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CONGRÈS MONDIAL UKRAINIEN



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The Hon, Lech Kaczyński
President of the Republic of Poland

The Hon. Marek Jurek
Marshall
Sejm of the Republic of Poland

The Hon. Jarosław Kaczyński
Chairman of the Council of Ministers
Republic of Poland

Honourable Sirs,

In 1947 the Government of Poland forcibly deported the Ukrainian population from the eastern and south-eastern regions of the Polish state, namely the Podlesie, Chelm and San regions and the Lemko lands, where the Ukrainian population had lived from time immemorial. This deportation, called "Operation Wisła" (Akcja Wisła), took place without prior warning or consent of the Ukrainian population, and affected about 150,000 women, children and men, including the elderly. It is noteworthy that these deportations were not applied to the ethnically Polish population of these regions.

The deportation was carried out in an inhumane manner, often accompanied by beating and even killings and the destruction of property. Those deported were not served with any documents of charges, nor were they given any opportunity of appealing to judiciary or governmental authorities. In this way the indigenous Ukrainian population of the eastern and south-eastern regions of the Polish state (Cracow, Rzeszow and Lublin Voivodships) was eradicated. Polish authorities thereafter made efforts to eradicate all signs of the former Ukrainian inhabitants of these regions.

The Operation was carried out by the Polish Army, border security forces and other armed units, in accordance with a previously prepared plan "to resolve the Ukrainian problem in Poland once and for all". The Ukrainian population was torn from concentrated communities in its ancestral lands and was forcibly dispersed in small groups among the Polish population throughout the formerly German "recovered territories" in the north and west of the new Poland, with the purpose of its assimilation.

The Ukrainian population of Poland thereby lost its ancestral lands and with them, their communities, schools, churches, and other establishments. With the loss of concentrated settlements and dispersal among the Polish majority, it also lost any practical possibility of developing its community, language and culture. With loss of concentration it also lost any realistic possibility for political representation and the ability to defend its interests through its own elected deputies to the Polish Parliament (Sejm).

The property of the forcibly relocated Ukrainian population was taken over by the state. Vacated lands, farmsteads and buildings were left uninhabited or given over to Polish settlers. A portion of these properties were subsequently sold by the Government to the Polish population, while Ukrainians, who wished to reclaim or even purchase their property were denied. Unfortunately, this discrimination persists even in today's democratic Poland.

Nearly 4,000 Ukrainians, mostly villagers, but including also teachers, priests of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic and Orthodox Churches and other leading members of the Ukrainian community in Poland, were interned behind the barbed wires of the Jaworznie "Central Labour Camp", located at the former Nazi concentration camp SS-Lager Dachgrube, a branch of the Auschwitz concentration camp. Among the incarcerated Ukrainians were a few hundred women and some dozen children. In most cases they were people selected from among those being deported, and were incarcerated without court verdicts. The conditions in the Jaworznie "Central Labour Camp" were very harsh, and many of the Ukrainian prisoners died as a result of malnutrition, very poor living conditions, overwork and especially beatings during interrogations.

To date the Republic of Poland has not compensated the victims of Operation Wisla, has not returned their property, and has not prosecuted those who initiated, planned and implemented Operation Wisla. A climate of denial and disinformation regarding Operation Wisla persists in contemporary Poland, as well as a generally negative attitude towards Polish citizens of the Ukrainian nationality. Laws and decrees that discriminate against Ukrainian citizens of Poland have not been abrogated to this day. Over the years the Ukrainian community has made repeated efforts to bring these injustices to the attention of Polish authorities, but with little tangible effect.

It should be noted that the forcible relocation, confiscation and destruction of property and abuse of the Ukrainian nationality, carried out by Polish government authorities, were in contravention of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, specifically Article 95: "The Republic of Poland guarantees on its territory, to all, without distinction of extraction, nationality, language, race, or religion, full protection of life, liberty, and property." The Constitution guaranteed, in particular, protection against detention without an order of the judicial authorities (Article 97), "inviolability of the home and hearth of the citizen" (Article 100), liberty of every citizen to select his place of abode (Article 101), right to preservation and development of the language and customs of national minorities (Articles 109, 110), and much else.

It is time that the Republic of Poland, the successor to the Polish state, which planned and carried out the destruction of the indigenous Ukrainian communities of the eastern and south-eastern regions of the Republic, remedy the wrongs committed against its own people of the Ukrainian nationality. Therefore the Ukrainian World Congress, on behalf of all victims of Operation Wisla and their descendants, and irrespective of their current place of residence, seeks implementation of the following remedial actions:

- 1) The return of all church and community property.
- 2) Relocation assistance for those of the deported or their descendants who wish to return to their ancestral lands.
- 3) Prosecution of those who initiated, planned or implemented Akcja Wisła, in particular, commandants and collaborators at the labor camp in Jaworznie.
- 4) Adequate compensation of Ukrainians interned in Jaworznie and their descendants, irrespective of their current place of residence.
- 5) Abrogation of all laws, decrees, etc. connected with Akcja Wisła as well as others, which discriminate against Polish citizens of Ukrainian nationality.

- 6) Passage of an Act of the Polish Sejm unequivocally condemning Akcja Wisła and apologizing to its victims and their descendants.
- 7) Inclusion of unbiased information on Akcja Wisła in the educational curriculum throughout Poland.
- 8) Establishment of a separate Polish State Fund to assist in the development of Ukrainian communities in Poland as minimal compensation for Akcja Wisła.
- 9) Ensuring political representation for Poland's Ukrainian minority in both the Sejm and the Senate of Poland to remedy its forcible dispersal in non-concentrated numbers.
- 10) The formation of a separate Commission consisting of representatives of the government of Poland, the Ukrainian community in Poland, the Council of Europe, the European Union and the Ukrainian World Congress to monitor the above.

Toronto — New-York



Askold S. Lozynskyj
President
Ukrainian World Congress

February 7, 2007



Jurij Darewych
Chair, Commission on
Human and Civil Rights

Copies:

Council of Europe
Directorate General of Human Rights - DG II
Secretariat of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union

OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

References

Eugeniusz Misiło *Akcja Wisła* (in Polish), Warszawa: Archivum Ukraińskie (1993).
This book gives a detailed account of Operation Wisla and contains transcriptions of Polish government and military documents regarding this deportation.

Bohdan Kordan. "Making Borders Stick: Population Transfer and Resettlement in the Trans-Curzon Territories, 1944-1949", *International Migration Review*, Vol. 31, No. 3. (Autumn, 1977) pp. 704-720.
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Timothy Snyder. " 'To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem Once and for All' : The Ethnic Cleansing of Ukrainians in Poland, 1943-1947" *Journal of Cold War Studies* 1.2 (1999) pp, 86-120.

Katarzyna Tychańska. "Bezprawność operacji "Wisła" z 1947 roku" (in Polish). Proceedings of the conference "Akcja «Wisła» na tle stosunków polsko-ukraińskich w XX wieku", Szczecin, 12-14 June 1992, pp. 89-99.

Polish Constitutions (*Polskie Konstytucje*)

The Constitutional Act of February 19, 1947

See, esp. Article 1 and the Declaration of Rights and Liberties

<http://www-personal.engin.umich.edu/~zbigniew/Constitutions/k1947.E.html>

Constitution of the Republic of Poland (1921)

See, esp. articles 97, 100, 101, 109, 110

<http://www-personal.engin.umich.edu/~zbigniew/Constitutions/k1921.E.html>

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