

Between the Great Famine and the Great Terror. The Deportations of People from the Border Districts of the Soviet Ukraine in 1935

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Abstract

The article is a discussion of the first mass deportation of the unpredictable Polish and German inhabitants from the western border districts of Ukraine, which the Soviet authorities carried out in 1935. Close to 9,500 households were facing deportation, with Polish families accounting for approximately half of these. Increased suspicion of and hostility toward the Poles and the Germans was caused by the growing international tensions in contemporary Europe and the gradual emergence of the future military conflicts. In the mid-1930s, the Soviets were reinforcing their western border, erecting fortifications as part of the so-called Stalin Line, which also spanned the section of the USSR's border with the Second Polish Republic. The deported Poles and Germans were moved to eastern districts of Ukraine, particularly in villages depopulated during the Great Famine of 1932-1933. The purpose of this strategy was two-fold: to tighten security in the state's western extremities and to provide workforce for towns and villages decimated by hunger.

Deportations as a form of repressive policies of the totalitarian Soviet state have left a permanent mark in its tragic history. This sociotechnical strategy followed primarily from the Bolsheviki's theoretical considerations concerning the necessity to remove or seal off hostile social groups. The first displacements of people from Ukraine took place between 1930 and 1933, as part of the process of the collectivization of agriculture. In the course of eliminating the kulaks, the regions of total collectivization saw the displacement of the wealthiest peasant families to remote parts of the USSR. Their farms were confiscated and gradually turned into kolkhozes. These people were typically moved north, to the Urals, Siberia, and Kazakhstan, where they were used for hard labor, such as clearing forests, mining resources, and construction of industrial establishments, roads, and waterways. The displaced families were allowed to take with them some food supplies and warm clothes. A few thousand families were subject to deportations, which progressed in stages and were extremely brutal. Under the law, these people were prisoners in the gulag system.

Stalin's policy of "the great leap forward," carried out until the late 1920s, aimed at super-industrialization, that is, establishing a vast industrial infrastructure in just a couple of years. However, it backfired, cutting a swathe through the Soviet countryside and resulting in the Great Famine of 1932–1933. It took the greatest toll on Ukraine (where it was referred to as the *Holodomor*), killing a few million people on a genocidal scale (Kasyanov, 2010; Kuśnierz, 2005).¹ Additionally, Stalin's top hierarchy were abandoning the course of somewhat liberal nationality policies. Accusations of nationalist leanings were leveled at both the local Ukrainian communist activists and representatives of ethnic minorities, while the Poles and the Germans were the first to have been labeled "enemy nationalities."

The increased internal tensions in view of Stalinist policies had international implications as well. Their reflection was the moods of the inhabitants of the border regions in western USSR. In order to beat the death of hunger and repressions, many attempts were made to cross the "green border" into the neighboring Poland and Romania. The source of the Kremlin's greatest distress was the rife peasant rebellions in Podolia between 1931 and 1932, as it was feared that the Polish Second Republic would take advantage of the situation to further destabilize Ukraine. In such circumstances, suspicion and distrust directed at the Poles living

¹ Researchers from the Institute of Demography and Social Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in Kiev believe, based on years-long investigations, that the Great Famine of 1932 and 1933 claimed the lives of 3,941,000 people in Ukraine, while the negative birth rate between 1932 and 1934 caused by the Famine is estimated at 1,122,000 (Siedmiu liderów Kompartii ZSRR uznano za winnych..., 2010; Zinchenko, 2014).

in the western border villages intensified. It was concluded that these people should be preemptively displaced inside the USSR. As early as 5 March 1930, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) passed a top-secret resolution respecting the Polish villages in the border regions, which in a sense complemented the decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine respecting the displacement of a few thousand kulak families outside Ukraine.

