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Ideological basis of Polish citizens resettlement from the Eastern Borderlands in the years 1944-1946

On 27 July 1944, a few days after its creation, Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN – Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego), acting upon consent from the Polish Workers’ Party, has signed a Polish-Soviet agreement establishing the new borderline of Poland, with the special regard to the border between Poland and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics¹. The official agreement on the revision of this particular border was signed but a year later, on 16 August 1945². As a result, Poland has irrevocably lost its former territories on the East of the Curzon Line³. Due to a sudden geographical and political change, thousands of Polish citizens found themselves outside their own country. The immediate consequence of the aforementioned agreement was the signing of three subsequent documents, known as ‘republican agreements’, concluded between Poland and Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic and Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic on 9 September 1944, and with Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic on 22 September 1944. According to the authors of the dossier entitled “Przesiedlenie ludności polskiej z Kresów Wschodnich do Polski 1944-1947” [*Resettlement of Polish people from the Eastern Borderlands to Poland in the years 1944-1947*]:

“The agreements differed only in the geographical scope of their enforcement, the organization of the resettlement apparatus, and the dates of enforcement”⁴.

Three Soviet republics and Poland consented to the mutual repatriation of their citizens who, as a result of the shift of the borders, of warfare or for other reasons, found themselves on the ‘inappropriate’ side of the newly established demarcation line.

Eastern Borderlands

The Polish term ‘Kresy’ (the Eastern Borderlands), used in the title and recurring in the present work, is understood by most Poles, and particularly by historians, in the terms of the territories on the very East of Poland.

According to the dictionary of Polish terms and expressions, the word ‘kresy’ itself means *borderland territories*⁵. Stanisław Ciesielski adds that it is a territory (...) *on the periphery of the specific civilization centers (...), at the intersections of countries and nations; (...) on Polish/Lithuanian, Polish/Belarusian, Polish/Ukrainian borderlands and also, rarely mentioned, on Belarusian/Lithuanian and*

¹ Alicja Paczoska, *Dzieci Jalty. Exodus ludności polskiej z Wileńszczyzny w latach 1944-1947* (Toruń, Marszałek, 2002), 77.

² Paczoska, *Dzieci Jalty*, 88; Dorota Sula, *Działalność przesiedleńczo-repatriacyjna Państwowego Urzędu Repatriacyjnego w latach 1944-1951* (Lublin: KUL, 2002), 58.

³ With only a few amendments in favor of the Polish, like exchange of Sokal area for Ustrzyki Dolne: “Porozumienie zawarte między PKWN a rządem ZSRR w sprawie granic Polski” in *Stosunki polsko-radzieckie 1917-1945. Dokumenty i materiały*, ed. Tadeusz Cieślak (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1967), 399-400; *Przesiedlenie ludności polskiej z Kresów Wschodnich do Polski 1944-1947*, ed. Stanisław Ciesielski (Warszawa: Neriton, 1999), 13.

⁴ *Przesiedlenie ludności polskiej z Kresów Wschodnich*, ed. Ciesielski, 62.

⁵ *Słownik języka polskiego*, ed. M. Szymczak (Warszawa: PWN, 1994).

*Belarusian/Ukrainian borderlands*⁶. The aforementioned territories should be treated in a particular way, as even if some of them may be referred to as a periphery of civilization, such cities as Lvov or Vilnius are certainly not peripheral at all⁷.

Understanding of the territorial scope of the Eastern Borderlands varies on the basis of the period that is taken into account. Describing repatriations from the Eastern Borderlands in the years 1944-1946, the author of the present work refers to the interwar meaning of this term, i.e. the territory which comprised nowogrodzkie, poleskie, stanisławowskie, tarnopolskie, wileńskie, wołyńskie and partially białostockie and lwowskie provinces: S. Ciesielski notices that (...) *only tarnopolskie and stanisławowskie provinces constituted a component of the old understanding of the term 'Polish Borderlands' dating from before the Partitions of Poland*⁸, as only these provinces lied sufficiently eastwards for the inhabitants of the Second Polish Republic to call them in this special way.

The author of the present work decided to adopt this concise definition, restricting the use of the term 'Eastern Borderlands' to the territories between the Polish/Soviet border established on 18 March 1921 by the Treaty of Riga on the East and the Polish/Soviet border established on 16 August 1945 by the agreement on demarcation line on the West. More precisely, this term will be used to describe the territories that were lost in 1944 by the Second Republic of Poland to the Soviet Union.

New borders

Pursuant to the agreements concluded, the citizens of each of the signatory states had the right to be voluntarily⁹ repatriated to their motherland: Poles to Poland, Belarusians to BSSR, Lithuanians to LSSR, Ukrainians to USSR. Interestingly enough, the agreements did not provide the possibility to transfer Belarusians, Lithuanians, or Ukrainians who used to be Polish citizens before 17 September 1939 to Poland. According to the text in question, the most important were obviously the clauses on the repatriation of (...) *Poles and Jews who used to be Polish citizens before 17 September 1939, living (...)*¹⁰ on the territory of the Eastern Borderlands, and the clauses on *the change of Soviet citizenship of people of Polish and Jewish origin living in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*¹¹, who obtained it after 17 September 1939.

