

Leeleva Online Map

Vilna River

Ukrainian: Viliya or Vilia [Вілія]

Russian: Viliya [Вилия]

Polish: Wilja

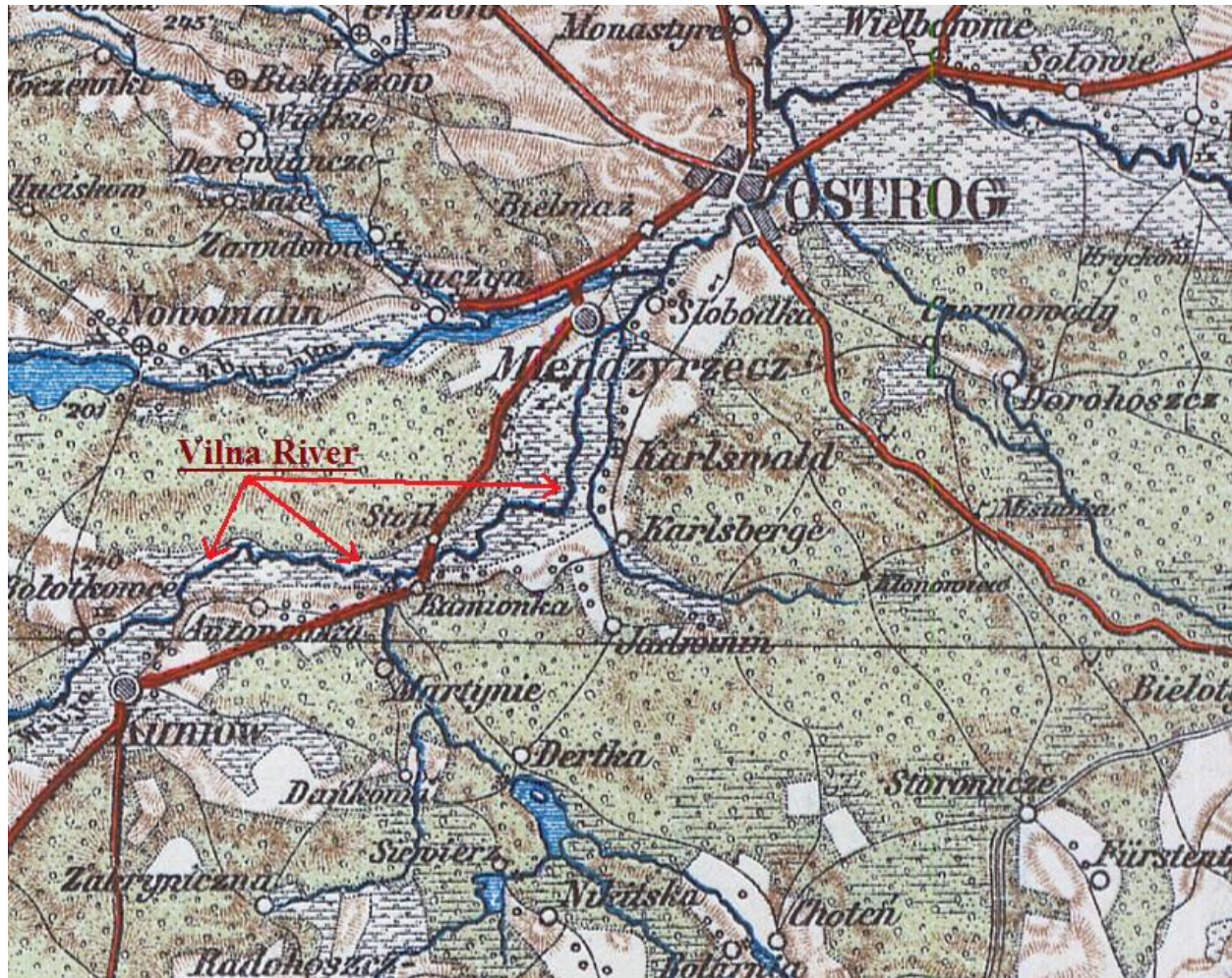
German: Wilija

NOTE: Not to be confused with the river of the same name which is a tributary of the Neman River flowing through Belarus and Lithuania.