Additionally, the Moscow authorities had already planned to displace a total of between 10,000 and 15,000 families from Ukraine's border regions, with Polish nationals to be affected first. Aside from persons convicted of "banditry, espionage, and active counterrevolutionary and organized contraband," subject to displacement were also Polish paupers and middle-class families. As regards the latter, the aforesaid party document mentioned "the nobility families (irrespective of their financial standing), whose presence close to the border would be deemed a threat by the GPU [Gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie – the State Police Directorate] and local party bureaus" (Dönninghaus, 2011, p. 519).²

For example, in 1930, deported north were 1,307 families (consisting of four or five people on average) from the Volhynia, including 761 Ukrainian, 339 Polish and 181 German families, as well as 26 families of other nationalities (DAZHO, F. 85, SER. 1, CS. 679, SHT. 83). Most of the deported Polish families came from the Polish National District, so-called Marchlewszczyzna. Interestingly, taking the place of the deported were the families of the Red Army soldiers and of kolkhoz and Soviet activists, the idea being to bring reinforcements to the border regions and make a breakthrough on the front of setting up kolkhozes. Men were assigned to Red Army units stationed nearby, to be quickly drafted in the event of military threat. It has to be noted that this policy was continued in the subsequent years.

The intensification of anti-Polish sentiments among the Bolshevik authorities between 1933 and 1935 translated into practical actions, including a provocation directed against the Polish Military Organization staged by Stalinist security services. Several individuals were arrested and then given harsh sentences. The liquidation of Polish rural councils and Polish schools was acutely felt. In addition, almost all newspapers printed in Polish were shut down, together with Polish cultural-educational institutions in Kiev, Kharkov, and other cities of the Soviet Ukraine. The Roman Catholic Church was abolished from the public sphere, as the churches were closed and the priests faced repressions (Stroński, 1998). The nadir

² According to the data collected by Ukrainian researchers, this additional group of deportees included 15,000 persons "of special designation," mostly Poles (Smolyi, 2012, p. 252).

of the Stalinist oppressive policies was the Great Terror of 1937–1938, during which hundreds of thousands of people were sentenced out of court to death by firing squad or to imprisonment. It has to be noted that particular cruelty characterized the so-called Polish action, which the NKVD began on 11 August 1937 pursuant to the NKVD order 00485, signed by Nikolay Yezhov, head of the service. Researchers found that the total number of people facing repressions in the entire USSR was 111,000, including 47,300 in Ukraine (Iwanow, 2014, p. 392).

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In the mid-1930s, following the increased international tensions, the problem of tightening security in the western extremity of the USSR in anticipation of war became pressing. To that end, the construction of the so-called Stalin Line, a line of fortifications along the Polish and Romanian borders, began. One of the foremost such strongholds was the so-called 7 Ukrepraion, near Novohrad-Volynskyi, which was surrounded by numerous Polish villages. The Soviet counterintelligence was trying to ensure the structure's secrecy, to which end provisional buildings were erected to screen it, and other forms of camouflage were employed to deceive the enemy (*Liniia Stalina*, n.d.; Koval, 2014, p. 82).³ These considerations also informed the decision to remove the Polish and German inhabitants living near the line's infrastructure. Special efforts were made to prevent infiltration by Polish intelligence, seeing as Poland was considered the top enemy (Podkur, 2014). The evidence currently available suggests that the displacement of Poles from the border region was carried out on Moscow's initiative.

The next mass deportation of Polish nationals from Ukraine's border regions to the east was organized in 1935. Its character was strictly political, as the Soviet authorities were motivated by the considerations of tightening the security of the western border and the removal of unwanted inhabitants. While this category previously included "class enemies," on this occasion, it was nationality that was considered. In this context,

3 The Stalin Line (a name invented by western politicians) was a comprehensive infrastructure of fortifications along the USSR's western border between 1929 and 1939, which was modeled on similar constructions, such as the Mannerheim Line, the Maginot Line, or the Siegfried Line. It consisted of a series of reinforced sections, abbreviated as URs (Rus. *Ukreplennyi Raion*). A reinforced section spanned between 100 and 180 kilometers along the frontline and reached a few kilometers inside the land. It was fitted with a complex system of reinforced-concrete and steel-clad combat shelters and auxiliary reinforcements. A UR had underground warehouses, powerplants, hospitals, command posts, and communication nodes. The underground facilities were connected by a maze of tunnels and hidden passages. Each UR could independently carry out military operations, even when completely sealed off. In 1932, a decision was made to construct a 120-kilometer-long Novohrad-Volhynia UR, between 25 and 80 kilometers off the Polish border.

the Poles and the Germans were the first to be removed. This time, the character of displacements was internal, as people were deported to eastern parts of the USSR. The beginnings of this operation can be traced to late 1934, when a confidential resolution was passed on the 9 December meeting of the Political Bureau of the Ukrainian communist party, which ordered the district party committees to

immediately send their representatives to the Polish and German districts of the republic to notify their inhabitants that the authorities will not tolerate any attempts at anti-Soviet activities or agitation and will not stop short of stripping these people of the right of residence in the USSR, or will send all those who display disloyalty to the Soviet authorities to remote corners of the USSR (CDAHOУ, F. 1, SER. 16, CS. 11, SHT. 294).

