35.1%)	135 (23.4%)	142 (24.6%)	39 (6.7%)	—	59 (10.2%)
8. Infantry Division	182 (44.6%)	—	82 (20.1%)	47 (11.5%)	97 (23.8%)	—
18. Infantry Division (incomplete data)	102 (41.6%)	2 (0.8%)	70 (28.6%)	20 (8.2%)	50 (20.4%)	1 (0.4%)
28. Infantry Division	220 (60.6%)	131 (36.1%)	—	12 (3.3%)	—	—

Having completed the course of initial general training, young soldiers gave the oath and were assigned to certain detachments, where they should obtain their military specialisations. The most talented and disciplined, according to the commander's decision, were sent to a training company. There, over the duration of six months, they were prepared as future NCOs. All those who successfully passed the final exams received the rank of corporal, and others that of senior soldiers, while the worst remained privates.

When choosing candidates for the training company, commanders took into account not only their intellectual (a completed primary education was required) and physical abilities, but also their nationality. In the middle of 1930s the War Ministry determined that national minorities could not exceed 5 per cent of the future NCOs being trained in every specific unit.<sup>31</sup> Naturally, this restriction caused resentment among soldiers, Belarusians, Ukrainians or Jews. Even some high ranking Polish military officials also criticised such an obviously abnormal situation. For example, in January 1937, in his letter to the Chief Inspectorate of the Armed Forces, General Norwid-Neugebauer wrote:

“Recently there have been changes in the selection of candidates for regimental NCO schools. Candidates are to be exclusively of Polish nationality. I think that in this case it would be entirely reasonable not to limit the regimental commanders because, in some cases, trustworthy soldiers from the minorities can be very good NCOs. Additionally, such tight restrictions might cause, in some cases, feelings of injustice and abuse among the national minorities. This will make fertile ground for negative attitudes towards the Polish state. Soldiers from ethnic minorities, if

<sup>30</sup> JERZY ODZIEMKOWSKI: *Armia i społeczeństwo II Rzeczypospolitej* [The Army and Society of the Second Polish Republic], Warszawa 1996, p. 49.

<sup>31</sup> KOZŁOWSKI, *Wojna obronna* (as in footnote 24), p. 117.

they are really loyal toward our country and deserving of promotion, should be able to make at least a modest military career.”<sup>32</sup>

In response to this letter, the War Ministry allowed the regimental commander to exceed the 5 per cent limit in cases where they had really excellent candidates for NCO schools, persons with a high level of professional skills, education and loyalty to the state.<sup>33</sup>

In the infantry and cavalry regiments soldiers from national minorities, including Ukrainians, were not supposed to get into special detachments. For example, because of the perceived need to protect military secrets, the communications platoon, where telegraph and radiotelegraph operators were trained, was to be staffed only with politically loyal Poles. This rule was followed very strictly. Moreover, non-Poles theoretically could not become gun commanders and gunners in the anti-tank platoons and regimental artillery platoons. Thus, representatives of the national minorities remained in the line detachments (companies and squadrons). But here they were also faced with certain prohibitions and restrictions. Again, because of the need to protect military secrets, these soldiers could not be used in the office to work with documents. Secretaries and couriers could only be Polish.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, the national factor was taken into consideration when assigning sharpshooters (snipers) in rifle companies and cavalry squadrons. Snipers, if possible, also had to be Poles.<sup>35</sup> In practice, however, the company commander could hardly follow these instructions. It was not always possible to choose among the soldiers of junior and senior years of service, respectively 20 per cent and 10 per cent of Poles, with very good shooting skills.<sup>36</sup> Numerous photos of Ukrainian soldiers can serve as evidence of this. On the soldiers’ chests there are special shooting awards – braided cords with one, two or three tassels.

#### 4 Ukrainians – NCOs and Officers of the Polish Army

In the Polish army, NCOs occupied an extremely important place. They were expected to have a strongly developed sense of duty and loyalty to the government and the state. In fact, they were the commanders, the closest to the private soldier. That is why the NCOs immediately, permanently and strongly influenced the privates. The combat training of a soldier, his appearance, health, order and discipline within the unit, all these matters were the sole realm of NCOs. Due to very attractive financial conditions and various

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem, pp. 115-116.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, p. 117.