Jake Unruh depicts the Vilna River flowing through the western section of his map of Leeleva Village¹. This river, known as the Viliya or Vilia in Ukrainian and Russian, is the second-largest waterway that crossed Ostrog County in the 19th Century and one of the largest left-bank (western) tributaries of the Huron (Goryn) River. The Vilna rises in the hills near the village of Pidlisne (also known as Podlesnoye or Podwysokie), several miles south of the town of Kremenets' (Kremenets' is about 37 miles southwest of Ostrog).

The Vilna meanders in a generally northeast direction through the villages of Shumsk and Surazh and entered Ostrog County territory near the village of Zakot. The Vilna flowed through Kunoff (Kuniv) Parish passing through the villages of Vilia (today known as Zarichchya and Zahreblya), Dolochchia, Kunoff (Kuniv), Antonovka (Antonivka), Komminka (Kam'yanka), and Mezhyrich before flowing into the Huron on the northeastern side of the Town of Ostrog².

This 19th Century map shows the Vilna valley as the river passes Kunoff (Kuniow), Antonovka (Antonwka), Komminka (Kamionka) and Mezhyrich (Mendzyrzecz) on its way around the south side of Ostrog. The river's banks being very low and shallow, the valley through which the river flows is filled with marshes³.



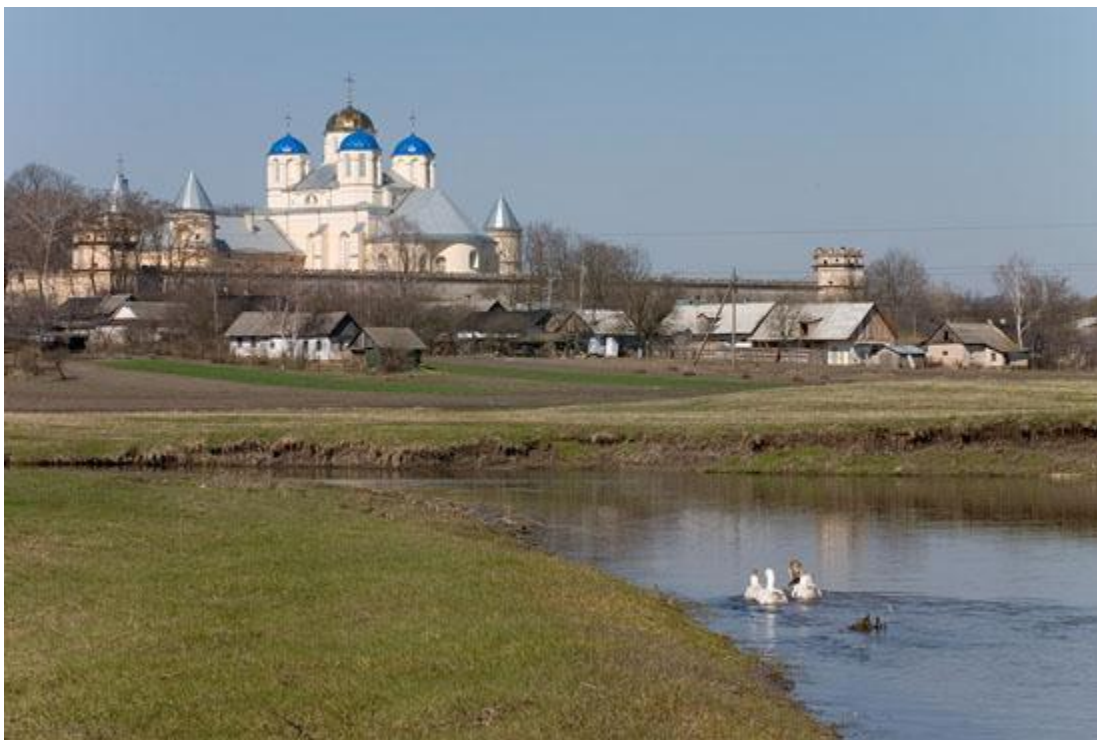
Vilna Valley, Ostrog County, 1897

This photo shows a ford on the Vilna River, south of Mezhyrich



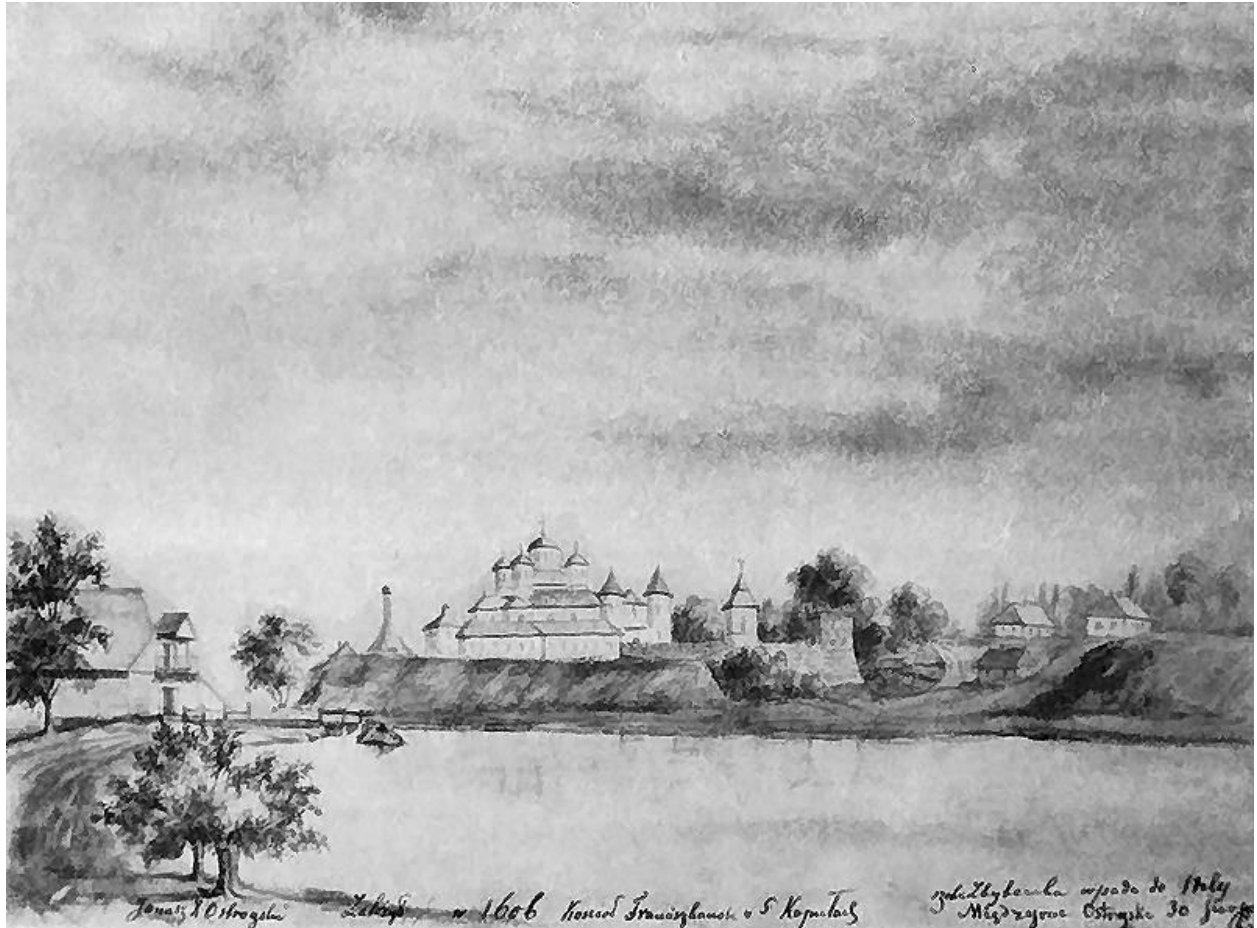
Vilna River ford at Mezhyrich⁴

On its way past Mezhyrich, just 7 miles north of Leeleva (Lesna), the Vilna slips by one of the most impressive architectural sights in all of Ukraine, the Mezhyrich Monastery. The walls of the 14th Century monastery rise just several hundred feet north of the river's edge.



Mezhyrich Monastery with the Vilna Flowing in the Foreground⁵

The medieval monastery was Franciscan Catholic until the mid-19th Century. This watercolor pencil drawing by the Polish-Lithuanian artist Napoleon Orda shows the monastery in the 1800s as viewed from the north.



