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**POLISH POLICY OF RELIGIOUS REVINDICATION
IN CHELM AND SOUTHERN PODLASIE REGIONS
IN 1937–1938**

***Польська політика Ревіндикації на території Холмщини
та Південного Підляшшя 1937–1938 рр.***

Article describes the main reasons that led to the change of Polish state policy towards Ukrainian national minority in Chelm and Southern Podlasie regions in the second half of 1930s. The author shows preparations of Polish government to polonization policy of the region and its implementation in 1917–1938.

Keywords: revindication, national minority, national assimilation policy, Chelm region, Second Polish republic.

У статті описано основні причини, які призвели до зміни політики Другої Речі Посполитої щодо української національної меншини в Холмщині та Південному Підляшші в другій половині 1930-х рр. Автор розкриває підго-

товку польського уряду до колонізації регіону та початок впровадження цієї політики в 1917–1938 рр.

Ключові слова: ревіндикація, національна меншина, політика національної асиміляції, Холмщина, Друга Річ Посполита.

The topic of Ukrainian-Polish relations between the two World Wars is quite slippery and ambiguous. This period is characterized by a certain confrontation between the two nations and attempts to resolve it in one way or another. During this time, a large number of mutual insults and accusations between both sides of the conflict had been accumulated.

For this reason, this historical period is actively studied from various sides. However, despite a large number of published researches, several areas still remain understudied. For instance, the position of Ukrainian population, that densely populated eastern counties of Lublin province, - Chelm and Southern Podlasie regions. This area has not been the scene of active confrontation between the Polish and Ukrainian population during interwar period, so the researchers have not paid much attention to this topic.

Among the Ukrainian scholars, it is worth noting Yuriy Makar, who studied the life of the Ukrainian population of the Chelm and Southern Podlasie in the first half of the 20th century and the reasons that led to deportation of the Ukrainian population (Макар, Ю. 2011). Another important source for studying the socio-political and cultural life of Ukrainians in Podlasie is the work of Yevgeny Pasternak, an eyewitness of the events in which he reveals his own view of the course of events (Пастернак, Є. 1989).

Concerning Polish scientists, this topic was touched by Jerzy Doroshevsky (Doroszewski, J. 2000), Zbigniew Zaporovsky (Zaporowski, Z. 1989) and Mirosław Szumyło (Szumiło, M. 2006), who devoted a number of scholarly works to Anton Vasinchuk, founder of many Ukrainian NGOs in Chelm region. The most important Polish researcher of the history of the Chelm region, Grzegorz Kuprianowicz (Kuprianowicz, G. 2003), focuses on religious and cultural life of Ukrainians of the Chelm region.

The main task of the article is to analyze major reasons that led to the change of Polish state policy towards Ukrainian national minority in Chelm and Southern Podlasie regions during the second half of 1930s. In particular, I will discuss preparation and implementation of polonization policy by Polish government in this region.

In the second half of the 1930s, Polish state policy regarding religious national minorities suffered significant deterioration. This was due to a faster evolution of Poland towards an authoritarian state, especially after death of Józef Piłsudski in 1935. Main ideological topics of the ruling parties of this period were na-

tionalism, Catholicism, and authoritarianism. State interests were clearly defined as interests of the Polish ethnicity. The national policy conceived the final transition from the concept of state assimilation to national assimilation.

It was believed that the state should monitor national processes and help to increase the capacity of the Polish people. A point of view that social cohesion should be ensured through religious unity began to dominate.

This particularly aggravated public policy towards the Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian population of Chelm and Southern Podlasie regions. At the end of January 1935, Lublin province government held a «Congress devoted to the Ukrainian minority in the Lublin province». Except for Lublin governor Jozef Ruzhnetski and officials from General Administration (city mayors, department heads of Lublin province government), it was attended by representatives of local military led by Commander II Corps Area General Mieczyslaw Smoravinski (APL, Komenda Powiatowa Policji Państwowej w Chełmie, sygn. 38, k. 263).