<sup>34</sup> KOWALSKI, *Mniejszości narodowe* (as in footnote 6), p. 133.

<sup>35</sup> KOZŁOWSKI (as in footnote 24), p. 115.

<sup>36</sup> JAN BŁASIŃSKI: *Kawaleria II Rzeczypospolitej na przykładzie 25 pułku ułanów Wielkopolskich* [The Cavalry of the Second Polish Republic in the Example of the 25th Greater Poland Lancers Regiment], Warszawa 1996, p. 42.

other privileges many conscripts were willing to stay on in the army, having completed their active service.

In order to become a NCO one had to: 1) successfully complete the regimental NCO school and obtain the rank of Corporal; 2) remain in the army for at least two years after having completed active service. Only then could one sign a twelve-year contract with the War Ministry. This was clearly a long and difficult path, and candidates had to meet high requirements. One of them was the candidate's nationality. As already mentioned it was very difficult for non-Polish soldiers even to get into the regimental NCO school. The officer corps in the Polish army was even more monolithic, in the sense of nationality and religion. The next table reflects this.<sup>37</sup>

	15.01.1926	15.02.1927	1.05.1930
Roman Catholics	16 430	16 890	15 553
Protestants	266	382	1
Greek Catholics	–	45	44
Orthodox	102	142	6
Jewish	74	87	14
Others	26	15	---
Total	16 898	17 561	15 618

Clearly, in their religion, the Ukrainians were Greek Catholics and Orthodox. At the same time it is necessary to keep in mind that there were also Russians and Belarusians among these categories.

The absence of Ukrainians among the officer corps might be explained by two main reasons. First of all, the Polish War Ministry imposed very severe restrictions on members of national minorities seeking to enter the officer schools. Secondly, a military career was unpopular among the Ukrainian intelligentsia (especially in Eastern Galicia), who considered it unacceptable to serve, as they saw it, in the army of occupation. After school, young Ukrainians chose careers for themselves which were less associated with army. They preferred rather to become engineers, lawyers and doctors. Thus, among the 426 graduates who finished the Infantry officer school in 1928-1929 there were fewer than ten Ukrainians (2 per cent), namely: two residents of Eastern Galicia, several people from Volyn and three political emigrants. The latter had entered the school without any exams, in accordance with a secret agreement between the Polish military authorities and the Ukrainian government in exile.<sup>38</sup> Between 1922 and 1932, among the graduates of the Artillery officer school, 98.4 per cent were Poles, 1 per cent were political emigrants

<sup>37</sup> KOWALSKI, *Mniejszości narodowe* (as in footnote 6), p. 123.

<sup>38</sup> VASYL TATARSKYI: *Pid chotyryma praporamy* [Under Four Flags], München 1959, p. 58; *Szkoła podchorążych piechoty. Księga pamiątkowa. Uzupełnienie* [Infantry Cadet School. Commemorative Book. Supplement], Londyn 1976, pp. 81-88.

from Georgia, and only 0.6 per cent were Ukrainians and Russians.<sup>39</sup> In 1938, among the 148 cadets in the Cavalry officer school there was only 1 Ukrainian, all the rest were Poles.<sup>40</sup>