Jan Czerniakiewicz burdened himself with the task of thorough analysis of the pre-war Polish National Censuses. Pointing out the flaws and methodological mistakes, he managed to establish the number of the inhabitants of Eastern Borderlands from 1 September 1939 for 11 584 764 persons, 36% (4 222 037 persons¹²) of whom were Polish. The data was confirmed by D. Sula, who established the number of inhabitants of the Eastern Borderlands for 10 924 800 persons, only 4 million (36%) of which were Polish¹³. Czerniakiewicz also gives the number of Jews inhabiting the 'Stolen Lands' at the beginning of the war: 1 156 366 people¹⁴. Unfortunately, none of the works read by the author of the present text provided the repartition of the population of the Eastern Borderlands with the regard to the given provinces or the territories later incorporated into Soviet republics.

While analyzing the data, one has to bear in mind, as states Czerniakiewicz, that biological losses during the war are difficult to avoid. It is also advisable to take voluntary and forced

⁶ Stanisław Ciesielski, "Kresy Wschodnie – dynamika przemian narodowościowych" in *Kresy Wschodnie II Rzeczypospolitej. Przekształcenia struktury narodowościowej 1931-1948*, ed. Stanisław Ciesielski, (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2005), 7-9.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹ *Przesiedlenie ludności polskiej z Kresów Wschodnich*, ed. Ciesielski, 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹¹ Archiwum Akt Nowych [The Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw], record *Generalny Pełnomocnik do spraw Repatriacji w Warszawie*, file 1, 16.

¹² Jan Czerniakiewicz, *Repatriacja ludności polskiej z ZSRR 1944-1948* (Warszawa: PWN, 1987), 51.

¹³ Sula, *Działalność PUR*, 59.

¹⁴ Czerniakiewicz, *Repatriacja ludności polskiej z ZSRR*, 51.

migration into consideration. According to the Czerniakiewicz's estimation, on the day of signing of the agreement on repatriation, there were 2,5 million persons living on the territory of the Eastern Borderlands who, pursuant to the agreement, became subjected to the repatriation to Poland¹⁵.

Repatriation, evacuation or deportation?

Migrations¹⁶ of the civil population from the Eastern Borderlands to Poland that took place in the years 1944-1946 are commonly referred to as 'repatriation' in most of the archival documents as well as contemporary historiography¹⁷. The period itself is also called 'the first repatriation', by analogy to 'the second repatriation' of the years 1955-1959¹⁸. The resettlement at the end of the 1950s. concerned Polish political prisoners deported to the Soviet forced labor camps from 1939 and Polish inhabitants of the Eastern Borderlands who had not managed to evacuate from BSSR, LSSR and USSR during the first wave of resettlement.

The term 'repatriation' is used interchangeably with 'resettlement' and 'evacuation', but rarely with 'deportation'. This is not a historians' invention. The terms, as well as rule of interchangeability, stem from the documents issued by the agents responsible for the registration and transport of Poles from the Eastern Borderlands to the Republic of Poland.

Evacuation or repatriation?

In all three waves of resettlement, agreed upon in September 1944 by the state of Poland and the concerned republics of the Soviet Union, appears the term 'evacuation'. Poles, Belarusians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians were to be 'evacuated', which was considered to be a *voluntary* process. The word 'resettlement' was used only a few times. 'Repatriation' does not appear in the documents in question¹⁹.

It is highly probable that the terminological confusion arose in relation to the title of an institution created by the means of a Polish Committee of National Liberation decree of 7 October 1944, namely the National Repatriation Agency²⁰, the head of which was Władysław Wolski. Initially, the scope of actions of the Agency featured: the organization and supervision of the resettlement process on the territories of Poland, creation of the infrastructure which would facilitate the accommodation of the migrants (the so-called 'staging areas'), provision of the sanitary infrastructure and food supplies during the transport, and, last but not least, general support for the citizens after the settlement in their final destination²¹.

It should be pointed out that the National Repatriation Agency was not the only institution responsible for the repatriation of Poles. Three separate posts of the General Representative in Charge of Evacuation were created on the territory of the Eastern Borderlines, in three Social Republics (BSSR, LSSR and USSR). The appointed officers were responsible for

¹⁵ Ibid., 53.

¹⁶ Reflections on the term 'migration' presented D. Stola in the methodology introduction to his latest book: Dariusz Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia? Migracje z Polski 1949-1989* (Warszawa: ISP PAN, 2010), 11-14.

