

## УКРАЇНСЬКО-ПОЛЬСЬКІ СТОСУНКИ

Історико-політичні проблеми сучасного світу:  
Збірник наукових статей. – Чернівці:  
Чернівецький національний університет,  
2017. – Т. 35-36. – С. 173-181

Modern Historical and Political Issues:  
Journal in Historical & Political Sciences. – Chernivtsi:  
Chernivtsi National University,  
2017. – Volume. 35-36. – pp. 173-181

УДК: 325.54(477+438)«1944/1946»

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### Обмін населенням між Польщею і Українською Радянською Соціалістичною Республікою у 1944-1946 роках у світлі чехословацьких військових джерел

Внаслідок зміни кордонів після Другої світової війни Річ Посполита Польща втратила північно-східні воєводства, що відійшли до складу Української Радянської Соціалістичної Республіки (УРСР). Крім того, в межах Польщі залишалася доволі чисельна українська меншина - від 500 до 700 тис. осіб. Натомість, з радянського боку кордону також чимала кількість поляків. 9 вересня 1944 р. комуністична влада Польщі та уряду УРСР підписали угоду про обмін населенням. Офіційно обмін мав бути добровільним. У вересні 1945 р., всупереч засадам угоди від 9 вересня 1944 р., польська армія розпочала примусове виселення українців до УРСР, яке тривало до кінця 1946 р. Протягом 1944-1946 років з Польщі до України виселено 488057 осіб. Рівночасно з України до Польщі прибуло 787674 особи. Щоб уникнути виселення до підрадянської України, багато українців переховувалося в Карпатах та утікало через кордон до Чехословаччини. Чехословацька армія та поліційні служби виловлювали втікачів і повертали їх назад до Польщі.

#### Ключові слова

Польща, Українська Радянська Соціалістична Республіка, обмін населенням, Чехословаччина.

### Relocation of People between Poland and the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic in the years 1944-1946 in the light of czechoslovak military sources

In the result of the shift of borders, occurring after World War II, the Republic of Poland lost its south-eastern provinces in favour of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (UkSSR). Nevertheless, a significant Ukrainian minority, estimated between 500 and 700 thousand, remained within the borders of Poland. In addition, a significant number of Poles remained on the Soviet side. On September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1944, Polish communist government and the government of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic concluded an agreement on the relocation of people. Officially, the relocation was supposed to be voluntary. In September 1945 the Polish army, against the provisions of the agreement of September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1944, started forced displacement of the Ukrainian population to UkSSR. The dislocation of the Ukrainian population to the USSR lasted till the late 1946's. Throughout 1944-1946, 488,057 people were dislocated from Poland to Ukraine. At the same time 787,674 people moved from Ukraine to Poland. In order to avoid dislocation to the Soviet Ukraine, some Ukrainians moved to the Carpathian Mountains, and sought refuge in Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovak army and security services caught refugees and deported them back to Poland.

#### Keywords

Poland, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, the relocation of people, Czechoslovakia.

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## Wymiana ludności pomiędzy Polską i Ukraińską Socjalistyczną Republiką Radziecką w latach 1944-1946 w świetle czechosłowackich źródeł wojskowych

W wyniku zmiany granic, która dokonała się po II wojnie światowej Rzeczpospolita Polska utraciła województwa południowo-wschodnie na rzecz Ukraińskiej Socjalistycznej Republiki Radzieckiej (USRR). Mimo tego w granicach Polski nadal pozostała duża mniejszość ukraińska, licząca od 500 do 700 tysięcy ludzi. Natomiast po radzieckiej stronie granicy pozostała duża liczba ludności polskiej. Dnia 9 września 1944 r. polskie władze komunistyczne oraz rząd Ukraińskiej Socjalistycznej Republiki Radzieckiej podpisały umowę o wymianie ludności. Oficjalnie wymiana miała być dobrowolna. We wrześniu 1945 r., wbrew postanowieniom umowy z 9 września 1944 r. polska armia rozpoczęła przymusowe wysiedlanie ludności ukraińskiej do USRR. Wysiedlanie ludności ukraińskiej trwało do końca 1946 r. W latach 1944-1946 z Polski na Ukrainę wysiedlono 488.057 osób. W tym samym czasie z Ukrainy do Polski przybyły 787.674 osoby. Aby uniknąć wysiedlenia na radziecką Ukrainę wielu Ukraińców ukrywało się w Karpatach i uciekało przez granicę do Czechosłowacji. Armia czechosłowacka i służby policyjne wyłapywały uciekinierów i deportowały z powrotem do Polski.