A special category of military personnel were the so called contracting officers. These were political refugees, former soldiers of national armies, mainly Ukrainian and Georgian, who had been defeated by the Bolsheviks. Engaging them in military service, the Poles hoped to use these people at a later date in a war against the USSR. In this case they would create their own national armies, primarily Ukrainian and Georgian, as well as various insurgent, diversionary and survey organisations in the Soviet Union's rear (in Ukraine, the Northern Caucasus and Transcaucasia). When compared to other nationalities (Georgians, Azerbaijanis, Dagestanians, Ossetians and others), Ukrainians appeared in the Polish army considerably later as contracting officers. It was only after the coup in May 1926, when Józef Piłsudski returned to power, that exiled Ukrainian political leaders managed to arrange service in the Polish army for several dozens of former Ukrainian officers and soldiers.<sup>41</sup> These officers served on the basis of personal contracts that they signed with Polish War Ministry. In fact, they enjoyed the same rights and performed the same duties as staff officers of the Polish Army. However, there were some exceptions. Contracting officers were deprived of pensions for long service. They could only achieve promotion in rank by signing a new contract with the War Ministry. The initial contracts had a special provision stating that the contracting officer would fight for the Polish army in the case of war against the USSR. This condition was later removed.<sup>42</sup> By 1 August 1938 there were 38 Ukrainians in total serving as contracting officers in the Polish army. The following table provides some basic information about them.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> IGOR BŁAGOWIESZCZAŃSKI: *Artyleria Wojska Polskiego w latach 1918-1939* [The Artillery of the Polish Army in 1918-1939], in: *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny* 16 (1971), 1, pp. 258-295, here p. 286.

<sup>40</sup> EUGENIUSZ KOZŁOWSKI: *Wojsko Polskie, 1936-1939. Próby modernizacji i rozbudowy* [Polish Army, 1936-1939. Attempts of Modernisation and Development], Warszawa 1964, p. 122.

<sup>41</sup> SERGIUSZ MIKULICZ: *Prometeizm w polityce II Rzeczypospolitej* [Prometheism in the Policy of the Second Polish Republic], Warszawa 1971, p. 106.

<sup>42</sup> MARCIN MAMOŃ: *Wygnaniec z Kaukazu. Przyczynek do dziejów oficerów kontraktowych w II RP* [Exile from the Caucasus. Contribution to the History of Contract Officers in the Second Polish Republic], in: *Niepodległość* 47 (1995), pp. 185-217, here p. 197.

<sup>43</sup> *Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe, Warszawa* [Central Military Archive, Warsaw], sygnatura tymczasowa 1774/89/206.

	Lt. Col.	Major	Captain	1 <sup>st</sup> Lieut.	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieut.	Total
Infantry	2	10	2	5	1	20
Cavalry	–	4	1	1	1	7
Artillery	–	1	2	3	–	6
Communications	–	2	–	–	–	2
Armor troops	–	–	1	–	–	1
Air Forces	–	–	1	–	–	1
Armory service	–	–	1	–	–	1
Total	2	17	8	9	2	38

During their service in the Polish Army, Ukrainian contracting officers received Polish state awards. It is known that Major Konstantyn Smovski from the 11<sup>th</sup> Lancers Regiment, Major Mykola Palienko from the 26<sup>th</sup> Light Artillery Regiment, and Major Yakiv Halchevski from the 67<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment all received Silver Merit Crosses (Srebrny Krzyż Zasługi). Additionally, all Ukrainian contracting officers who participated in the war against the Bolsheviks in 1920 were awarded with a commemorative medal, “Poland to her defender” (“Polska swemu obrońcy”).

### 5 Meeting the Religious Needs of Ukrainian Soldiers in the Polish Army

During military service, each soldier, regardless of his nationality enjoyed a full freedom of conscience and worship. This provision was also fixed in the Domestic Service Charter (Regulamin Służby Wewnętrznej). Twice a day (in the morning and evening) soldiers of Christian denominations gathered together for common prayer, where each of them behaved in accordance with the traditions and rituals of his religion. Normally, Catholic soldiers visited regular church ministries on Sundays and holidays, while other denominations (including Orthodox) did so at least once a month. Every year, each unit commander received a list of Greek-Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim feasts from the “Bureau of Non-Catholic Denominations”. Additionally, he also received special instructions describing the features of the feast’s celebration. The Greek-Catholics had 25 annual holidays, Jews – 23, Orthodox – 18, and both Protestants and Muslims – 11.<sup>44</sup>

By religion, Ukrainian soldiers were, mostly, Greek-Catholic or Orthodox. There were special military chaplains to meet their religious needs in the Polish army. Greek-Catholic soldiers (also known as Uniates) were under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Field Bishop of the Polish Army. This was enshrined in a special order of the Minister for War, issued in 1924, which stated that

<sup>44</sup> KOWALSKI, *Mniejszości narodowe* (as in footnote 6), p. 150.