This appears to have been the first and final such warning issued by the authorities to the “dissenting” Poles. Soon, it turned out that the party’s threat was by no means empty. On 20 December, the Politburo of the Ukrainian communist party adopted the resolution “On deportations from border regions,” pointing to the necessity of displacing the Polish and German nationals from 24 districts of the Kiev and Vinnytsia oblasts. The displacement was to affect all families from individual households and members of kolkhozes whose presence in the border region was considered unpredictable and suspicious (CDAHOУ, F. 1, SER. 16, CS. 11, SHT. 316).

On 23 December, Stanisław Kosior (who actually had Polish origins), head of the communist party of Ukraine, sent Stalin a comprehensive plan of and the explanation of the reasoning behind this displacement operation, requesting approval. The plan provided for clearing the border region over two stages, consisting in 1) purging said region of the anti-Soviet element, as defined by the NKVD, and moving it north (around 2,000 households were to be affected) and 2) the displacement from the border regions to eastern oblasts of Ukraine of unpredictable persons from individual holdings, as well as certain kolkhozniks, totaling between 8,000 and 9,000 families. In his missive to Moscow, Kosior particularly emphasized the tense situation in three districts: Novohrad-Volynskyi and Markhlevsk, which were most densely-populated by Poles, as well as Pulyny, inhabited by Germans. In late December 1934, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party approved the Ukrainian party’s proposal to purge the border regions of unpredictable inhabitants, primarily Poles and Germans (Dönninghaus, 2011, p. 530).

In order to execute this operation, a decision was made to send representatives to the border regions to lay the groundwork. They were members of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian communist party, the NKVD, as well as of the Kiev Military District, which had full or par-

tial authority over the villages bordering the military facilities of the UR of the Stalin Line. Together with the local authorities, they were to select the villages and compile lists of names of the families to be deported. As already mentioned, the first groups to be deported were the Poles and the Germans living there in large numbers, including those who had failed to supply the obligatory quotas of farming produce to the state, as well as the enemies of the kolkhoz system and politically-unpredictable and anti-Soviet individuals (CДАХОУ, F. 1, SER. 16, CS. 11, SHТ. 316; Stępień, 1999, p. 270).

The next step toward executing the planned displacements was the 2 January 1935 joint resolution of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian communist party and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, "On the displacement of the inhabitants of the border region." This document stipulated the depopulation of 8,000 households in western Ukraine and populating them with people from 4,000 households in eastern Ukraine. A relevant joint party-government decision was made on 21 January. A special party-government commission, headed by Ilya Shelehes, secretary of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian communist party, was appointed to enforce the order. On 23 January, the Politburo increased the number of the households to be depopulated to 8,300, leaving unchanged the number of the 4,000 households of "the better kolkhozniks from the Kiev and Chernihiv oblasts" (SHТ. 39). Said commission was given the deadline of 27 January to draw up a detailed plan of the displacements and to specify their timeline, since the operation was to be launched no later than on 20 February. In addition, it was decided that starting on 13 February, the inhabitants selected for deportation would be notified that they would be displaced "to remote regions, given their passivity in fortifying the border and the kolkhozes" (SHТ. 39). As a consolation, the affected kolkhoz holdings were granted tax exemption for 1935 and for the previous years, in the case of any outstanding payments. Individual farmers did not qualify for this relief, but their obligatory quota of meat supply was reduced by 50% (SHТ. 40). Interestingly, those who wished to join kolkhozes in their new places of residence were allowed to submit relevant applications to transport overseers on the trains.