¹⁷ For example: AAN, record *Generalny Pełnomocnik w Warszawie*, files 3, 14, 21; AAN, record *Główny Pełnomocnik Rządu RP do spraw Ewakuacji Ludności Polskiej z LSRR w Wilnie*, files 9, 11/1, 29, 51; Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych [Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Polish Republic], files: 6/29/447, 6/31/481, 6/32/502, 22/10/246, 22/10/252, 22/10/256; Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej [Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance], files: 01258/128, 01256/817, 1572/1080 and all studies, books and articles used in this article.

¹⁸ Małgorzata Ruchniewicz, "Tzw. repatriacja ludności polskiej z ZSRR w latach 1955-1959", *Dzieje najnowsze* 2 (1999), 171; Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia?*, 81.

¹⁹ *Przesiedlenie ludności polskiej z Kresów Wschodnich*, ed. Ciesielski, 55-61.

²⁰ *Dziennik Ustaw* [Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland] 7 (1944), 32.

²¹ Krystyna Kersten, *Repatriacja ludności polskiej po II wojnie światowej (studium historyczne)* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1974), 90; Czerniakiewicz, *Repatriacja ludności polskiej z ZSRR*, 34-35; *Dziennik Ustaw* 7 (1944), 32.

arbitrating all disputes during the entire evacuation process²². All actions of General Representatives were governed by the PKWN General Representative in Charge of Evacuation²³ run by Władysław Wolski, also in the capacity of the president of the National Repatriation Agency²⁴. The fact that Wolski held two posts at the same time was one of the reasons why the National Repatriation Agency lost its importance to the General Representative. Eventually, the power of the institution has been limited to the territory of Poland. As a result of various doubtful political decisions, National Repatriation Agency has been incorporated into the structures of the Ministry of Regained Territories²⁵.

The administration of the General Representative was reorganized in August 1945, after adding to its power the prerogatives of the National Repatriation Agency, i.e. the control of the repatriation of Poles, both from the USSR and from broadly defined ‘western countries’. Enlarging the scope of activities entailed not only the change of the name for the High Representative of the Government for Repatriation, but also a division of bureaucratic structures into two institutions: the first in charge of repatriation from USSR, the second responsible for coordination of migration from other countries²⁶.

Repatriation or deportation?

Initially the term ‘evacuation’ was considered to be official by Polish authorities responsible for resettlement²⁷. However, if one reads carefully the documents issued by the Representatives, clear is the conclusion that the term ‘repatriation’ started to become more and more popular in relation to Polish citizens covered by the ‘republican agreements’²⁸. The term ‘refugees’ was gradually getting out of use and it referred mostly to war migrations before the first half of 1944.

The term ‘repatriation’ was starting to replace ‘evacuation’, also in official contexts. In August 1945 the name ‘General Representative for Evacuation of the Provisional Government of National Unity’ was changed to ‘High Representative for Repatriation of the Republic of Poland’²⁹. It can be assumed that the term ‘evacuation’ started to provoke negative associations. In foreign terms dictionaries it refers to: *the transport of population (...) from the territory endangered by the enemy (...) or affected by a natural disaster*. All three dictionaries consulted in order to resolve this terminological problem were unanimous on the meaning of the word ‘evacuation’³⁰. This term did not fit the communist propaganda, as it implied that Poles transported from the Eastern Borderlands were in danger: due to the actions of the enemy, war or a natural disaster. This

²² “Układ między PKWN a rządem LSRR o przesiedleniu ludności litewskiej z terytorium Polski do LSRR i obywateli polskich z terytorium LSRR do Polski” in *Przesiedlenie ludności polskiej z Kresów Wschodnich*, ed. Ciesielski, 55-61; see also: Archiwum Akt Nowych, record *Główny Pełnomocnik w Wilnie*, file 1, 2-10.

²³ The name of General Representative in Charge of Evacuation office has evolved over time, with changes names of the Polish government: PKWN General Representative in Charge of Evacuation, Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland General Representative in Charge of Evacuation. Provisional Government of National Unity General Representative in Charge of Evacuation; *Przesiedlenie ludności polskiej z Kresów Wschodnich*, ed. Ciesielski, 15-16.

²⁴ Kersten *Repatriacje ludności polskiej po II wojnie światowej*, 91, footnote 106.

²⁵ *Przesiedlenie ludności polskiej z Kresów Wschodnich*, ed. Ciesielski, 16-17.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 15-16; Kersten *Repatriacje ludności polskiej po II wojnie światowej*, 91.

²⁷ In the treaties signed between the Polish and the BSSR, USSR and LSSR word ‘repatriation’ does not appear even once and word ‘evacuation’ is used thirty seven times. Word ‘resettlement’ appears twice. Later on word ‘evacuation’ is increasingly replaced by ‘repatriation’ – AAN, *Generalny Pełnomocnik w Warszawie*, file 1, 16-21.

²⁸ Janina Hera, “Losy ekspatriantów z Kresów po zakończeniu wojny” in *Exodus. Deportacje i migracje (Wątek wschodni). Stan i perspektywy badań*, ed. Marcin Zwolski (Warszawa-Białystok: IPN, 2008), 117.