“soldiers of the Greek Catholic Rite, despite the fact that their services are performed in accordance with Eastern rites and in the Church Slavonic language, are the same Catholics as the Catholics of the Roman rite, and they belong to the Catholic Church. In any case they cannot be sent to the Orthodox churches and for Orthodox worships. If the Greek Catholic chaplain is absent, Roman Catholic chaplains have to provide them with pastoral care. They must also attend only Roman Catholic churches”.<sup>45</sup>

The Greek Catholic chaplaincy in the Polish army was headed by the Greek Catholic Dean, who was a member of the Curia of the Field Bishop of the Polish army. He also was the Bishop’s advisor in liturgical questions of his denomination. All Greek Catholic soldiers, as well as their family members, were under the spiritual care of certain chaplains, who led one of the Greek-Catholic parishes. There were five of them in total: 1) St. Joseph in Warsaw (which covered the territory of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps Districts); 2) St. Basil in Krakow (which covered the territory of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Corps Districts); 3) St. Nicholas in Lwów (which covered the territory of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Corps Districts); 4) Annunciation of Our Lady in Łódź (which covered the 4<sup>th</sup> Corps District); and 5) St. Stefan in Poznań (which covered the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Corps Districts). In 1931 the Field Bishop created a new Greek Catholic military parish in Jarosław. He also granted parish privileges to Greek Catholic chaplains in Przemyśl and Stanisławów.<sup>46</sup>

It should be noted that the dependent position of the Greek Catholic chaplains, as well as the obligation to participate in Roman Catholic worship, often caused deep dissatisfaction among Greek Catholic soldiers. Compared with other confessions, they were in the worst position. Thus, in 1927, Reverend Mykola Il’kiv, deputy of the Polish Parliament, drew attention to the fact that there were only four chaplains for 17 000 Greek Catholic soldiers, while there were 15 chaplains for 27 000 Orthodox, i.e. one Greek Catholic chaplain was in charge of 4300 soldiers, and his Orthodox colleague less than half of that, only 1800.<sup>47</sup> However, despite this situation, there was no serious conflict on religious grounds in the Polish army.

The Orthodox chaplaincy of the Polish army, however, was organised by a special section for non-Catholic religions, which was created within the structures of the War Ministry in 1919. During the twenty years of its existence this institution was reorganised several times, changing its name and its staff. From 1927 onwards, it became known as the Bureau of Non-Catholic Denominations which, from 1935, consisted of four departments: Orthodox, Evangelical-Augsburg Confession, Evangelical-Reformed plus Evangelical-

<sup>45</sup> JERZY ODZIEMKOWSKI, BOLESŁAW SPYCHAŁA: *Duszpasterstwo wojskowe w drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* [Military Chaplaincy in the Second Polish Republic], Warszawa 1987, pp. 102-103.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 106.

<sup>47</sup> KOWALSKI, *Mniejszości narodowe* (as in footnote 6), p. 142.



Uniate, and Jewish.<sup>48</sup> The Orthodox department was headed by a Protopresbyter (Archpriest), who was also Chief Orthodox chaplain of the Polish army. From 1921 to 1935, this was a Ukrainian, Reverend Vasyl Martysh; from 1936 to 1939, it was also a Ukrainian, Reverend Semen Fedoronko. The department operated seven regional Orthodox chaplaincies: Warsaw, Grodno, Suwałki, Katowice, Tarnów, Poznań and Toruń, which were established in the territory of five Corps Districts: 1<sup>st</sup> (Warsaw), 3<sup>rd</sup> (Grodno), 5<sup>th</sup> (Krakow), 7<sup>th</sup> (Poznań), and 8<sup>th</sup> (Toruń).<sup>49</sup> In 1922, Orthodox chaplains were granted special military ranks: Protopresbyter (the equivalent of a Colonel), Dean in the Corps District Command (Lieutenant-Colonel), Senior Chaplain (Major), and Chaplain (Captain). In 1927, according to the staff list of the Polish army, the following were expected to serve: 1 protopresbyter, 3 deans, 4 senior chaplains (two positions were vacant) and 8 chaplains. Additionally, there could also be 7-8 auxiliary chaplains.<sup>50</sup>