The documents preserved indicate that while selecting the families to be displaced from Polish villages, the НКВД considered the following criteria: (1) Polish counterrevolutionary nationalist element; (2) ecclesiastical activists; (3) counterrevolutionary kulak element; (4) ties to Poland and suspected espionage; (5) organizers and beneficiaries of "Hitlerite help"⁴; (6) contacts with the consulate; (7) former soldiers of Petliura's

4 The material aid sent by Germany during the Great Famine of 1932–1933. It was also received by the Poles who lived in the same villages as Germans.

and Sokolovsky's armies⁵; (8) former nobility; (9) former landowners; (10) persons involved in anti-Soviet propaganda; (11) persons acting to the detriment of a kolkhoz; (12) former smugglers; (13) former gendarmes; (14) former members of the Polish Military Organization; (15) the Galicians (DAZHO, F. 87, SER. 1, CS. 3, SHT. 26).⁶ As can be seen, the panoply of "transgressions and crimes" was so wide that it could practically apply to every villager in Volhynia and Podolia.

It has to be noted that setting up the deportations was progressing rather smoothly. For the purposes of executing the displacement in the oblast and its districts, relevant commissions were appointed. Facing the heaviest workloads were regional commissions, composed of the secretary of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), the chairman of the regional executive committee, and the NKVD head. These commissions selected families and compiled their lists, according to the numbers received from the oblast, and additionally ensured that the families and their properties would be delivered to train depots. Each transport took 100 families with all their belongings. The transport overseer was assigned two aides, between ten and twelve armed guards, a doctor, a nurse, and a veterinarian. For fear of people escaping to Poland, the NKVD bureaus were ordered to tighten security and surveillance at the border patrol group sections 19 (Olevsk), 20 (Slavuta), and 21 (Voločysk). In addition, on the pretext of exercises, military units and 700 militiamen were deployed to the villages and districts subject to deportations to maintain order and provide assistance so that the operation would proceed unobstructed (CDAHOV, F. 1, SER. 16, CS. 12, SHT. 44).

The figures established show that between 20 February and 10 March 1935, displaced from 23 border districts of the Kiev and Vinnytsia oblasts were 8,329 families, including 5,475 from the Kiev oblast and 2,854 from the Vinnytsia oblast. Among the deportees were 2,866 Polish, 1,903 German, and 3,434 Ukrainian families, as well as 126 families of other nationalities (Yefimenko, 2013, pp. 150–151; Rybak, 2012, pp. 326–327).⁷ The same totals are also quoted in publications on the fates of the Germans in Ukraine, which state that making up the 8,329 families were 41,650 persons (Yevtukh & Chyrko, 1994, p. 47).

5 Soldiers of Symon Petliura's army and of Dmytro Sokolovsky's anti-Bolshevik partisan force, who fought against the Bolsheviks together with Józef Piłsudski's army in 1920.

6 Former inhabitants of Western Galicia who made their way to the USSR.

7 Similar numbers are also provided by German researcher Victor Dönninghaus (Dönninghaus, 2011, p. 531), who, referring to Russian sources, writes about the displacement of 41,650 people (8,329 families), with Poles (from 2,886 families) making up approximately 60% of this number. Some Ukrainian scholars (e.g. Podkur, 2014, p. 25) quote slightly different totals, with the number of deported families standing at 8,342.

It has to be added that aside from the deportations to eastern oblasts of Ukraine, “kulaks and anti-Soviet element” were deported outside the republic in early February 1935: these people were moved north, to the so-called White Sea-Baltic Combine, referred to as the Belbaltkombinat (Smirnov, 1998).⁸ Overall, selected for deportation at that time were 2,000 families (8,678 persons), whose nationality composition was as follows: 681 Poles, 615 Germans, 589 Ukrainians, and 115 persons of other nationalities (Yefimenko, 2013, p. 149).

The next wave of deportations took place in fall 1935. This time, it was insisted that only Poles be displaced. In early September, Vsevolod Balitsky, head of the Ukrainian НКВД, approached Stanisław Kosior and Pavel Postyshev, leaders of the Ukrainian communist party, with the idea of depopulating another 300 households belonging to “hostile and unpredictable element” from the Markhlevsk district, which was part of the Kiev oblast, and moving them to the Kharkov oblast, as well as 50 households of “the most dangerous anti-Soviet element,” which was to be displaced to the White Sea-Baltic Combine (СДАХОУ, F. 1, SER. 16, CS. 12, SHT. 268; Rybak, 2012, p. 328). According to the preserved documentation, people, together with their belongings and livestock, were deported to the Kharkov oblast on three transports between 30 September and 3 October 1935. A total of 306 families (1,668 persons) were affected, including 287 Polish, 7 German and 11 Ukrainian families, plus one “Halych” family. The number of children displaced is noteworthy, standing at 768 (ДАЗХО, F. 87, SER. 1, CS. 3, SHT. 32–33). Their deportation resulted not only in the reduction of the number of school grades, but also in schools being closed down or merged. The documents also indicate that the deportees took with them their property, including 243 cows and 50 horses (SHT. 33).