²⁹ Archiwum Akt Nowych, characteristics of the archival record *Generalny Pełnomocnik Rządu R.P. do spraw Ewakuacji w Warszawie*, ed. Janusz Wasiak; see also: Krzysztof Jodczyk, “Migracje Polaków z Wileńszczyzny na powojenne terytorium Polski (1945-1959)” in *Exodus. Deportacje i migracje (Wątek wschodni). Stan i perspektywy badań*, ed. Marcin Zwolski (Warszawa-Białystok: IPN, 2008), 143.

³⁰ Władysław Kopański, *Słownik wyrazów obcych i zwrotów obcojęzycznych z almanachem* (Warszawa: PWN, 1994); *Wielki Słownik wyrazów obcych PWN*, ed. Mirosław Bańko (Warszawa: PWN, 2005); *Słownik wyrazów obcych*, ed. W. Głuch (Warszawa: PWN, 2001).

terminology satisfied the anti-communist and anti-socialist propaganda, as it featured a hint of suggestion that the Soviet Union, its institutional apparatus and, above all, NKVD constituted a threat to Polish citizens inhabiting the territory of the Eastern Borderlands and the main reason to evacuate them outside the USSR to their safe homeland.

The change of the name seemed to be justified from the political and social perspective (or, as it is said nowadays: by marketing reasons) but the choice of the new word was quite unfortunate. There are no documents explaining such decision. It is only a guess that maybe the decision-makers, willing to break up with ‘evacuation’, wanted to standardize the terminology by using the name of the already existing institution: the National Repatriation Agency, but this name was only partially relevant. Initially, this institution dealt with the movements understood as ‘repatriation’ quoted in the dictionaries above. It organized and assisted the return of Polish citizens from the ‘western countries’, including those returning from the army, from the ‘voluntary emigration’, and from camps or other forced labor institutions. Apart from that, it dealt with Poles evacuated from the East who were leaving their former homeland on *voluntary or involuntary basis*³¹.

According to foreign terms dictionaries, ‘repatriation’ covers *the coming back of repatriates (prisoners of war, internees, resettled refugees) to their homeland*³² as well as *the return of the evacuated (...) who, under various circumstances, have found themselves temporarily outside their country of origin*³³. A repatriate is a person who has been evacuated due to some danger and now comes back to his homeland. However, these definitions have nothing to do with the real situation of people evacuated from the Eastern Borderlands. They were not staying literally outside their homeland, not temporarily, not in a foreign country and not as a result of any form of migration or evacuation. The only thing that moved after the signing of the international treaties was the Polish/Soviet border. As a consequence of a few signatures, inhabitants of Polish Borderlands, even if they did not move an inch, found themselves on a territory of a foreign country³⁴. This was aptly described by M. Ruchniewicz, who presents the situation of Poles repatriated after 1944 in a figurative way: *(...) Poles from the former Eastern Borderlands have never left Poland. We can rather say that it was Poland who left them by separating their homeland from the rest of the country*³⁵.

The signing of the ‘republican agreements’ triggered the migration of thousands of Polish citizens. In theory, the evacuation or repatriation was of voluntary character. Despite that, Polish-speaking inhabitants of the Eastern Borderlands were under much pressure to leave the territory of Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine³⁶. It concerned especially intelligentsia, bourgeoisie and the owners of large portions of the land. The situation of the broadly defined group of specialists (engineers, architects, craftsmen etc.), with the particular regard to the crofters, was completely different, in particular in Lithuania. More detailed descriptions and appropriate examples will be introduced further in this text.

Although some inhabitants of the Eastern Borderlands decided to migrate, at least in theory, voluntarily, applying for an evacuation card, in practice they were running away from persecution, imprisonment, crimes of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army or other informal military groups who were hunting Poles. Dariusz Stodola brings back his memories in the following words: *(...) those departures weren't obligatory but somehow forced upon people and emigrants were rather refugees than the resettled*³⁷. What term can be used to describe this kind of mass migration? The already enumerated ‘evacuation’ and ‘migration’ do not describe the complexity of the process. It

³¹ Hera, “Losy ekspatriantów z Kresów”, 119.

³² Kopański, *Słownik wyrazów obcych*.

³³ *Słownik wyrazów obcych*, ed. Gluch.

³⁴ For absolutely no justification for use of word “repatriation” points out M. Ruchniewicz (Ruchniewicz, *Tzw. repatriacja*, 171-172) and M. Zaremba (Marcin Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce* (Warszawa: Trio, 2005), 241.

³⁵ Ruchniewicz, *Tzw. repatriacja...*, s. 172.

³⁶ Hera, *Losy ekspatriantów z Kresów*, 114-117.

³⁷ Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia?*, 23-24.

also was not an emigration, as the people were not meant to settle in any foreign country; they were heading to Poland. It cannot be called deportation either because, in theory, the resettlement was a matter of choice.