“MIĘDZYRZECZ OSTROGSKI”, by Orda⁶

After 1866, the facility was taken over by local Ukrainian clergy and consecrated as Orthodox. The blue and gold spires of the Trinity Cathedral rise behind the thick walls and towers⁷. Many miracles have been attributed to the icon, the miraculous image of Our Lady Zhyttyepodatelnysya (Божої Матері Життєподательниці), also known as the Virgin Hodegetria (Богородиця Одигітрія, the Virgin of Salvation or Health) which is housed here. The icon is Byzantine in origin, perhaps as old as the 15th Century⁸.



Mezhyrich Monastery, Viewed from the Southwest⁹

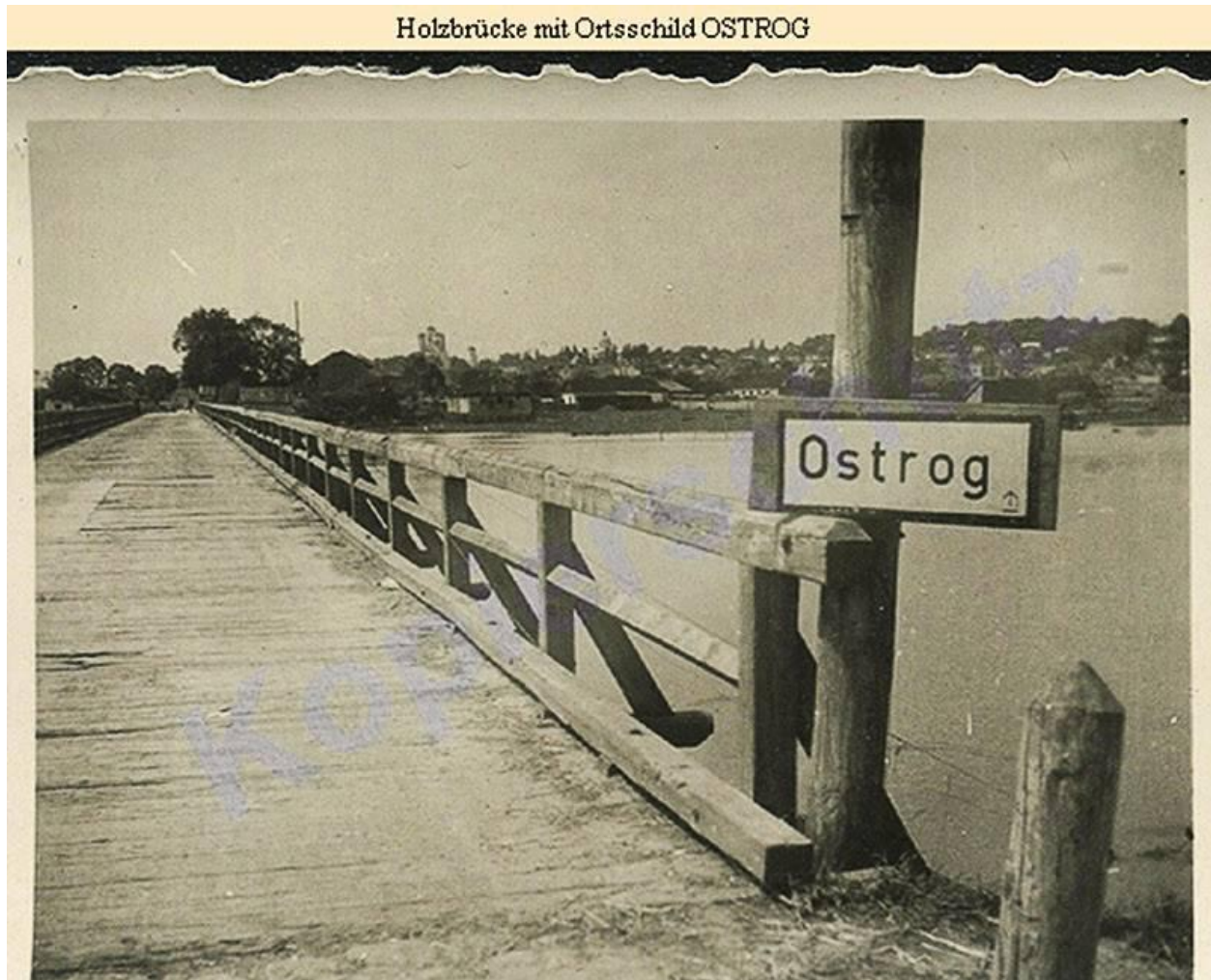
During the 1950s, the Soviets built three hydro-electric plants along the Vilna River just outside the village of Mezhyrich, bringing some of the first electricity to the area. A sub-station stood between the banks of the river and the monastery walls. Many of the residents at that time were scared of electricity and did not want the plants in their village. By 1965, however, the area was connected to the larger Soviet power grid and Mezhyrich's three hydro-electric plants were taken off line¹⁰.