The tendency to displace Polish families only was even more prominent in fall 1935 in the Vinnytsia oblast. In late October 1935, Volodymyr Chernyavsky, the secretary of the local party committee, sent the following to Nikolay Popov, secretary of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian communist party:

In the Vinnytsia oblast, especially in the border districts, located on the frontline, a significant number of Poles have settled. Among them are persons suspected of espionage, former

⁸ The Belbatkombinat was a special camp controlled by the Joint State Political Directorate of the USSR established in 1933, whose inmates were political prisoners and common criminals tasked with the maintenance of the White Sea-Baltic Canal, which was built between 1931 and 1933. The camp was headquartered in the town of Medvezhyegorsk. The dispossessed farmers and hired workers brought there worked with a view to enhancing the canal’s environs, a job which consisted in clearing the forests, extracting raw materials, and building plants, harbors, shipyards, powerhouses, and farms.

smugglers, families of refugees, religious activists, and a similar counterrevolutionary element constituting the cornerstone of the enemy's operations in our backyard (СДАХОУ, F. 1, SER. 16, CS. 12, SHT. 343).

The dignitary was asking his superiors to greenlight the operation of the deportation of 1,500 Polish families to eastern oblasts of Ukraine, with the following number of families to be displaced from each district: Horodok – 250, Ploskirov – 150, Shepetivka – 150, Volochysk – 150, Antoninsk – 100, Pluzhansk – 100, Sataniv – 100, Slavuta – 100, Teofipol – 100, Iziaslav – 100, Berezivka – 100, Bazaliya – 50, Koziatyn – 50 (SHT. 343).

In addition, it was requested that the decision-making process concerning deportation be expedited, so that the operation could be carried out before the cold period, but the actual developments were slightly different. On 4 November 1935, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian communist party adopted a relevant resolution and granted the request from Vinnytsia, but the necessary order of the Soviet Ukraine government was only issued a month later, under the title “On the deportation of 1,500 households from the Vinnytsia oblast.” The actual displacements took place between 5 and 15 January 1936, that is, at the peak of the freezing-cold weather (SHT. 354). Undoubtedly, these circumstances only added to the aggravation of the deportees.

More details concerning the operation can be gleaned from the information on the Horodok district. The entities fully responsible for carrying out the action were the district committee of the Bolshevik party and the local НКВД. The families selected for deportation were notified of the operation and all relevant details a week before the departure of their transports. Local activists were used, a thousand of whom had been mobilized by the district party committee and tasked with agitation efforts, protection of the deportees' property, delivering them to the train depots, and preventing escapes and any unrest.

The 250 Polish families selected were loaded on a transport and ferried off between 10 and 13 January 1936 from the Wiktoria and Skibiniewo train depots. These families came from the following villages: Balakyry – 16 families, Felsztyn [now Skelivka] – 23, Horodok – 53, Heletyntsi – 18, Ludvipol – 28, Markhlevka – 17, Naftulivka – 14, Nemyryntsi – 33, Varyvtsi – 13, Zhuchkivtsi – 16, Zhyshchyntsi – 19 (ДАВО, F. P-136, SER. 3, CS. 372, SHT. 1). A total of 1,089 persons were deported, including 305 men, 349 women, and 435 children. They were taken to the train depot on 1,188 carts and placed, together with their property, on three transports consisting of 105 cars in total. 650 tons worth of personal belongings and equipment were loaded, plus 24 horses, 60 cows, 25 pigs, 3 goats, 980 hens, and others (SHT. 1).