### Słowa kluczowe

Polska, Ukraińska Socjalistyczna Republika Radziecka, wymiana ludności, Czechosłowacja.

In result of the shift of borders, which took place after World War II, the Republic of Poland lost south-eastern provinces to the benefit of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (UkSSR). Nevertheless, a significant Ukrainian minority, estimated between 500 and 700 thousand, remained within the borders of Poland. They lived in a narrow strip along the borders with Ukraine and Czechoslovakia. A significant number of Poles remained on the Soviet side.

On September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1944, Polish communist government (Polish Committee of National Liberation) and the government of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic concluded an agreement on the relocation of people. The aim was to enable Poles living in the Soviet Ukraine to move to Poland, and Ukrainians living in Poland to move to Ukraine. Officially the relocation was supposed to be voluntary. However it soon occurred that Poles were generally willing to leave UkSSR with no resistance, yet the Ukrainian minority in Poland refused to move to Soviet Ukraine. It resulted from attachment to patrimony and the awareness that Ukraine, impoverished by war and wasteful Soviet economy, suffered from famine. Although Polish authorities exerted various forms of pressure on the Ukrainian population, most Ukrainian families stubbornly refused to leave Poland.

In September 1945 the Polish army, against the provisions of the agreement of September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1944, started forced displacement of the Ukrainian population to UkSSR. According to Zdzisław Konieczny: «Particular villages were surrounded and the inhabitants were instructed to leave at the time specified by commanders. Considering all hallmarks of compulsion, the displacement of Ukrainian inhabitants of particular villages was received with hostility and led to minor or major opposition suppressed by force by the army»<sup>2</sup>.

«During such operations», according to Grzegorz Motyka, «the army fired guns towards anyone who tried to escape. And almost everybody tried to escape. The soldiers plundered properties, beat the inhabitants, sometimes raped women, put fire to buildings»<sup>3</sup>. Andrzej L. Sowa presents the relocation in a similar way: «During the relocation extremely brutal methods were used, shooting some of the men, burning villages or performing massive executions, which were the revenge for the killing of Polish soldiers by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA)»<sup>4</sup>. According to Jan Pisuliński: «It has to be stressed, that almost everywhere the army dislocated people in a very brutal way by beating and robbing those who resisted. Polish civilians from neighbouring villages often took part in plundering properties»<sup>5</sup>. The dislocation of the Ukrainian population to the USSR lasted until the end of 1946. In

<sup>2</sup> Z. Konieczny, *Polacy i Ukraińcy na ziemiach obecnej Polski w latach 1918-1947 (zarys problematyki)*, Przemyśl 2010, p. 268.

<sup>3</sup> G. Motyka, *Tak było w Bieszczadach. Walki polsko-ukraińskie 1943-1948*, Warszawa 1999, p. 285.

<sup>4</sup> A.L. Sowa, *Stosunki polsko-ukraińskie 1939-1947*, Kraków 1998, p. 291.

<sup>5</sup> J. Pisuliński, *Przesiedlenie ludności ukraińskiej z Polski do USRR w latach 1944-1947*, Rzeszów 2009, p. 538.

the years 1944-1946, 488,057 people were dislocated from Poland to Ukraine. At the same time 787 674 persons came from Ukraine to Poland<sup>6</sup>.