Military representatives suggested decisive action to eliminate the Ukrainian question in Chelm region. One of the military representatives at the Congress said: «In this area, the state should get rid of too much damaging it and unnecessary tolerance. In the name of its own existence (the state) should completely eliminate the problem of Ukrainian minority in the Chelm region, or at least reduce it to a secondary issue, which is the issue of Czech settlers in Volyn and German colonists in Chelm region». Another speaker said straight-forwardly: «Our goal is to complete the conquest of the elements of the Polish territory between the Bug and the Wieprz rivers» (Kuprianowicz, G. 2003).

Governor Joseph Ruzhnetski, by the results of the Congress, acknowledged the role of the Orthodox Church as one of the most important aspects that must be considered in the policy of the state. He said, «We have committed Polonization of Orthodoxy» (Kuprianowicz, G. 2003). During this period, this has not been considered a radical action that would aim to quickly and dramatically restrict the Orthodox Church in Chelm and Southern Podlasie regions. Instead, attention was focused on providing it kind of a Polish character.

«Guidelines for Determining Positions on the Ukrainian Question» that consisted of 35 points, were presented at the congress. They formulated a detailed and long-term program of elimination of «Ukrainian minority issues» in Chelm and Southern Podlasie regions and adopting them «finally into the fold of Polish culture and the nation» (Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, Komenda Powiatowa Policji Państwowej w Chełmie, sygn. 97 Sprawy polityczne, 73 k.). A number of paragraphs regarded Orthodox confession. They highlighted strong Polonization of Orthodox Church, state opposition to the development of its structures and non-recognition of priests by the state.

New trends in the national and religious policy of Polish state became more and more clearly manifested after the death of Marshal Jozef Pilsudski. In December 1935, the government officially established the Committee on the issue of national minorities, which included prime minister and heads of key state agencies. During their first meeting, the Committee discussed the state policy about Orthodoxy. It was agreed that the Orthodox Church should be used for the distribution of Polish culture and therefore the state must start the Polonization policy of it (Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, Komenda Powiatowa Policji Państwowej w Chełmie, sygn. 97 Sprawy polityczne, 73 k.).

Principles of the state policy were drawn by the Prime-Minister Marian Zyn-darm-Koshtsyanski in February 1936, when he said: «The goal (of policy) is the internal consolidation of the Republic». During 1935–1936 the role of religious forces in determining national minorities policies has grown (Макап, Ю. 2011). Representatives of militia usually made more radical proposals than representatives of the civil administration.

In late 1930s, more and more attention was devoted to religious issues. It was decided that Ukrainian assimilation must involve polonization of personal religious life and faith. A special role was ascribed to the Catholic Church since it was believed that the most certain way of polonization and social integration is the acceptance of Catholicism in the Latin way.

This sharpening of religious and national policy had the most dramatic effect in Chelm and Southern Podlasie regions. As renowned Polish scholar, Jan Ken-sik noted: «Chelm and Volyn were training ground for a new national policy; in these areas it took the sharpest forms» (Kęsik, J. 1998).

Preparation for polonization-revindication program was launched in the Lublin province in late 1936. On December 11, 1936, the Coordination Committee of the Regions Corps Command II (Lublin) was created. It covered with its activities five southeastern regions of Lublin and Volyn provinces (Пепра, Ю. 2016).

The Committee included representatives of militia and over twenty Polish community organizations of Lublin and Volyn provinces. Mieczyslaw Smoravinski (commander of the Regions Corps Command) was the head of the Committee. The executive body of the Committee was the headquarters of the independent Department of the Regions Corps Command, headed by Major General Stanislaw Krogulski (Kuprianowicz, G. 2003).

On June 4, 1937, in Lublin plenary meetings of the Coordination Committee were held, which, in addition to military commanders, had representatives of civil administrative authorities, professors of Catholic University of Lublin, representatives of Polish NGOs, etc. At the meeting, main aims of the Committee were established. They indicated the need to consolidate all Polish organizations and

society to «strengthen Polishness» in the areas covered by the activities of the Committee. One of the activities of the Committee was preparation for the revindication action (Пепра, Ю. 2016).