Archival materials suggest that the deportation caused major uproar among the population. On learning the names of the families selected, people usually asked, “Why are they deporting Poles only?” (Naftulivka,

Zhuchkivtsi), and concluded that “they’ll send off all the Poles soon, for sure” (Naftulivka, Nemyryntsi) (СНТ. 3). In some villages, futile attempts were made to resist the displacement or even to flee. For example, one Mr. Rudnicki from Zhuchkivtsi and one Mr. Deruga from Felsztyn had escaped, but after a few days, they decided to report to the depot and re-join their families, whom – as fathers and husbands – they could not leave in a lurch (СНТ. 3). Interestingly, no cases were recorded of escapes across the nearby border on the river Zbruch to the neighboring Poland. Apparently, the Soviets had tightened security on the Polish border, which may have been a lesson learned from the Great Famine period of 1932–1933, when desperate people were fleeing into Poland to beat repressions and the death of hunger (Stroński, 2019, pp. 198–200).

As already mentioned, the deportees were sent to 39 districts in eastern Ukraine: these were 9 districts in the Kharkov oblast (2,540 households), 14 in the Dnipropetrovsk oblast (3,800), and 16 in the Donetsk oblast (3,130). The overall number of households stood at 9,470, which was 1,170 more than previously indicated in the joint party-government resolution (СДАХОУ, F. 1, SER. 16, CS. 12, СНТ. 45; see also: Yefimenko & Yakubova, 2012, p. 257). These figures allow for concluding that around 47,000 people were deported, with Polish families accounting for at least 42% of this number.

Said resolution, jointly adopted by the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Bolshevik party and the Council of People’s Commissars of the USSR under the title “On the displacement of people from the border regions,” provided that the better quarters in the new place of residence would be given to those kolkhozniks and individual farmers who would apply for being assigned to a kolkhoz during the transport. In addition, kolkhozniks were also given formal titles to houses, while individual farmers could only lease them, regardless of the property they had left behind. It has to be added that these dwellings in the eastern oblasts were houses formerly belonging to Ukrainian peasants who died of hunger between 1932 and 1933.

Interestingly, the document under scrutiny reads that should a need arise, Polish and German grades in local schools could be formed for Poles and Germans, and to that end, teachers from border regions could even be brought in. However, there is no evidence in documentation that such grades in local Ukrainian or Russian schools were actually established. In all likelihood, this did not happen, since in 1935, Polish schools and other cultural-educational establishments started to be closed down (Stroński, 1998, pp. 141–157).

In all probability, the families displaced to eastern oblasts of the Soviet Ukraine were under no strict obligation to stay in their new places of residence, and they were only barred from returning to their homes. Some of the Poles were hired in the local kolkhozes, while others worked in the nearby industrial cities. However, it soon turned out that the authorities had not forgotten about the Polish origins of these people. In the

period of the Great Terror between 1937 and 1938, in the course of the so-called Polish action, a non-trivial number of men were arrested, sent to gulags, or executed.

One of them was a *kolkhoznik* by the name of Dominik Szaciło, born in 1894, a former speaker of the rural council in the village of Vily in the Kiev oblast, whose family was deported to the village of Mokrianka in the Krasnohrad district, Kharkov oblast. On 20 November, together with other men from the former Markhlevsk district, he was arrested, and on 19 December, pursuant to the order of the People's Commissar of the USSR NKVD and USSR attorney general, he was executed by firing squad for his alleged membership in a Polish counterrevolutionary organization. He was outlived by his wife and four children.⁹

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Based on the documents quoted, it can be concluded that around 47,000 people living in the Soviet Ukraine were deported in 1935, either to eastern oblasts of the republic or across its borders. The deportations of 1935 proved to be the first steps taken by the authorities after removing people from their permanent dwellings, when the considerations of nationality came to the fore. It is true that classifying families as the “anti-Soviet nationalist element” was always an important criterion, and local NKVD cells were even tasked with digging dirt on people so that they could be selected for deportation. However, it stands to reason that the latter considerations were not crucial at the time. The Soviet authorities took an irrevocable, firm decision to both remove all Poles and Germans from the western districts, and to liquidate the Polish autonomous region. The events described corroborate this hypothesis. We are looking at the first large-scale operation of removing the population of a territory informed by not just social, but also nationality factors. Stalin's totalitarian government continued these policies in subsequent years. As soon as in 1936, the same regions saw the deportations of around 70,000 Poles and Germans to Kazakhstan, who were shortly followed by representatives of other nationalities: Koreans from the Far East, Volga Germans, Crimea Tatars, Chechens, and the Ingush.

(transl. by Maciej Grabski)

⁹ Documents concerning the legal rehabilitation of Dominik Szaciło, made available to the author by Maria Łagowska from Zhytomyr, Szaciło's daughter.

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