In order to avoid dislocation to the Soviet Ukraine, some Ukrainians moved to the Carpathian Mountains, and sought refuge in Czechoslovakia. In the first years after World War II, the situation in this state was highly specific, compared to other countries of Central Europe. The country avoided serious war damage. Although Czechoslovakia was occupied by the Red Army in 1945, the communist dictatorship was not introduced immediately. President Edvard Beneš returned to Prague from emigration in England and revived the multi-party system. He appointed a coalition government. Such a situation did not last long. In February 1948, the communists staged a coup and took over entire power and authority. A new constitution, modelled on its Soviet counterpart, was introduced. Yet, as late as in the years 1945-46, to a certain extent to autumn 1947, Czechoslovakia constitutes a specific oasis of (relative) democracy as well as law and order in comparison to other countries of the region, dominated by the USSR.

The refugee movement of the Ukrainian population from Poland to Czechoslovakia started in 1945. Initially particular families escaped abroad. However, in 1946 this movement became massive. Ukrainian villagers sought shelter in Slovakia. Czechoslovak army and security services caught refugees and deported them back to Poland. Those dramatic events are evidenced by documents collected in Slovak and Czech archives.

Czechoslovakia was not a neutral country in respect of the armed conflict in south-eastern Poland. It was in alliance with the USSR and was expected to support communist authorities and with determination supported the forces of the Polish government. Yet the attitude of Czechoslovak state officials towards the Ukrainians was free of fanatic hatred, so frequent in Poland at that time. Czechoslovak officials were not objective; they rather analyzed the events in Poland in a much more calm and balanced way, in comparison to Poles and Ukrainians. The Czechoslovak intelligence service was also interested in the dislocation of the Ukrainian population from Poland.

On October 7, 1945, the officers of the Czechoslovak Fiscal/Customs Guards, protecting the border with Poland, sent an emergency letter from the post in Runin, Slovakia to district authorities. They informed that: «Today, (...) in the morning, 82 Ukrainians at the age above 15 and 67 children below 15 reported at our post. They all come from abroad, from the Wetlina commune, and they crossed the border illegally. They are in possession of 40 cows, 23 calves, 10 horses, 5 foals and 7 sheep».

The local Guards tried to force them back over the border, yet they refused. They were temporarily located in the Runin commune, Snina district. They said that we can shoot them or do with them whatever we wish, but they will not return to Poland. Next they explained the reasons which made them leave their homes in Poland and hide in the forest: «Two weeks ago Polish soldiers came to Wetlina and told us to get ready to move to the USSR since we are Ukrainians. We followed the order and loaded the most necessary things on carts and we were led to Cisna, from where we were expected to be dislocated. There, we were robbed by Poles and told that we could go wherever we wanted. There was a similar situation in other places. We returned to our home village. Polish soldiers were already there. During our absence they had plundered everything, some houses were burnt, and when they saw us, they fired guns at us with no reason. Many people were injured. We escaped to the mountains, where we were in hiding for two weeks. Due to cold and rainy weather we moved to the territory of Czechoslovakia in order to seek refuge in villages. We requested for the permission to remain in Czechoslovakia until our situation was clarified. We are willing to perform any kind of work»<sup>7</sup>. The officers of the Fiscal Guards from Snina asked district authorities for instructions on what to do with refugees. In turn, the district authorities asked the Office for Internal Affairs in Bratislava for further instructions. They were told to move the refugees by force behind the border barrier. That happened on October 10, 1945.

Documents show that this was not the only incident. Similar events occurred repeatedly on the Polish-Slovak border in autumn 1945. The officers of Czechoslovak police and soldiers protecting the border caught refugees from Poland and immediately sent them back. Soon the refugee movement became massive. In January 1946, the commander of the Czechoslovak army located in north-eastern

<sup>6</sup> R. Drozd, *Polityka władz wobec ludności ukraińskiej w Polsce w latach 1944-1989*, Warszawa 2001, p. 55.

<sup>7</sup> ŠtatnyarchivPrešov – pobočkaHumenné, fond (f.) Okresný národný výbor (ONV) Snina 1945 – 1949, škatula (šk.) 3, číslo (č.) 538/1945.