Civil administration was collaborating with an army in the implementation of this program. The radicalization of policy regarding national minorities caused doubts about the leadership of the province. The previous governor of Lublin province Jozef Ruzhnetskyy unofficially protested against these state policies towards national and religious minorities (Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, Komenda Powiatowa Policji Państwowej w Chełmie, sygn. 97 Sprawy polityczne, 73 k., без дати). It was probably the reason for his removal from the post of governor in September 1937. On the wave of Lublin authority changes, duties of Lublin province governor were given to George Albin de Tramenkurt, which before this time had been a Polesie governor. He fully supported the action «of strengthening Polishness» in the eastern provinces of the state (Пепра, Ю. 2016).

General Olbryht, the commander of the 3rd Infantry Division, directly controlled actions in Chelm region as a «Head of the Coordination action in Chelm region». The main center of activity was in Zamosc, which was the headquarters of the division. On October 26, 1937, General Olbryht issued an order, which defined the objectives of the polonization action and instructions for preparing an action. Later he announced the development of a plan for the whole Chelm region (Макар, Ю. 2011).

The plan was called «Main Guidelines for the Polonization of Chelm region». The leading idea of the program was the principle: «All Orthodox people of Chelm are to be converted into Poles». Based on this idea, three categories of the Orthodox population were determined: «indifferent to the Orthodox Church», who could be convinced to adopt Catholicism; «tied to Orthodoxy», who however, were not conscious Ukrainian; and «nationally conscious Ukrainians» (Kuprianowicz, G. 2003).

A separate policy for each of these groups was created - from the cautious campaign in relation to the first category to limiting the impact of the third category. Reaching the goal in particular involved «splitting large clusters of this population and separating them from other by creating Polish settlements nearby» (Пепра, Ю. 2016).

People from the first group were supposed to turn to Catholicism willingly. The second group should have been forced to turn down Orthodoxy and adopt Catholicism. People from the third group were seen as Ukrainian nationalists, and the only policy towards them was isolation. Achieving these goals was planned for many years to come. They were to be implemented by the army, the Catholic Church, schools, administrative authorities, as well as local Polish society (Пепра, Ю. 2016).

The «Guidelines» recommended the following idea: «It is necessary to stimulate Poles in the Chelm region to have a special mission of polonization and unite around this idea» (Пепра, Ю. 2016). Other administrative actions were to reorganize the structure of communes so that the Polish population would have had an advantage over Ukrainians. The emigration of the population Ukrainian from this region was supported and the emigration of the Polish population banned. In addition, only Catholics could own the land.

According to the list, approved by General Olbrycht on April 4, 1938, 56 churches were subjected to dismantling and 61 churches were to transit to the Lublin Catholic episcopate. It is difficult to understand how the Church wanted to use them if the Ministry of National Education objected the creation of new parishes and financed no paid government positions for the new priests (Kuprianowicz, G. 2003).

To resolve this issue and eliminate Ukrainian property owning Uniate church, on June 20, 1938, Poland signed with Vatican the Memorial about repurchase of former Greek-Catholic church building, for which it paid 2.5 million złotych. Sejm (parliament) ratified this agreement on July 6, 1938, when there was the most massive destruction of Orthodox and Uniate Church. The new stage of destruction of former Ukrainian Orthodox and Greek-Catholic Church began in April 1938 (Пастернак, С. 1989).

The action of destruction of Orthodox churches in Chelm region was ended on July 16, 1938. Only 51 churches have left buildings for approximately 230,000 Orthodox believers (APL, Komenda Powiatowa Policji Państwowej w Chelmie, sygn. 38, k. 263).

To summarize, in the second half of 1930s Polish state policy regarding religion and national minorities experienced a significant tension. The final transition from the concept of state assimilation to national assimilation took place in the national politics. At that time, it was decided to conduct the final polonization of Ukrainians in Chelm and Southern Podlasie regions. The main goal was considered as religious revindication. This was one of the reasons for significant strengthening of nationalist sentiments among the population and activation of far-right-wing political forces such as the UNO.

Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, Komenda Powiatowa Policji Państwowej w Chelmie, sygn. 38, 263 k.

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