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The Soviet organizational and legal system of deporting Polish citizens from the occupied eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic. A historical and legal study based on the example of the first deportation on February 10, 1940

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ABSTRAKT

Sowiecki system organizacyjno-prawny deportacji obywateli polskich z okupowanych ziem wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej. Studium historyczno-prawne na przykładzie pierwszej deportacji 10 lutego 1940 roku

Wraz z przekroczeniem przez Armię Czerwoną granicy polsko-sowieckiej 17 września 1939 roku władze sowieckie miały przygotowany szereg dyrektyw mających normować polityczne i społeczne kwestie. Tym procesom podlegała również zorganizowana w lutym 1940 roku deportacja osadników wojskowych i leśników. W państwie sowieckim rzeczywistość biurokratyczna miała większe znaczenie niż faktyczne przestrzeganie realizacji zapisanych zasad. Dawało to wrażenie przestrzegania wszelkich norm prawnych, i zawsze gdy zachodziła taka potrzeba, można było usprawiedliwić niedociągnięcia błędem czynnika ludzkiego. Wytworzony w ten sposób system funkcjonował na wszelkich poziomach państwa sowieckiego, do tych zasad stosował się również aparat represji. Prawna legalizacja podejmowanych działań była kluczowym elementem prawnej rzeczywistości państwa sowieckiego. Dawała wykonującym rozkazy pełne poczucie działania w ramach legalnie i powszechnie obowiązującego systemu prawnego.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: organizacja, prawo, represje, propaganda, deportacje, Związek Sowiecki, II wojna światowa, II Rzeczypospolita, ziemie wschodnie



ABSTRACT

The Soviet organizational and legal system of deporting Polish citizens from the occupied eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic. A historical and legal study based on the example of the first deportation on February 10, 1940

With the crossing of the Polish-Soviet border by the Red Army on September 17, 1939, the Soviet authorities had prepared a number of directives to regulate political and social issues. The deportation of military settlers and foresters organized in February 1940 was also subject to these processes. In the Soviet state, bureaucratic reality was more important than the actual observance of written principles in their implementation. This gave the impression of compliance with all legal norms and whenever such a need arose, shortcomings could be argued as a human factor error. The system created in this way operated at all levels of the Soviet state, and the apparatus of repression also applied these principles. The legal legalization of taken actions was a key element of the legal reality of the Soviet state. It gave a full sense of operating within a legally and universally binding legal system for people executing orders.

KEYWORDS: organization, law, repression, propaganda, deportations, Soviet Union, World War II, the Second Polish Republic, eastern territories



When the Red Army crossed the Polish-Soviet border on September 17, 1939, the Soviet authorities had already prepared a number of directives to regulate political and social issues. Although they were not in the form of officially adopted legal acts, but in the form of ordinances of party structures and the NKVD (Narodnyj Komissariat Wnutriennich Dieł – People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs), their task was to legitimize the acts of repression.

From the very beginning of the introduced changes, the Soviet authorities applied unconventional legal solutions to legitimize the aggression. Therefore, the actual introduction of Soviet legal solutions was preceded by a transitional state. For example, in September 1939, wishing to maintain the impression of self-determination of local communities, the Soviet authorities formally prohibited the creation of Soviet revolutionary committees. Temporary Boards consisting of representatives of the Red Army and the local population were established in their place. In the propaganda appeals it was announced that

in order to settle the issue of what the new government is to be and how it is to be appointed, after thorough preparation, three people's assemblies should be appointed by general elections: the Ukrainian People's Assembly – from representatives elected in the provinces of Western Ukraine, the Belarusian People's Assembly – from representatives elected in the provinces of Western Belarus and the Polish People's Assembly – from representatives elected in provinces with a majority of Polish population¹.

However, it soon turned out that the correction of the spheres of influence following the military decisions (taken on September 28, 1939) made the orders referring to the Polish People's Assembly lose their legitimacy. As a direct consequence of these changes, from the very first days of the occupation, the policy towards the Polish population was tightened up in all areas occupied

¹ M. Gnatowski, *17 września 1939 r. – agresja czy wyzwolenie? Refleksje historyka w świetle nowych źródeł*, w: *Radziecka agresja 17 września 1939 r. i jej skutki dla mieszkańców ziem północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej*, red. M. Gnatowski, Białystok 2000, p. 76–77.

by the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) and the resignation from all pro-Polish accents was decided. In practice, this meant strengthening the Belarusian and Ukrainian case in justifying the causes of aggression. Slogans about the just, historical liberation of both nations from the yoke of “Polish masters” and the end of the unification of both nations in one common state – the USSR, which began more than 20 years ago, were displayed. In the propaganda rhetoric this led to the negation of all Poles’ rights to the borderlands, identifying them only with the colonists and partitioners.