Repatriation or expatriation?

The best term to describe the migration movement supported by the Polish state would probably be ‘expatriation’. The first reference appeared in the book by K. Kerster „Repatriacje ludności polskiej po II wojnie światowej” [*Repatriation of Polish population after the Second World War*]³⁸. In the first half of the 1960s, this well-known historian participated in the discussion on terminology used to describe migrations of 1944-1946 and 1955-1959³⁹.

The terms ‘expatriation’ and ‘an expatriate’ seem to describe in a precise way the situation on the Eastern Borderlands in the years 1944-1946. Poles who were evacuated were indeed coming back to their homeland but also coming back from their homeland; theoretically not from abroad, but from their home country (even if no longer existing) to their own country. This intricate term was created by replacing the prefix ‘re-’ by the prefix ‘ex-’ and it suits the migration of Poles from Eastern Borderlands perfectly.

This is obviously a term forged many years after the events. At the time, the term used was ‘repatriation’: a voluntary migration movement of the citizens who wanted to return to their homeland. It was already in 1945 that the censors from the Agency for the Control of the Press, Publications and Shows started to change ‘evacuation’ for ‘repatriation’⁴⁰. According to the official doctrine, neither USSR nor any of Soviet republics had expelled or forced any Polish or other citizens to leave, but all parties involved, people from the Representative’s office on one hand and the evacuees on the other, knew the truth.

Internationalism and the nation-state

Marxism-Leninism was the leading political and philosophical doctrine which should have provided, at least in theory, the decision-makers of the USSR with the grounds for their doings. Moreover, one of its most prominent directions was defined by the ideology of internationalism, which, as it can be easily stated with no further reflection on the nature of this ideology, was highly inconsistent with the assumptions of Stalin’s policy on the future of Polish citizens living on the East of Curzon Line. Maybe it is worthwhile to ask oneself a question why Stalin was so determined to purge the Eastern Borderlands, now under the rule of Soviets, of all Polish? Especially in the context of the October Revolution, whose leaders have previously openly preached internationalism, universal equality of the working masses using one, universal language, united under the red banner of communism and world’s revolution? Have Stalin forsaken all those ideas deciding to deport the majority of Polish from the territory of Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine?

Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin on state and nation

This question is preliminarily treated in three classic works of the practitioners of communism⁴¹: in Lenin’s “The State and Revolution. The Marxist Theory of the state and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution”⁴² and in two articles by Stalin: “Marxism and the National Question”⁴³ and “The National Questions and Leninism. Reply to Comrades Meshkov,

³⁸ Kersten *Repatriacja*, 33-35.

³⁹ Ruchniewicz, *Tzw. repatriacja*, 172.

⁴⁰ Hera, *Losy ekspatriantów z Kresów*, 118.

⁴¹ Krzysztof Tyszka, *Nacjonalizm w komunizmie. Ideologia narodowa w Związku Radzieckim i Polsce Ludowej* (Warszawa: IFiS PAN, 2004), 79.

⁴² Vladimir Lenin, “Państwo a rewolucja. Nauka marksizmu o państwie a zadania proletariatu w czasie rewolucji” in *Dzieła wszystkie*, vol. 33 (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1987), 3-113.

⁴³ Joseph Stalin, “Marksizm a kwestia narodowa” in Joseph Stalin, *Marksizm, a kwestia narodowa. Kwestia narodowa a leninizm* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1949), 5-80.

Kovalchuk, and Others”⁴⁴. Lenin’s work was published in 1918 and written not more than a year before. The first article by Stalin, considered by Lenin to be *quite satisfactory*⁴⁵, is dated for the turn of the year 1912 and the year 1913, and the second one for the year 1929, even though it has not been published until 1949. All of the abovementioned texts present the views of the true leaders of the political doctrine of communism which constituted the basis of Soviet Union’s policy for many years. The views in question are the proper ideas of Lenin and Stalin, as well as the views of largely quoted Marx and Engels, on such matters as state and statehood, nation and nationalism, so precious in the framework of the present sub-chapter and the featured analysis on the extent of consistency of the communist ideology and the repatriation of Poles from the Eastern Borderlands.

Contradictory to what may have seemed right, the actions of ‘the red tsar’ could not have been supported by the views of the fathers of the communist revolution. Frederick Engels, quoted by Lenin in “The State and Revolution”, claimed that *the state, first, divides its subjects according to territory*⁴⁶. However, one must bear in mind the idea quoted after K. Tyszka that Engels failed to develop a full and well-organized theory of the nation⁴⁷ and that without a precise definition of the national traits of the inhabitants of the state it would be rather difficult to define its statehood in the age of the nation-states. It was quite a gap in Marxist ideology, however quickly bridged by Joseph Stalin in 1913 in his article “Marxism and the National Question”, where he proposed and quite elaborately outlined⁴⁸ his structural⁴⁹ definition of the ‘nation’: *A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture*⁵⁰ but however *It is only when all these characteristics are present together that we have a nation*⁵¹.