As the river passed through the Town of Ostrog, it formed the boundary between different portions of the Town; Ostrog castle sitting on a hill on the northern bank, Ostrog New City (Nowo Miasto; Nove Misto) stretching out from the southern bank. This watercolor by the Polish artist Zygmunt Vogel from the mid-19th Century shows Ostrog Castle in the background with the Vilna passing in foreground¹¹.



“View of Ostrog” by Zygmunt Vogel

This is a view of a bridge crossing the Vilna looking north into Ostrog. Note the spires of the restored Epiphany Cathedral just to the right (east) of straight ahead on the bridge. Epiphany Cathedral is the church which stands inside the walls of the Ostrog Castle. During much of the 19th Century, the church stood in ruins (as seen on Vogel's watercolor), but restoration was begun by the last decade of the century.¹²



Bridge into Ostrog¹³

The Vilna was notable in the 19th Century for the many beautiful lakes rising along its path.¹⁴ Below is a view of the lake near Suraz on the Vilna. Tributaries in Ostrog County included the Ustya and the Gutis'ka Rivers.



Lake on the Vilna River Near Surazh¹⁵

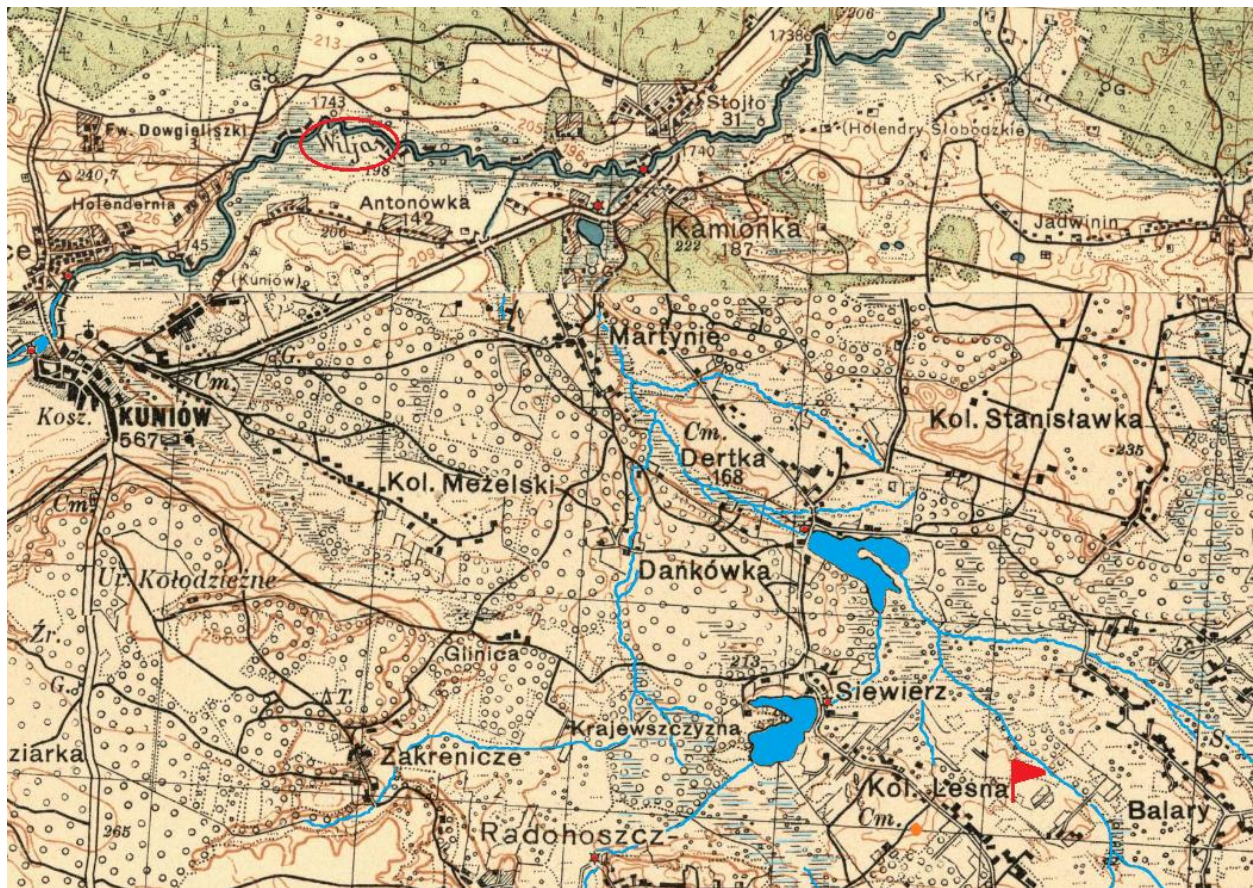
Water covered about 1.5% of the land area of Ostrog County in the late 19th Century¹⁶ and the Vilna and its lakes contributed a large portion of that. A 19th Century Polish Gazetteer indicates that the Vilna was 3 to 5 sazhen wide and 2 to 3 sazhen deep. The river's flow rate was around 1.5 feet per second and the spring flood covered the whole valley 3 sazhen deep.¹⁷