The Soviet authorities, especially in the first period of the occupation, treated various kinds of abuses by the militia with indulgence, regarding them as a natural reaction after many years of Polish “oppression and exploitation”. Rape and violence were, after all, inseparable from any revolution followed by a happy dictatorship of the proletariat. One of the methods of compensating for historical injustice was granting farmland to the poor rural population. The conflicts that occurred on this occasion were treated as a desired effect of the popular reaction. The secretary of the Central Committee of the CP(b)B (Central Committee of the Communist Party of Bolsheviks) of Belarus, P. Ponomarenko, speaking at the meeting of the chairmen of the temporary authorities in Volkovysk, advised: “If the peasants give them [the Polish settlers – WS] a hard time, we will not oppose it but we will not tolerate too much arbitrariness”². At the same meeting he recommended a similar tactic to be applied to all wealthy landowners. Following the guidelines of the Central Committee, local Red Army commanders or members of the Communist Party often deliberately aroused class and national conflicts, encouraging them to administer justice on their own.

The repressive policy pursued by the Soviet authorities, directed against all ethnic groups living in the eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic, aimed to eradicate status class and professional groups considered capable of undertaking their own national initiatives. The above assumptions were equally successfully applied to the Belarusian, Ukrainian, Jewish and Polish population, but it was Poles as a particularly privileged ethnic group in the Second Polish Republic, who suffered the greatest losses.

Arrests of people suspected of hostile activity have continued uninterruptedly since the military intervention by the Red Army had begun. In the first

2 M. Gnatowski, *W radzieckich okowach (1939–1941). Studium o agresji 17 września 1939 r. i radzieckiej polityce w regionie łomżyńskim w latach 1939–1941*, Łomża 1997, p. 27–28.

period they were largely based on previously prepared censuses. With the passage of time they grew stronger, covering more and more masses of the population, but they still had the character of individual repressions³.

The application of a collective responsibility at the beginning of 1940, for the first time on such a scale, was a new element in the repressive policy of the Soviet authorities in the Polish territory of the Second Polish Republic. Forced resettlement affected entire families and social groups. The deportations did not bypass any of the nationalities (e.g. many Jews who enthusiastically welcomed the encroaching Red Army units in September 1939 were accused of the so-called Trotskyist deviations), but similarly to the arrests, they affected the Polish population to the greatest extent.

In accordance with the Soviet legislation applied in this type of cases, no one was presented with any formal charges, it was based on an administrative decision, against which there was no appeal. The Soviets already had extensive experience in carrying out this type of operation. From the beginning of the USSR, and massively from the 1930s, they were resettling huge numbers of people to "cleanse" individual areas of their empire and populated others – difficult to live and lacking hands to work. The deportees were settled mainly in Siberia, Kazakhstan and the northern regions of the European part of Russia.

The use of this form of repression was a huge surprise for the people of the eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic. The Soviet authorities managed to keep the well-prepared action a secret until the very end. The first victims of these mass repressions were mainly military settlers (veterans of the Polish-Bolshevik war of 1920) and forest service workers and their families.

The first actions announcing the subsequent large-scale deportation action can already be seen in the directive No. 783 of October 10, 1939 issued by Ł. Beria and sent to the heads of the NKVD of Ukraine and Belarus⁴. In accordance with the instructions contained therein, all settlers had to be listed and kept under constant surveillance, and those whom the occupant had already known from "hostile activities" – arrested. In addition, Beria ordered searches to be

3 W. Śleszyński, *Okupacja sowiecka na Białostocczyźnie 1939–1941. Propaganda i indoktrynacja*, Białystok 2001, p. 290.

4 Directive of NKVD of USSR No. 793 on actions against settlers, *Deportacje obywateli polskich z Zachodniej Ukrainy i Zachodniej Białorusi w 1940 roku*, in: *Deportacje obywateli polskich z Zachodniej Ukrainy i Zachodniej Białorusi w 1940 roku*, red. W. Komogorow et al.; wybór i oprac. nauk. Wasilij Christoforow; tłum. M. Słoń-Nowaczek, Warszawa–Moskwa 2003, p. 41.

carried out on them to reveal and confiscate their firearms and melee weapons. Every 10 days it was necessary to report on the progress of these tasks. It was feared that this group might constitute a “serious base for counter-revolutionary activity”, so it had to be neutralized.