Services were held in 4 garrison churches and in 6 garrison chapels, installed inside the barracks.<sup>51</sup> These facilities could not meet the religious needs of all Orthodox soldiers in the Polish Army. On 15 February 1927 they numbered 27 730 persons (including only 140 officers) or 9.81 per cent of the Polish Armed Forces.<sup>52</sup> In 1931, because of this situation, the Chief Orthodox chaplain protopresbyter Reverend Vasyl Martysh complained to the Chief of Bureau of Non-Catholic Denominations that “in the garrisons of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Corps Districts, clerics are often forced to perform ministrations for the Orthodox believers in such badly adopted rooms as horse-exercising pens, cinemas and soldiers chambers, which adversely affects the soldiers and cannot cause them a proper religious spirit”.<sup>53</sup> The first Orthodox military liturgy in the Polish language was held on 11 November 1936. It was dedicated to the 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence and took place in Warsaw at St. Mary Magdalene Church. The ceremony was attended by the head of the Orthodox Church in Poland, Metropolitan Dionysius, to whom a captain of the guard of honour twice reported with sounds of the 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment military orchestra. It is noteworthy that the agreement between the Orthodox hierarchy and military leaders concerning the use of the Polish

<sup>48</sup> Ibidem, pp. 137-139.

<sup>49</sup> PIOTR ZARZYCKI: Plan mobilizacyjny “W”. Wykaz oddziałów mobilizowanych na wypadek wojny [Mobilization Plan “W”. List of Units to be Mobilized in a Case of War], Pruszków 1995, pp. 227, 237, 240, 244, 246, 252, 254.

<sup>50</sup> WALDEMAR REZMER: Duszpasterstwo wojskowe w II Rzeczypospolitej [Military Chaplaincy in the Second Polish Republic], in: *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny* 38 (1993), 1, pp. 49-66, here p. 55.

<sup>51</sup> ODZIEMKOWSKI/SPYCHAŁA (as in footnote 45), p. 193.

<sup>52</sup> TADEUSZ BÖHM: Duszpasterstwo wyznań niekatolickich w II Rzeczypospolitej [Non-Catholic Chaplaincy in the Second Polish Republic], in: *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny* 38 (1993), 4, pp. 47-59, here p. 54.

<sup>53</sup> Ibidem, p. 58.

language for worships did not always meet with a proper understanding among soldiers.<sup>54</sup>

As religious personnel, Orthodox and Greek Catholic chaplains had to inculcate in the soldiers a love of God. Special instruction required them to educate soldiers in the religious spirit based on the principles of the Orthodox faith. They had to awake in soldiers the sense of historical connection with Poland, as well as love and loyalty to the state. Additionally, chaplains had to explain the essence of such important concepts as citizens' and soldiers' duties and loyalty to the military oath.

The soldiers took an oath after their two-month initial training. The ceremony was preceded by prayers and sermons, conducted separately for representatives of each denomination. The oath-taking ceremony was a very delicate matter. It was necessary to develop a text and determine the course of the ceremony, which would fully comply with the dogma and traditions of different religions, and to appoint a person who actually would take the oath. Additionally, it was necessary to establish a fair sequence of swearing by soldiers of different denominations. All these issues mentioned above were regulated by the Domestic Service Charter and by special orders and instructions of the Minister of War. Since 1936, according to the latest edition of the Charter, Catholics were to take the oath first, Protestants second, Orthodox third, and then all the rest. Such a situation often caused frustration among Orthodox chaplains, who complained that hundreds of Orthodox soldiers had to wait until dozens or even a handful of Protestants had taken their oath.<sup>55</sup> Until 1928, the unit commander or specially designated officer took the oath from the soldiers. However, when military chaplains of all denominations (including Orthodox) issued a statement that an oath in the name of God can only be taken by a cleric, the course of the ceremony was changed. Since then, the soldiers made their oath to the chaplain in the presence of the commander.