The Vilna River Near the Village Previously Known as Vilia¹⁸

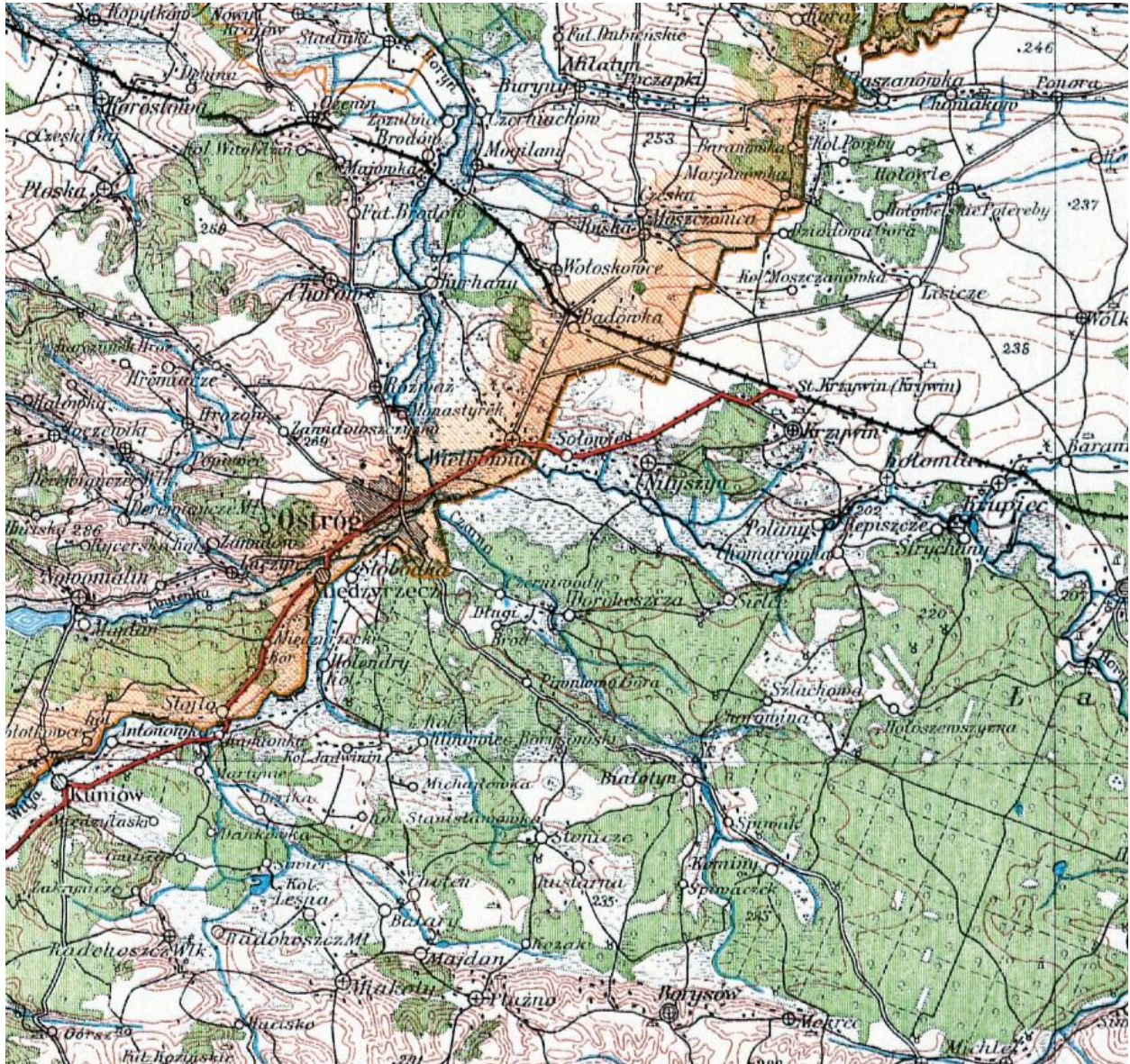
The Ternopil Encyclopedic Dictionary indicates the Vilna today is annually frozen from mid-December through early March and that the river drains an area of 1815 km².¹⁹