Initially Stalin’s ideas were supposed to constitute a form of a political strategy and to be used as guidelines enabling Russian socialists to develop an interpretation of the national question. It was only later that the abovementioned definition started to be considered by the communists as basic⁵². As states L. Kolakowski(...) *It does not add anything to what Lenin had said on the question*⁵³.

In modern sociology such detailed and restrictive definitions are strongly discouraged and highly unpopular. According to J. Kurczewska:

“(…)the later the sociological theory of the nation or the sociology of the nation is, the longer gets the list of the characteristics featured and the more arbitrary seems the **cruciality** or the **substitutivity** of the trait in question”⁵⁴.

Hugh Seton-Watson went even further, claiming that *no scientific definition of a nation can be devised, yet the phenomenon has existed and exists*⁵⁵. Nevertheless, most researchers agree that:

⁴⁴ Joseph Stalin, “Kwestia narodowa a leninizm. Odpowiedź towarzyszom. Mieszkowowi, Kowalcukowi i innym” in Joseph Stalin, *Marxizm, a kwestia narodowa. Kwestia narodowa a leninizm* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1949), 87-109. No wonder that Lenin had positively evaluated the the work of Stalin. According to L. Kolakowski Stalin wrote this article inspired by Lenin (see: Leszek Kolakowski, *Główne nurty Marksizmu*, vol. 3 (Warszawa: PWN, 2009), 20).

⁴⁵ Stalin, *Marxizm a kwestia narodowa*, 4.

⁴⁶ Vladimir Lenin, *The State and the Revolution* (Chippendale: Resistance Books, 1999), 17

⁴⁷ Tyszka, *Nacjonalizm w komunizmie*, 43.

⁴⁸ Stalin, *Marxizm a kwestia narodowa*, 7-14.

⁴⁹ Joanna Kurczewska, “Naród” in *Encyklopedia socjologii*, ed. Henryk Domański et al. (Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 1999), 289.

⁵⁰ Joseph Stalin, “Marxism and the National Question” in Vladimir Lenin, *Marxism and Nationalism* (Chippendale: Resistance Books, 2002), 197.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵² Tyszka, *Nacjonalizm w komunizmie*, 86.

⁵³ Leszek Kolakowski, *Main currents of Marxism. Its Origins, Growth and Dissolution*, vol. 3, trans. Paul Stephen Falla (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 12.

⁵⁴ Kurczewska, “Naród”, 289.

“A nation is a form of a dynamic, supra-state, supra-stratum and supra-class community, historically-based and sharing common features(conditions) such as territory, state, language, and subjective traits expressed as a sense of awareness of being a member of a certain community, given the fact that at present the importance of the awareness factor is increasing”⁵⁶.

Stalin’s definition of nation included the component of ‘common territory’ but this single feature was not meant to determine the existence of the state as such. Stalin underlined the fact that the existence of a separate state shall not be included in the definition quoted above as the fifth distinctive feature of the nation. According to the communist leader, this idea *is profoundly mistaken and cannot be justified either theoretically or in practice, politically*⁵⁷.

However, all three thinkers, Stalin, Lenin and Engels agreed that the nation and the state, and so, to some extent, the nation-state could come into being only when a given group of people was given the chance to inhabit a given territory where the group could develop a common language, economic life and culture, and the state – its institutions and administration. This is why the start of the repatriation following the adoption and entering into effect of the decision on annexation of a part of Polish territory was fully justified from the ideological point of view. Stalin has described a similar situation in his article from 1913, the situation developed throughout the years in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, more specifically: the cultural-national autonomy proclaimed by Austrian Social-Democrats⁵⁸. Their program, supported by a well-known Austro-Marxist⁵⁹ theoretician Otto Bauer⁶⁰, featured the idea that the aforementioned autonomy shall be granted not to a certain country but to a given nationality such as Poles or Checks, regardless of the territory inhabited. Such approach would implicate the necessity of creation of the common national institutions covering only cultural and by no means political issues. As remarks L.Kołakowski, Lenin did not agree with this statement; he claimed that self-determination rule would not function properly if the nation would be denied the right to form its proper country⁶¹. Stalin shared this view, disapproving of Austrian approach to the national question: *National autonomy is contrary to the whole course of development of nations*⁶². Justifying his position, he asked: (...) *can they [the nations – Author’s notice] be artificially welded together if life, if economic development tears whole groups from them and disperses these groups over various regions?*⁶³. Given Stalin’s definition of the nation, the answer to such question cannot be positive. Again, quoting his own words:

“The advantage of regional [territorial] autonomy consists, first of all, in the fact that it does not deal with a fiction bereft of territory, but with a definite population inhabiting a definite territory”⁶⁴.

Following this view, a nation, in order to be able to develop and to create an independent country has to be composed of the individuals living on the same territory. As claimed by L. Kołakowski: (...) *Stalin argued for the right of the national self-determination and political separation on*

⁵⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2003), 3.