The first legal and organizational decisions aimed at deportation were discussed in December 1939 in Moscow. The action plan prepared by the apparatus of repression was examined by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) on December 4, 1939, and approved by that body. It envisaged a radical solution, that is the deportation of all settlers and their families from “Western Ukraine” and “Western Belarus” and then transferring them (under an agreement with the People’s Commissariat of the USSR Wood Industry) as a workforce for logging. The most dangerous of them had to be arrested and punished⁵.

The politically approved project was discussed the next day on December 5, 1939 by the Council of People’s Commissars (RKL) of the USSR, which, in a top secret resolution No. 2010-558, formally accepted the proposals submitted to it by the NKVD of the USSR regarding the displacement of settlers and their families⁶. It commissioned the requesting ministry to perform this task, at the same time obliging it to develop a resettlement procedure within 20 days and submit it for approval. The displaced cattle and farm livestock were to be handed over to the local authorities. What property and small inventory could the settlers take with them, it had to be determined. On the other hand, the proposals for the management of the property they were forced to leave (real estate, cattle, livestock) were to be prepared by the republican governments of Ukraine and Belarus.

Based on the resolution of the USSR government of December 5, 1939, Ł. Beria sent a directive to the heads of the NKVD of Ukraine and Belarus on December 19, which established detailed rules for the displacement of the settlers. He ordered the heads of NKVD structures in Belarus and Ukraine:

1. Begin immediately and by 5.I.1940 complete the preparation of a detailed record of all settlers and their family members residing in the western oblasts of Ukraine and Belarus, according to the attached model.

5 *Matieriały «Osoboj papki» Politbiuro CK RKP(b)-WKP(b) po woprosu sowjetsko-polskich otnoszenij 1923–1944 gg.*, riedaktor I. I. Kostiuszko, Moskwa 1997, p. 98.

6 Resolution of RKL USSR No. 2010–558a regarding the displacement of the settlers from the western oblasts of BSRS and USRS, in: *Deportacje obywateli polskich*, p. 712–715.

Keep the records under a credible pretext, without publicity and without disclosing the purpose of its preparation.

2. Record the settlers in the villages.

Divide the area inhabited by settlers into operational sections in such a way that each operational section covers approximately 250-300 settlement families.

3. In order to prepare and carry out actions in each operational section, an operational triple will be established, headed by the head of the district unit of the UNKVD or with specially delegated operational officers from the peripheral UNKVD. The composition of operational triples for individual sections is determined and approved by the NKVD, USRS and BSRS.

4. The triples of the individual sections carefully develop specific operational plans for carrying out actions within the section. These regional operational "triples" are to be submitted to the NKVD, the USRS and the BSRS, respectively, for approval.

5. When developing plans for the displacement of settlers, [triples of] individual operational sections must take into account the specific conditions and situation in which the action will be carried out⁷.

On the basis of the above guidelines, the head of the NKVD of the Byelorussian SSR, Ławrentij F. Canawa, on December 25, 1939, sent a similar letter⁸ to the heads of the NKVD regional boards with instructions on how to record the settlers and their families. He ordered: "[...] to proceed immediately and by January 5, 1940, complete the preparation, according to the attached diagram, of a detailed list of all settlers and their family members living in the area; conduct the inventory under some decent pretext, without fussing and finding out the real reasons. Such a pretext may be, for example, the necessity of an inventory of farm buildings. Make the entire list of farms and settler families

7 Directive of NKVD USSR No. 5648/B regarding the displacement of the settlers, in: *Deportacje obywateli polskich*, p. 49–53.

8 „Zachodnia Białoruś” 17 IX 1939 – 22 VI 1941, t. 2: *Deportacje Polaków z północno-wschodnich ziem II Rzeczypospolitej 1940–1941*, red. B. Gronek, G. Jakubowski, przekł. z jęz. ros. M. Słoń-Nowaczek, Warszawa 2001, p. 24–29.

with the help of regional and powiat executive committees; in order to prepare and carry out the entire project, operational triples should be organized on each of the sections (covering 250–300 families), headed by the head of the NKVD district branch or a delegated employee of the NKVD regional branch, they must be submitted for approval by January 7, 1940”. The directives also indicated that: “particularly harmful settlers, in relation to whom there are materials confirming their anti-Soviet activity in the past or now, should be arrested and their cases formally prepared for a special conference, and their families should be displaced according to general arrangements. Take measures to prevent any excesses, counter-revolutionary events and delays in the confiscation and shipping of settlers. The list, deadlines and measures used for the displacement of the settlers must be presented to the first secretary of the PSC regional committee (b)”⁹. Canawa also ordered to establish the composition of the circuit triples. On the other hand, the cast of operational triples had to be presented to him for approval by January 7, 1940. The mode of action had to be reported to the first secretary of the communist party in the oblast. Similar activities were carried out in the western oblasts of the Ukrainian SSR.