Maria Ratzlaff Penner says villagers could hear winter ice crunching in the river from Leeleva²⁰. This map shows the Vilna in relation to the village of Lesna²¹.



Vilna River in Relation to the Village of Leeleva (Lesna)

The Vilna formed a portion of the border between Poland (Second Republic) and the USSR from 1921 until 1939 when the area was annexed by the USSR as part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. It was at this time that the name of the German village of Karolswalde was changed to Prykordonne, which is a Ukrainian equivalent of “border”. During this time, many Poles living in the villages to the southeast of the Vilna attempted their escape from the Soviet Union by crossing the river.²²



The Vilna as the Border between Poland and USSR, Southwest of Ostroń

Sources:

Brokgauza and Efrona Encyclopedic Dictionary, St. Petersburg/Leipzig, 1907 Edition.

Cynkalowsky, Prof. Alexander, Ancient Volyn and Volhynian Polissia (Geographic Dictionary – From Early Times to 1914) [Стара Волинь і Волинське Полісся (Краєзнавчий словник — від найдавніших часів до 1914 року)]; Vol II; Volyn Society, Winnipeg, 1986.

Geographical Dictionary of the Polish Kingdom and Other Slavic Countries, Warsaw; (1880-1914).

“History” [Історія], Holy Trinity Monastery Mezhyrich [Свято-Троїцький Межиріцький Монастир]; 2013.

“Mezhyrich” [Межиріч], Ukraine Incognita [Україна Інкогніта]; 2013.

“MIĘDZYRZECZ OSTROGSKI”; VOLYN - Sketches and watercolors by Napoleon Orda (1807-1883).

“Ostrih” (or Ostroh); Encyclopedia of Ukraine, 2007.

“Ostróg”, 1:300.000; Wojskowy Instytut Geograficzny. Wszelkie prawa zastrzeżone, 1929.

P47 S43 (alt. A47 B43) Ostróg (1:100 000 WIG - Mapa Taktyczna Polski), Wojskowy Instytut Geograficzny, Warszawa, 1921.

P48 S43 (alt. A48 B43) Zasław (1:100 000 WIG - Mapa Taktyczna Polski), Wojskowy Instytut Geograficzny, Warszawa, 1931.

Photo via “Ostroh is the heart of Volyn” Facebook Page, 2013.

Photo via Panoramio.com: “Staraia GRES” taken in Ostroz'kyi district, Rivnens'ka oblast, Ukraine 50° 10' 52.22" N 26° 17' 15.09" E, 2011 © All Rights Reserved by Vitalom.

Photo via Panoramio.com: “Surazh” taken in Surazh, Ternopil's'ka oblast, Ukraine 50° 9' 1.62" N 26° 10' 29.12" E, 2010. © All Rights Reserved by tkachuk.

Photo via Panoramio.com: “View Ford” taken at Mezhyrich, Rivnens'ka oblast, Ukraine 50° 18' 16.55" N 26° 29' 28.14" E, 2013, © All Rights Reserved by любком.

Romanchuk Alexander [Романчук О.], “Hydroelectricity at Mezhyrich Ostrog District” [Гідроелектростанція с. Межиріч Острозького району], 2013.

Ternopil Encyclopedic Dictionary; Ternopil: publishing and printing plant "Zbruch", 2004-2010.