Slovakia – lieutenant colonel Jan Juraj Stanek alarmed the authorities in Prague: «People, along with their property, escape massively from Poland»<sup>8</sup>. He asked for urgent dispatch of reinforcements, and tried to convince that the forces at his disposal are not capable of controlling the situation on the border. In response, additional army units were relocated to north-eastern Slovakia.

The refugees sought shelter from the attacks of robber gangs and units of the Polish army, in Czechoslovakia. According to the Czechoslovak intelligence service (OBZ) bands of robbers were often army units dressed in civilian clothes and equipped with old weapons<sup>9</sup>. The groups were called «penalty purpose units». The procedure was organized in character. The headquarters of the «penalty purpose units» – according to the Czechoslovak intelligence – were located in the town of Gorlice<sup>10</sup>.

The assaults usually took place at night, but during the day the Ukrainian population could not feel safe either. Quite often army units would surround villages and unlawfully took the property. If the residents resisted in any way, they were beaten<sup>11</sup>. The soldiers took mainly warm clothes and food, but also anything that had any value (sewing machines or tools). The residents hid their belongings, usually by burying more valuable things. Yet, soldiers knew about it and tried to force their victims to reveal the location of hiding places by beating them.

According to one of the reports of the Czechoslovak intelligence: «On January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1946, the unit from Jaśliska marched off to Wisłok. The residents, from fear of the government army, massively ran away to the local forests. The government army opened fire against the escaping people, surrounded the village and entered it. The village was completely plundered. The soldiers demanded foreign currency, mainly US dollars. Those who could not meet the demands were beaten. Many residents were beaten until they lost consciousness. At last, the soldiers set fire to the village and returned to Jaśliska. On the way back they warned the residents of WyznaWola and NiżnaWola, that they would do the same. In result the residents of the villages escaped massively to the local forests along with their property. Some of them crossed our border»<sup>12</sup>.

The reports of the Czechoslovak intelligence informed that the Polish army would set fire to Ukrainian villages in order to prevent the population from returning home. In a report of May 3, 1946 it was observed that: «After the expulsion the army sets fire to the houses of the displaced people»<sup>13</sup>. Nights in the border area were often lightened up by glows of fire. A report of 8 May 1946 informed: «On April 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, the following villages were burnt by the Polish government army: Radoszyce, Czystohorb, Dołżyca. The glow was visible from our side of the border»<sup>14</sup>. Similar information is contained in a report of 21 May 1946: «During the expulsion in the village of Żubracze, many residents escaped, but later returned. The army expelled the people again and the cottages were burnt. The village of Żubracze was on fire from May 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>, 1946. The fire was visible from our side of the border»<sup>15</sup>.

Burning of Ukrainian villages was not always preceded by the expulsion of their residents. In a situational report of the command of the ZPÚ concentration of 8 February 1946 it was noted that: «On February 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>, 1946 the Polish army expelled the Ukrainian population from Sanok, Baligród and NoweZagórze. In places where people resisted, the Polish army burnt buildings. People who were trying to extinguish their houses were shot from machine guns. The injured were left unaided until they died. (...) On January 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>, 1946, the village of Karlików was burnt (16 km away from Sanok). 30 civilians were killed, and many more injured. The village, except for two cottages, was turned to ash.

<sup>8</sup>Encoded telegram of 21.01.1946., VHA Bratislava, f. Vojenská oblast'-4 (VO-4), šk. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Situational report for the period of 25–28.01.1946 of the OBZ branch office of the ZPÚ concentration of 30.01.1946, VHA Bratislava, f. Operace „Banderovci”, šk. 51, inv. č. 177.

<sup>10</sup> Situational report for the period 5–8.02.1946 r., Jánošík Headquarters, 2. Section, of 8.02.1946, VHA Bratislava, f. Operace „Banderovci”, šk. 78, inv. č. 371.

<sup>11</sup> A report of the district command of NB Medzilaborce on the situation on the Czechoslovak - Polish border, of 10.05.1946, ABS Praha, f. 307-95-22.