⁵⁶ Kurczewska, “Naród”, 288.

⁵⁷ Joseph Stalin, *The National Question and Leninism* (Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), 349.

⁵⁸ Stalin, *Marksizm a kwestia narodowa*, 35.

⁵⁹ Leszek Kołakowski, *Główne nurty marksizmu*, vol. 2 (Warszawa: PWN, 2009), 253.

⁶⁰ Kołakowski, *Główne nurty marksizmu*, vol. 2, 297-303; Melvin Croan, “The Politics of Marxist Sovietology: Otto Bauer’s Vision”, *The Journal of Politics* 21 (1959), 576.

⁶¹ Kołakowski, *Główne nurty marksizmu*, vol. 2, 410.

⁶² Stalin, “Marxism and the National Question”, 219.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Stalin, “Marxism and the National Question”, 243.

*a territorial basis*⁶⁵. Lenin, quoting Marx and Engels, speaks of democratic centralism and one, indivisible republic⁶⁶.

As a conclusion, it can be stated that from the point of view of the communist ideology, repatriation of Poles from the Eastern Borderlands was a justified move. According to Stalin's definition of the nation and the views of the leaders of the revolution on nation-states as territorial entities, Poles, who found themselves outside the territory of Poland after the shift of the borderline, have simply been sent back to their motherland.

Unanimity of Marxism-Leninism and Stalinism:

As a result of the shift of the border of the Soviet Union to the West thousands of Poles found themselves outside the territory of Poland. Their further stay in the Soviet Union also was not possible, given the fact that Stalin rejected the idea of cultural-national autonomy. Fulfilling the principles of the Marxist theory of nations, *the only correct theory*⁶⁷, Soviet decision-makers started to remove Polish citizens from the USSR. In theory, it was considered to be a form of respecting the right to self-determination, as *only the nation itself has the right to determine its destiny, (...) no one has the right forcibly to interfere in the life of the nation*⁶⁸, and, with a certain amount of irony and to a limited extent, Polish citizens were given the right to decide whether they wanted to leave or to stay on the territory of the republics of the Soviet Union. In reality, as it has been stated above, the majority of decisions on expatriation was not the matter of choice, it was forced upon Polish citizens by Soviet administration of many levels and by the difficulties in transport owed to the fact that Soviet railways did not provide the travelers with the due number of carriages.

Was it consistent with the principles of internationalism, world with no boundaries and with the idea of all peoples speaking the same language? It must be mentioned here that even Marx expressed the opinion that the state itself shall eventually disappear. Lenin was even more precise on the matter, he claimed that the elimination of state is the ultimate goal of communism⁶⁹, however it shall be achieved gradually, through various transition forms⁷⁰. On the other hand, in his work "The National Question and Leninism" Stalin states that the victory of socialism in one country shall not be confused with the victory of socialism on the world scale. Quoting Lenin's theory on one, common language, he supported the idea that the differences in language and other characteristic national traits would start to disappear only after *the victory of socialism on a world scale*⁷¹. It was not yet time for such a revolution in the years 1944/1945.

According to A. Walicki, Lenin tried to reconcile two contradictory visions: the one with the immediate abolishment of the state and the other based on its lingering decay. It resulted in creation of the idea of annihilation of the bourgeois state that shall be replaced by the proletarian state⁷², which would be the final form of state destined to disappear with time. Such approach confirms the view that *Lenin's plans were the plans for quite a distant future*⁷³.

Those who did not understand the basis on which the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) supported the development of the national culture of the peoples in Soviet republics were accused by Stalin to lack the knowledge on the Leninist doctrine and the awareness on the national questions⁷⁴. Such approach revealed a certain pragmatic skill of the leader.

⁶⁵ Kolakowski, *Main currents of Marxism*, vol. 3, 12.

⁶⁶ Friedrich Engels, "Przyczynek do krytyki projektu programu socjaldemokratycznego z 1881 roku" in Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Dzieła*, vol. 22 (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1971), 294.

⁶⁷ Stalin, *The National Question and Leninism*, 350.

⁶⁸ Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question", 206.

⁶⁹ Lenin, *Państwo a rewolucja*, 78.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 52.

⁷¹ Stalin, *The National Question and Leninism*, 356.

⁷² Andrzej Walicki, *Marksizm i skok do królestwa wolności. Dzieje komunistycznych utopii* (Warszawa: PWN, 1996), 315.

⁷³ Sylwester Zawadzki, *Marksistowska teoria państwa. Wybrane zagadnienia* (Warszawa: PAN, 1964), 104-106.

⁷⁴ Stalin, *Kwestia narodowa a leninizm*, 108.