U51 Ostrog., Übersichtskarte von Mitteleuropa, 1:300 000; Herausgegeben von der Kartgr. Abteilung der Kgl. Preuß. Landesaufnahme, 1897.

Unruh, Velma Penner, “Leeleva Village”.

Unruh, Jacob, “From Village Life to Kansas Plains”, 1978.

“View of Ostrog by Zygmunt Vogel (19 c)” Castles and churches of Ukraine, 2013.

¹ Unruh, Jacob, “From Village Life to Kansas Plains”, 1978.

² Although the Jake Unruh map does not show the 2 rivers merging, the Vilna (Vilia) is in fact a tributary of the Huron (Goryn).

³ U51 Ostrog., Übersichtskarte von Mitteleuropa, 1:300 000; Herausgegeben von der Kartgr. Abteilung der Kgl. Preuß. Landesaufnahme, 1897.

⁴ Photo via Panoramio.com: “View Ford”

⁵ “Mezhyrich” [Межиріч], Ukraine Incognita [Україна Інкогніта]; 2013.

⁶ “MIĘDZYRZECZ OSTROGSKI”; VOLYN - Sketches and watercolors by Napoleon Orda (1807-1883) (MIĘDZYRZECZ Ostrogski. Post-Franciscan Church and Monastery. View from the river Zbytenki. Within the ramparts with towers at the corners and square gatehouse, church towers and domes on high drums and monastic buildings. Dat. Międzyrzec Ostrogski 30 Sickle. Inscription: Janusz X. Ostrogski founded the Franciscan Church r 1606 5-Domed Monastery, the river flows into the Wilij Zbytenka; inscription on the backing: Volyn Międzyrzec Ostrogski Franciscan church. From 1862 to 1876. Figure tinted with watercolor pencil. 20.5 x 27.7 cm. National Museum of Krakow. III-r.a. 4186 (Teka Volyn).)

⁷ “History” [Історія], Holy Trinity Monastery Mezhyrich [Свято-Троїцький Межиріцький Монастир]; 2013.; “Mezhyrich” [Межиріч], Ukraine Incognita [Україна Інкогніта]; 2013.

⁸ “History” [Історія], Holy Trinity Monastery Mezhyrich [Свято-Троїцький Межиріцький Монастир]; 2013.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Romanchuk Alexander [Романчук О.], “Hydroelectricity at Mezhyrich Ostrog District” [Гідроелектростанція с. Межиріч Острозького району], 2013.

¹¹ “View of Ostrog by Zygmunt Vogel (19 c)” Castles and churches of Ukraine, 2013. Regarding the Ostrog Castle; note the Epiphany Cathedral in ruins in Vogel’s painting. Also seen of the castle complex are the Guard Tower (Vezha Murovana) on the right and the New Tower (Nova Bashta) to the left.

¹² “Ostrih” (or Ostroh); Encyclopedia of Ukraine, 2007.

¹³ Photo via “Ostroh is the heart of Volyn” Facebook Page, 2013. Probably taken in the inter-war period of the 20th Century

¹⁴ Cynkalowsky, Prof. Alexander, Ancient Volyn and Volhynian Polissia

¹⁵ Photo via Panoramio.com: “Surazh”.

¹⁶ Geographical Dictionary of the Polish Kingdom and Other Slavic Countries, Warsaw; (1880-1914).

¹⁷ Brokgauza and Efrona Encyclopedic Dictionary, St. Petersburg/Leipzig, 1907 Edition. A Sazhen is an obsolete Russian unit of measure, equivalent to roughly 7 English feet.

¹⁸ Photo via Panoramio.com: “Staraia GRES”.

¹⁹ Ternopil Encyclopedic Dictionary; Ternopil: publishing and printing plant “Zbruch”, 2004-2010.

²⁰ Unruh, Velma Penner, “Leeleva Village”.

²¹ P47 S43 (alt. A47 B43) Ostróg (1:100 000 WIG - Mapa Taktyczna Polski), Wojskowy Instytut Geograficzny, Warszawa, 1921; P48 S43 (alt. A48 B43) Zasław (1:100 000 WIG - Mapa Taktyczna Polski), Wojskowy Instytut Geograficzny, Warszawa, 1931.

²² “Ostróg”, 1:300.000; Wojskowy Instytut Geograficzny. Wszelkie prawa zastrzeżone. 1929.