In connection with the planned deportation, the republican authorities submitted proposals to use the remaining property of the displaced persons. It was proposed to divide the left behind land and everyday objects among the poor peasants. The village committees were to take care of it. Ultimately, these issues were resolved on December 21 and 22, 1939, first by the central party structures in Moscow (the central committee of the communist party) and then by the Soviet government. The above-mentioned decision-making process perfectly shows the legal way of making decisions in the Soviet Union, where party factors set goals and government structures were delegated only to carry them out. At the end of December a decision was also made to extend the deported group with foresters¹⁰. Both groups (military settlers and foresters) were considered the most dangerous. In the opinion of the Soviet authorities, knowing the area well and knowing how to use weapons, they could form the basis of a potential

9 Directive of the head of NKVD of Belarus SRR Ławrentij F. Canawa on December 25, 1939, quotation from: A. Chackiewicz, *Aresztowania i deportacje społeczeństwa zachodnich obwodów Białorusi (1939–1941)*, in: *Spółeczeństwo białoruskie, litewskie i polskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1939–1941*, red. M. Giżejewska, T. Strzembosz, Warszawa 1995, p. 121–122.

10 A.E. Gurjanow, *Polskie spiecpieriesielency w SSSR w 1940–1941 gg.*, in: *Riepriessii protiv polakow i polskich grażdan*, Istoriceskije sborniki «Miemoriała», wypusk 1, Moskwa 1997, p. 117.

anti-Soviet military resistance movement. The Soviet authorities did not mind the fact that the vast majority of the displaced persons were women and children. The use of collective responsibility was supposed to create a shock, discouraging other groups potentially planning anti-Soviet activities. Deportation was not a punishment but only a preventive measure performed in accordance with the legal assumptions of the communist state having the right to dislocate people if there was such a political or economic need.

The central authorities of the NKVD informed the services in the field where the deportees were to be directed, in order to prepare the conditions for their admission there. On the order of L. Beria it was necessary:

1. In order to organize the transport of the resettled settlers from the place of unloading the transports to the settlements, create, in advance, operational groups from UNKVD officers, whose task will be to check the readiness [of means] of transport, sanitary service, organization of feeding the displaced persons during transport and preparation of living quarters for reception displaced persons.

In order to secure these activities, the heads of the operational groups are to contact in advance the representatives of the People's Commissariat of the Wood Industry of the USSR in your district, who deal with the organization of the reception and the deployment of spec. displaced persons.

2. Carefully check the agent-informing network in the companies where the spec. displaced persons would work, clean it of suspicious and unfit for work elements and carry out additional recruitment, so as to ensure the daily flow of information about the social moods of the spec. displaced persons in wood industry enterprises.
3. Provide proper supervision while escorting spec. displaced persons from their place of unloading from transports to special settlements, excluding any possibility of escape or evasion of the designated place of residence.
4. Take over from the heads of the transports informers recruited by them among the displaced persons and the entirety of the intelligence material obtained describing the behavior, moods and mutual contacts of the displaced persons during the journey.
5. Spec. displaced persons who were exposed during the trip as people with an anti-Soviet bias or are suspected of the possibility of organizing a counter-revolution-

ary sabotage or escape, should in the first place be actively investigated by agents. One should also take into account the possibility of contact with them by the anti-Soviet element from among the previously dislocated spec. displaced persons.

6. Recruitment of agents aimed at revealing and investigating the settlers should be carried out after careful selection and verification of the recruited. Be aware that among the former settlers there may be agents and provocateurs of former Polish and foreign intelligence services.

7. Inform the Main Economic Board of the NKVD of the USSR about the course of preparations for the reception and deployment of the resettled settlers and about the steps you have taken to ensure that they conduct efficient agent-operational activities¹¹.