<sup>12</sup> Information of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the President of the Republic of Poland, Archiv Kanceláře prezidenta republiky, Praha, f. KPR – protokol T (tajné) 1945 – 1963, sign. T 277/45 – Poľsko.

<sup>13</sup> Intelligence information of „Ocel'-9”, of May 03<sup>rd</sup>, 1946, VHA Bratislava, f. Operace „Banderovci”, šk. 102.

<sup>14</sup> Intelligence information of „Ocel'-9”, of May 08<sup>th</sup>, 1946, VHA Bratislava, f. Operace „Banderovci”, šk. 102.

<sup>15</sup> Intelligence information of „Ocel'-9”, of May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1946 r., VHA Bratislava, f. Operace „Banderovci”, šk. 1.

(...) On January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1946 the village of Dusztyn (18 km away from Medzilaborce) was burnt to foundations. Also the lumber mill was burnt, many civilians were detained»<sup>16</sup>.

A situational report of 10 May 1946 informs: «On May 1, 1946, the village of Dołżyca and its 42 cottages were burnt. The village of Zawadka Morochowska, along with 60 cottages, had been burnt two months before. 73 people were killed. A month later further 12 men were killed in the village. Finally 10 people were killed on April 14<sup>th</sup>. All killed persons were of Ukrainian nationality. Fire was set to Radoszyce on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1946. 25 cottages were burnt. Fire was set to Wola Michowa on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1946 and Mimova<sup>17</sup> also on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1946. 60 cottages were burnt. Most probably, out of the entire village, only two cottages survived»<sup>18</sup>.

The refuge of the Ukrainian population to the Czechoslovak side of the border was sometimes dramatic in character. On May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1946 the district command of Police (NB) in Medzilaborce informed the authorities in Bratislava: «on April 30 and May 1, 1946 the residents of the villages: Komańcza, Dołżyca, Mokre, Wisłok, Jawornik, Radoszyce, Osławice, Płonna, Perehuki (all in Poland) were attacked by the Polish army units, which were probably ordered to force them, as Ukrainians, to leave to the USSR. The residents of the aforementioned villages fled to the forests along the border. They were chased by the soldiers. On May 1, infantry with heavy and light guns as well as two tanks approached from the side of the village Komańcza. They came to the distance of one kilometre from our border. Three shots were fired from the tanks in the direction of civilian population. After the shots, most people fled to our side of the border»<sup>19</sup>.

Czechoslovak officers stressed that the Ukrainian population escaped for Poland to the Czechoslovak side from fear of the brutality of the «government army». As was observed in one of the reports: «on the territory of Czechoslovakia, in the district of Medzilaborce, there is a significant number of refugees, Polish citizens of Ukrainian nationality, they escaped from fear of the security agency and the army, whose conduct towards them is deplorable»<sup>20</sup>.

In the opinion of Czechoslovak state officials, Polish army and border guards did not prevent the Ukrainian population from crossing the border. Instead, they refused to accept those refugees who were coming back. It was observed in one of the reports: «our people complain that there is no understanding or cooperation on the side of the Polish border guards. Polish border offices refuse to accept refugees or completely ignore them. In result those people return to our territory»<sup>21</sup>.

In May 1946 the number of refugees from Poland, on the territory of the district of Medzilaborce, was estimated by the local authorities for 8 thousand people<sup>22</sup>. The biggest number of refugees gathered in the area of villages: Palota, Habura and Čertižné. At the order of authorities in Bratislava, an officer of Czechoslovak security agency, conducted an inspection in the region. In his report he observed that the refugees: «took everything they could with them across the border: horses and carts, cattle, goats, pigs, poultry and various kinds of food. They stay outdoors»<sup>23</sup>. Most of them came from villages: Radoszyce, Jasiel, Wisłok Górny, Wisłok Dolny, Wisłok Wielki and Dusztyn.