## 6 Conclusion

Summing up, an ambivalent picture of the situation of Ukrainians in the Polish Army remains. On the one hand, national minorities in the Polish Army, including Ukrainians, were treated unequally and unfairly. They were the subjects of different restrictions and limitations which were, primarily, due to concerns about the country's safety and defense capability. In some cases an intolerant attitude was quite evident. This generated a fair sense of resentment and mistrust.

On the other hand, it should be emphasised that throughout the entire 20 years of the inter-war period there was no serious conflict or ethnic violence in the Polish army. For many soldiers, who mostly came from rural areas, the

<sup>54</sup> KOWALSKI, *Mniejszości narodowe* (as in footnote 6), p. 145.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 148.

army literally became a good school. Thanks to military service, they were able to come to the big cities of Central and Western Poland, where they saw previously unknown achievements of technical progress. Moreover, many Polish military leaders showed a fairly large tolerance in quite difficult religious matters. This created a friendly atmosphere within the units and there was a noted absence of serious religious conflicts. In turn, this contributed to strengthening the discipline and increasing the combat readiness of the soldiers. Significantly, in the difficult time of September 1939, Ukrainian soldiers, both Orthodox and Greek-Catholic, remained faithful and demonstrated endurance, discipline and loyalty.

## Zusammenfassung

### *Ukrainische Soldaten in den polnischen Streitkräften (1921-1939)*

Die Verfassung Polens von 1921 verpflichtete alle Bürger ungeachtet ihrer Nationalität zum Militärdienst. Deshalb dienten neben Polen, Weißrussen, Deutschen, Juden und anderen Nationalitäten auch Ukrainer in den polnischen Streitkräften, wo sie schätzungsweise zehn bis zwölf Prozent des Personals stellten. Allerdings sahen das politische und das militärische Führungspersonal Polens die ukrainischen Soldaten als nicht ausreichend loyal und vertrauenswürdig an. Deshalb waren sie in ihren Karrieren unterschiedlichen Einschränkungen, Verboten und künstlichen Hindernissen ausgesetzt. Praktisch gar nicht waren Ukrainer in der Luftwaffe, den Panzereinheiten, der Fernmeldetruppe, den Grenzeinheiten, der Feldgendarmarie und der Marine vertreten. Zahlreiche militärische Berufe und Ränge standen ihnen nicht offen. Viele Ukrainer dienten hingegen in der Infanterie und Kavallerie, die in Mittel- und Westpolen stationiert waren. Eher wenige Ukrainer erreichten die Unteroffiziers- oder Offiziersränge. Eine Ausnahme bildete eine kleine Gruppe von maximal 40 sog. „Vertragsoffizieren“, Offizieren der früheren Armee der Ukrainischen Volksrepublik, die 1920 gemeinsam mit Polen gegen die Bol'seviki gekämpft hatte. Nach ihrer Niederlage fanden sie politisches Asyl in Polen. Dass sie in der polnischen Armee dienen durften, war ausschließlich politischen Motiven geschuldet. Bei allen institutionellen Barrieren war das militärische Führungspersonal gegenüber den religiösen Bedürfnissen der größtenteils russisch-orthodoxen oder griechisch-katholischen ukrainischen Soldaten relativ tolerant. In der polnischen Armee dienten orthodoxe und griechisch-katholische Militärkaplane und in den großen Garnisonen existierten eigene Gemeinden. Unmittelbar vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg bemühte sich die polnische Regierung um die Polonisierung der orthodoxen Riten. Trotz aller Restriktionen entstanden keine offenen ethnischen Konflikte innerhalb der Truppe zwischen Soldaten polnischer und ukrainischer Nationalität.