The formal establishment of the rules for settlers' stay in special settlements (spetsposelok) took place with the approval of "Regulations of special settlements and employment of settlers displaced from the western oblasts of the Ukrainian SSR and BSSR" by the RKL of the USSR on December 29, 1939. It regulated the rules of settlement and the work performed by deportees. There was to be a living area of no less than 3m² per capita, while the work was to mainly consist in felling the forest.

Based on the orders of Ł. Beria, at the beginning of January 1940, the NKVD of the USSR approved the operational plans of the regional triples and the development of plans for the operational regions was commenced in the field. In turn, a special meeting on, inter alia, the displacement of settlers and foresters was held in Minsk on January 7, 1940 with the participation of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CP (b) B. The head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Belarusian SRS summarized the results of the records of these two population groups and discussed in detail the scenario of the planned action. He paid attention, among others, to the potential danger of organizing and putting up resistance by settlers-officers and settlers-policemen, who had to be apprehended before the displacement operation could begin. It was also provided for how to react to various possible events and situations. It was necessary to act in such a way as to ensure full "conspiracy and not cause

11 Directive of NKVD USSR No. 435/B on the creation of conditions for the reception of the displaced settlers, in: *Deportacje obywateli polskich*, p. 91–93.

the slightest confusion or reveal the planned action". It was also emphasized that the heads of the operational groups should organize

a political conference devoted to explaining the significance of the undertaking for the party and the government before the commencement of the action. At the same time, attention should be paid to the hostile attitude of the displaced persons to the authorities, their possible resistance and provocations organized in order to cause panic and sympathy among those carrying out the operation [...]. All members of the operational groups should exercise extreme vigilance¹².

In connection with the end of the registration action of settlers and forest guards from state forests and landowners at the beginning of January 1940, additional steps were taken in the NKVD to clarify their lists and to reveal also the families of settlers who moved to the cities¹³. According to the data collected by the end of the first decade of January 1940, 127,454 people from the families of settlers and foresters were deported in total¹⁴.

In the entire deportation operation, great importance was placed on the organization of appropriate transport to the place of deportation by the Main Transport Authority of the NKVD of the USSR. Appropriate detailed instructions standardized for e.g. the amount and form of food for the deportees. It was planned that 30 people with their luggage would be placed in the carriage. It was also allowed to bring clothes, underwear, footwear, bedding and everyday items, as well as tools, money (unlimited) and valuables. Four freight cars were marked for large items in each transport. The daily rate for feeding one displaced person was set at 2 rubles and 50 kopecks. This was to be enough to provide one with a hot meal once a day and 800 g of bread served by train buffets/restaurants along the route. The order (stating the day and time of arrival of the echelon and the number of lunch and bread portions) should be sent by telegraph by the head of transport to the director of the buffets of the selected station and the appropriate Road and Transport Department of the NKVD.

12 Instruction of NKVD of Belarussian SRR on carrying out the displacement, quotation from: A. Chackiewicz, *Aresztowania i deportacje*, p. 123.

13 Report of NKVD USRS No. 26 on the number of registered settlers and foresters, in: *Deportacje obywateli polskich*, p. 57.

14 A note with figures on the farms of settlers and foresters from the western obsasts of the BSRS and the USSR, in: *Deportacje obywateli polskich*, p. 63, 65.

This should be done 24 hours before the planned stop at a given station. In order to collect meals and boiling water, the train chief should appoint persons on duty from each car, whose task was to deliver food under the supervision of a convoy.

In fact, the food was distributed very irregularly. The above decisions show the dual system of Soviet reality. Legal and organizational one, assuming the use of humanitarian solutions, and practical one which was completely different from the assumptions. In the Soviet state the bureaucratic reality was more important than the actual implementation of the written rules. It gave the impression of compliance with all legal norms and whenever there was such a need, the deficiencies could be justified by the error of the human factor. This system functioned at all levels of the Soviet state, including repressive apparatus. The legalization of the actions taken was a key element of the reality of the Soviet state. It gave those who followed orders a full sense of operating within the legally and universally binding legal system.

When preparations for the displacement of the settlers and the forest guard were well advanced, Beria sent encrypted telegrams to Kiev and Minsk on January 26, 1940, with the decision to start the operation on February 8, 1940¹⁵. In fact, it was finally postponed by two days. On the same day the People's Commissariat of Communications was to provide ordered train sets (60–65 carriages each) to all the stations agreed with it by the NKVD for the deployment of displaced persons (30 adults in a car). Compared to previous plans, this meant an increase in transport compositions and codensation of carriages.