The Czechoslovak officer asked the refugees why they had escaped from Poland. In response he heard: «The situation on the Polish territory is unbearable. Poles, the security agency and the army persecute Polish citizens of the Ukrainian nationality. They attack Ukrainians, rob them and burn the farms. Polish army and the security agency persecute and maltreat Ukrainians. They break their legs and hands, quite often poke their eyes. When we told them to leave the territory of Czechoslovakia they knelt in front of us and said that sooner they would get shot rather than return to Poland»<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Situational report for the period of February 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>, 1946 . „Jánošík” headquarters of February 08<sup>th</sup>, 1946 , VHA Bratislava, f. Operace „Banderovci”, šk. 78.

<sup>17</sup> Probably Mików.

<sup>18</sup> Report on the situation on the Czechoslovak – Polish border , district headquarters NB Medzilaborce, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1946, ABS Praha, f. 307-95-22.

<sup>19</sup> District headquarters NB Medzilaborce, No.: 210 d v./46, ABS Praha, f. 307-95-22.

<sup>20</sup> Radio telegram OBR Humenne to the Internal Affairs Office in Bratislava of 9.05.1946 r., ABS Praha, f. 307-95-22.

<sup>21</sup> Army Unit 2143, No.: 106.418/2-1946, ABS Praha, f. 307-95-22.

<sup>22</sup> Radio telegram of the commander of OBR in Humenne to the Internal Affairs Office in Bratislava of 8.05.1946, ABS Praha, f. 307-95-22.

<sup>23</sup> OBR Humenne, no.: 331 zpráv./46, ABS Praha, f. 307-95-22.

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem.

It could be suspected that the refugees intentionally «exaggerated» their stories about the situation in Poland in order to evoke sympathy. However Czechoslovak officers did not question their authenticity. The stories of the refugees were coincident with the information about the situation in Poland obtained by the Czechoslovak authorities through their intelligence service.

Local, Czechoslovak authorities were passive towards the refugees, claiming that they had not received any instructions. The NB Headquarters (Czechoslovak police) ordered the formation of temporary refugee camps in towns located close to the Czechoslovak-Polish border. Such camps were created among others in: Kusucke Nove Mesto, Dolny Kubin, Kežmark, Sabinov and Humenne.

The refugees asked the Czechoslovak authorities to grant them permanent residence on the territory of Czechoslovakia, yet the authorities categorically refused. Yet, some of the offices issued false certificates confirming Czechoslovak citizenship which let the refugees from Poland travel further into the country or even go abroad. Such cases took place in Medzilaborce, Presov and Michalovce<sup>25</sup>.

On May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1946 major Jan Konieczny, a liaison officer attached to the Czechoslovak army, visited the refugees gathered in the area of the village Čertižné. He tried to convince them to return to Poland. The refugees complained that they had been robbed by the Polish army and that their cottages had been burnt. Major Konieczny convinced that such shameful acts were not committed by Polish soldiers but by bandits dressed up in Polish uniforms. «He explained that the Polish army protects people from various bands and guarantees them peaceful work»<sup>26</sup>. The refugees reacted with disbelief. The Czechoslovak officer accompanying major Konieczny, observed in his report that the refugees constructed temporary shelters (shacks or dugouts), in the place of their stay, yet their situation was difficult. The report is finished with the observation that that the refugees from Poland: «are haggard, ill and deprived of any protection»<sup>27</sup>.

On May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1946 the commander of the concentration of the units of the Czechoslovak army in north-eastern Slovakia, colonel Ján Heřman issued 'a special order to remove Polish refugees from the border area to the north of the town of Medzilaborce'. He ordered his subordinate units to remove ruthlessly and completely all Ukrainian refugees from Poland from the territory of Czechoslovakia, gathered in the area of the towns of Čertižné – Habura – Vydraň – Palota. The number of refugees was estimated for 1500 – 3000 people<sup>28</sup>.

The operations were planned for May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1946. It was carefully prepared. On May 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, Czechoslovak soldiers and police officers were expected to make a detailed register of the refugees. Their brief characteristics, name and surname, date and place of birth, address in Poland were to be recorded in special forms. The forms were prepared in three copies. On May 20<sup>th</sup> designated army and police units were to surround the refugees, take them to previously determined points on the border and hand them over to Polish officers. All the special forms of the refugees were to be signed by Polish officers. In view of potential resistance, significant forces were designated, including a special police unit, trained in suppressing riots. A company of tanks and a flight were held as reserve. After the deportation, half of the forces were to remain close to the border in order to prevent returns to the Czechoslovak side.

The registration of the refugees did not cause any serious problems. They were informed that after the registration they would be allowed to remain on the territory of Czechoslovakia. A Czechoslovak officer observed in his report: «During the registration the refugees said that the Polish army takes their entire personal property and wants to send them to Russia. (...) Once Polish soldiers have taken their property, they burn houses and farms and ignore them. (...) They claim that they would go to Russia, if the Polish army let them take their property. (...) The refugees from Poland say that if Czechoslovak state authorities decide to deport them to Poland, they will scatter and escape even if they were shot at. They claim that living in the Polish terror is impossible»<sup>29</sup>.

On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1946 the liaison officer of the Office for Internal Affairs in Bratislava reported as follows: «I state that on May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1946 at 02.00 the expulsion of Ukrainian refugees of Polish citizen-

<sup>25</sup> SNA Bratislava, f. PV – directly., šk. 453, č. 16446/1946.

<sup>26</sup> «OCEL headquarters, liaison officer, No.: 3904 zprav. 1946, ABS Praha, f. 302-143-1.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>28</sup> «OCEL headquarters, No.: 324Taj./1.odd.1946, VHA Bratislava, f. Operace „Banderovci”, šk. 99.

<sup>29</sup> NB Haburaconcentration of units, o.r: Sine d v./46, VHA Bratislava, f. Operace „Banderovci”, šk. 99.

ship, who three months ago and over the recent days escaped to Czechoslovakia from fear of Polish terror, was finished.

During the operation the following were transferred across the border line:

- people.....	4011
- horse carts.....	277
- horses.....	366
- cows.....	382
- sheep.....	90
- goats.....	354

and a large number of poultry (geese, ducks, hens).

(...)

The situation of the refugees was very bad, both from the point of view of living conditions as well as their health. The condition of children was particularly bad. There were many ill people deprived of appropriate food. The refugees, who had stayed on our territory for some time, did not want to return to Poland. (...) When they learnt that they could be handed over to Polish authorities, many men, women and older children would lie on the ground and ask to be shot rather than sent back. Many wanted to leave their entire property on the territory of Czechoslovakia. They claimed that Poles would take everything from them anyway.

They told terrible stories about persecutions they had suffered from Polish state authorities. They claimed that the resolutions of the agreement on the exchange of people between Poland and the USSR were not observed. Poles burnt their cottages. (...) They talked about how Polish soldiers maltreated the Ukrainian population: plucking out eyes or cutting hands. They told stories about murdering Greek Catholic priests or massive executions in some places.

The operation of the expulsion of the population started on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1946 at 7.00 and finished on May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1946 at 2.00. (...)

When last refugees were removed at night by NB officers and the army, the representatives of Polish authorities were no longer in Radoszyce, since they had left from fear of the Banderivsti [ the Bander bands, i.e. the UPA].

Along with major Krokavec we were looking for some representatives of the Polish authorities in order to hand over their citizens. We went as far as to Komańcza, but there was nobody there. At the same time the column of refugees moved in the direction of the village of Kulaszne. I inform that during my stay in Poland on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1946, I observed that Polish state officers acted correctly in respect of the aforementioned refugees. Polish officers behaved as if they had been afraid of those people. They said that in no way they would stay with them at night, as they would be immediately disarmed and liquidated»<sup>30</sup>.

The operation of the expulsion of the refugees from Poland was performed between May 20<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, 1946 in all border districts of north-eastern Slovakia. The total of approximately 4600 refugees was expelled across the border line<sup>31</sup>.