In the first days of February, the Ukrainian NKVD reported to Beria that in the western regions of Ukraine the demand for NKVD operational staff, militia and military commanders (6,565 people) was satisfied: the local people would be supported by people brought in from the central regions of the republic by February 4. On the other hand, the necessary personnel replenishment of operational groups by other uniformed formations meant the use of local NKVD forces and the Workers' Guard, as well as the use of NKVD troops stationed in the western districts, and youth trained by Border Forces. The rest of the composition was completed by rural activities. This meant that the total of

¹⁵ Telegram of the NKVD of USSR No. 25 regarding the displacement of settlers, in: *Deportacje obywateli polskich*, p. 73.

the displacement action was to be carried out in the field by as many as 39,562 people (on average more than 6 people in each operational group)¹⁶.

On February 2, 1940, Sierow gave the commanders of the 5th, 6th and 12th Armies stationed in the western districts of the USSR a top secret information that on February 8 the operation of displacement of settlers and forest guards would begin (scheduled for 5–6 days), ordered by the RKL USSR. Fearing the possible activity of the “counter-revolutionary element”, he asked the army to strengthen the protection of important places – power plants, water pumping stations, telephone exchanges, military warehouses and facilities, and to increase the vigilance of guard and patrol services during the aforementioned operation¹⁷.

Due to the efforts of the NKVD to keep the planned operation in strict confidence, even the trusted group of collaborators operating in the field did not know the real reason for the mobilization in communal premises on the night of the operation. Until 4 a.m. the time was filled with political talks to inform about the true purpose of the meeting just before the action itself.

The deportation operation carried out on the night of February 9–10, 1940, turned out to be a complete surprise for the settlers and foresters. The Soviet organizational and legal system of repression worked extremely well. The favorable circumstance was undoubtedly the time of its conduct – a winter night. The instruction describing the very moment of arrest was supposed to guarantee the detainees appropriate treatment, e.g. it even assumed that if the detainees did not have warm clothes, the family had to be provided with them.

As at all levels of the Soviet authorities’ activity, the legal reality here differed from the theoretical assumptions. The instruction was usually not followed, and its actual implementation depended on the decision of the local commander. Working in highly stressful conditions, they were focused on carrying out the essential order, i.e. on bringing the detainees to the assembly point. Most often, for purely practical reasons, the time spent on packing was shortened as much as possible and only in a few cases an attempt was made to understand the trauma of the surprised people by giving them practical advice or even helping with packing. The preserved memories, largely determined by the

16 Report of NKVD of USRS regarding securing the action of displacement of settlers and foresters, in: *Deportacje obywateli polskich*, p. 81.

17 Directive of NKVD of USRS No. 383/SN for the commanders of 5th, 6th and 12th Armies regarding actions connected with the displacement of settlers and foresters, in: *Deportacje obywateli polskich*, p. 99.

subjective feelings of this traumatic moment, clearly show the descriptions of the negative behavior of the escorts. It is completely understandable, because it is difficult to expect that people in a state of maximum stress will attempt an objective and balanced assessment of the events taking place.

Conclusion

The deportation on February 10, 1940, as it was repeatedly emphasized, was the first to be a great surprise and shock for its victims, which made them not properly prepared for the deportation. In more than 30 degrees of frost people were often deported without warm clothes and shoes. The victims of the first deportation were mainly military settlers and forestry services with their families. According to the latest research findings, we can say that it covered over 140,000 people.

The February deportation action was such a huge shock for the borderland community that after its completion many Polish homes had prepared and packed suitcases in case of further deportations. The fact that this was not an expression of empty fears was to be found out two months later, when another deportation of Polish citizens was carried out. In an organizational and legal manner similar to the February deportation, three other mass deportations were carried out in Poland: in April 1940, in June 1940 and in May-June 1941. The organizational and legal mechanism introduced in the 1930s in the USSR, adapted to the needs of the borderlands as part of the first deportation in February 1940, was then successfully used in subsequent deportation actions.

The deportation of a large part of the inhabitants of eastern Poland was closely related to the propaganda policy pursued by the Soviet authorities. Deportations affected those people who from the point of view of the communist ideology had no chances for political re-education, but on the contrary – could pose a threat to the planned activities. Depriving local communities of their natural leaders – political, social and cultural activists, officials and teachers – to a greater extent opened them up to the influence of communist slogans. Eliminating the old intelligentsia “contaminated” with the capitalist worldview and replacing it with a completely new social elite was one of the basic tasks of the policy of the Soviet authorities aimed at the full sovietization of the occupied territories.

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