A heartbreaking account of the operation was presented by one of eye-witnesses, a Greek Catholic monk from the Order of Saint Basil the Great from a monastery in Medzilaborce, not known by his name<sup>32</sup>. He recorded his observations in a private letter which survived until today<sup>33</sup>. The unknown monk wrote: «Yesterday after dinner, at 1.00 I went to Wydrań to preside over a wedding. I hardly entered the cottage and sat down (...) when I heard crying and lament on the street. All people, who were in the cottage, ran to the windows. A horrible view. On the crossroad, soldiers and gendarmes barred the road to Medzilaborce. At the same time the road from Kalinov to Łupki changed into a huge, slowly moving, living avalanche of lamenting haggard people. I looked at the tragedy and felt really bad. Everything went black and I cried... I turned away from the window to the wall on which there was a cross. I started to pray but I couldn't since everyone in the cottage was crying. When I calmed down I turned towards the window again and looked at this sad procession. One cart would

<sup>30</sup> Liaison officer of the 6th Department of the Internal Affairs Office of the „Ocel' headquarters , No.: 172 d v./46, ABS Praha, f. 307-95-22.

<sup>31</sup> „OCEL-6” headquarters, No.: 1702/Taj.zprav./1946, VHA Bratislava, f. Operace „Banderovci”, šk. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Probably the letter was written by ZoresławSaboła.

<sup>33</sup> „UkrainskyjŽurnal” (no 5/2007, p. 31).

follow another, some with one, others with two horses. Still others were drawn by a cow or a cow and a horse. People, who did not have any draught animals, dragged their carts themselves. On almost all carts there were small children, three or four who were wrapped in rags, cuddling one another like soaked pigeons. Men and women walked by their carts, barefooted, ragged, starving, experienced by hardships. With fear in their eyes, they moved towards an uncertain future, leading their cows, sheep or goats. (...) Human lament merged with mooing of cows, bleating of sheep and rattle of wheels. All this aroused in the soul of the observer a desperate cry 'God! How long will this suffering last?».

The operation conducted by the Czechoslovak army and police forces between May 20<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, 1946 did not eliminate the problem of Ukrainian refugees from Poland. Not all of them reported for the registration which turned out to be a trap. In the opinion of the quoted monk, the actual number of refugees staying in the area of Medzilaborce could approximate nine thousand, and only little more than four thousand reported for the registration. Desperate people continued to cross the border, although its protection was strengthened. The Ukrainians did not ask Czechoslovak authorities for help but used to hide in the forests. The Czechoslovak army organized sweep operations.

In July 1946, in the town of Strážsko, district of Michalovce, a special internment camp was organized for caught refugees<sup>34</sup>. In August 1946 there were 210 Polish citizens and 40 refugees from the USSR in the camp. The stay in camp was supposed to be short. It was assumed that the people would be soon deported to their home countries. Yet Polish communist authorities were not keen on accepting their citizens. Time of deportations was constantly postponed. The situation in the camp was difficult. Poor sanitary conditions led to the spread of contagious diseases. Many people died. This aroused outrage of a part of the Slovak public opinion. The camp was liquidated in October 1946 and 224 internees were moved to Bratislava. At the turn of November to December 1946 they were deported. Cases of refugees from Poland hiding in the forests of north-eastern Slovakia were reported until 1948.

In summary, it has to be observed that the phenomenon of the fleeing of the Ukrainian population from Poland to Czechoslovakia took place in the years 1945 – 1947, and in spring 1946 it became massive in character. Thousands of people escaped across the border. They justified their escape to Czechoslovak authorities due to terror of the Polish army and the security services. The Czechoslovak officers considered their stories credible. However, the refugees were consistently refused asylum in Czechoslovakia. Even veterans of the Red Army, who fought for the liberation of Czechoslovakia during World War II and were awarded Czechoslovak army medals, were refused help. At the same time Czechoslovak authorities offered shelter to Slovak refugees who escaped from Poland across the border. A significantly numerous Jewish community also escaped to Czechoslovakia from Poland. The refugees were enabled to go further to the West or settle down in Czechoslovakia. Yet different principles were followed in respect of the Ukrainian refugees.

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