Inconsistencies in Marxism- Leninism and Stalinism

In 1913 Stalin wrote that *the only correct solution is regional autonomy, autonomy for such crystallized units as Poland, Lithuania, and the Ukraine (...) etc.*⁷⁵. It can be easily noticed that such statement seemed to contradict the ideas in the already quoted passage: *A nation has the right freely to determine its own destiny. It has the right to arrange its life as it sees fit, without, of course, trampling on the rights of other nations*⁷⁶. It clearly means that the actions of ‘the red tsar’ were not fully consistent with his own words: Soviet Union, by the annexation of the Eastern Borderlands, violated the territorial integrity of Poland. The principle of self-determination of the nation was also breached, as all kinds of public security intelligence officers and administration executives in the Soviet republics multiplied the obstacles on the way to repatriation for ones and forced the others to leave by issuing direct or hidden threats of imprisonment and by various forms of persecution.

Even though the Soviet Union repeatedly denied all reports on the lack of self-determination, Stalin always underlined in his speeches the fact that the notion of self-determination shall be treated ‘*dialectically*’ (*in other words used as a slogan when it suited the party but not otherwise*)⁷⁷, as states L. Kołakowski.

Internationalism: a slogan of the propaganda

As remarked by K. Tyszka, the term ‘internationalism’ became shortly after the revolution of 1917 but a political slogan, empty propaganda notion that appeared in communist interventions and publications only as a nice addition or rhetorical figure of speech⁷⁸. The working masses found it difficult to accept the idea of abolishment of the state and its borders, and to build the new socialist order without the traditional, national basis. The enthusiasm of the ordinary revolutionists had a tendency to grow weak when the authorities rejected the simple but yet well anchored notions of ‘motherland’ and ‘nation’, and tried to replace them with the ideas of internationalism and universal understanding. *It seemed strange and suspicious*⁷⁹ states Tyszka.

People showed much more understanding and acceptance for Stalin’s conception of socialism-building in one country⁸⁰. All attempts to export the revolution to the West simply failed. Under ‘red tsar’s’ rule Lenin’s communism started to become the communism of the Russian everyman, the national communism, which was thoroughly exploited by soviet authorities. Popular belief in Russian superiority over other nations, widespread xenophobia and anti-Western sentiment were used by Kremlin on regular basis as a quite efficient instrument of propaganda, especially after the Nazi attack on the USSR. Moreover, these ideas united the citizens of the Soviet Union and strengthened the position of Stalin and his successors⁸¹. According to K. Tyszka: *The national communism became a fundamental element in Soviet political system*⁸².

Changing the borderline of Poland: Was it an example of Soviet social engineering at work?

The decision to repatriate Polish citizens from the Eastern Borderlands can be analyzed on two levels: on the already mentioned level of the indivisible national integrity and on the seemingly more important level of removal of all Polish inhabitation from the territory of Soviet Socialist Republics of Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine. What matters, is the reason of this action.

⁷⁵ Stalin, “Marxism and the National Question”, 243.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 206.

⁷⁷ Kołakowski, *Główne nurty marksizmu*, vol. 3, 21.

⁷⁸ Tyszka, *Nacjonalizm w komunizmie*, 119.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 120.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 121-123.

⁸² Ibid., 123.

Was it one of the means of implementation of the new order in Europe after the Second World War⁸³?

Basing on numerous historical studies, L. Kołakowski elaborated a theory according to which actions of Stalin were not necessarily based only upon his imperialistic drive. Annexations of territory and seizing power in the neighboring countries could have resulted from his vision to create a certain buffer zone around Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. The buffer zone would have covered the states called by L. Kołakowski ‘the befriended countries’ that would in reality be subjected to the domination of Kremlin. Such proceedings were meant to be a guarantee of the security of the RSFSR. However, this goal could not have been achieved if the territory of one of the republics in question would have been inhabited by a big, well-integrated and politically aware national minority of Poles.

Tyszka’s monograph “Nacjonalizm w komunizmie” [*Nationalism under communism*] includes the whole chapter on the national question in Lenin’s and Stalin’s ideology. The author of the publication concludes that it was mainly based on one concept: the concept of the so-called ‘new Soviet nations’ which were meant to be profoundly transformed through socialism⁸⁴. *The idea to build a Soviet nation(...) constituted an attempt to form a new nation, free of all the disadvantages of the old, of the rotten ‘bourgeois’ ideas and of all the issues related to the policy of the capitalism-driven world*⁸⁵. Supposedly it was Polish intelligentsia, wealthy land-owners and politically and nationally aware peasants who were considered to be one of the relicts of those ‘rotten ‘bourgeois’ ideas’ that held back the development of the Soviet nations in the Soviet Socialist Republics of Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine.

Nevertheless, regardless of the reasons for which Stalin has decided to remove Polish citizens from the territory of the Eastern Borderlands and respectively the citizens of the abovementioned Soviet republics from the territory of Poland, the very fact of arriving at such a decision can be easily described as Kremlin’s attempt to exploit the possibilities of social engineering.

From the beginning, in world’s history, and especially in the history of the 20th century, numerous were the cases of politically-based *eradication from the given territory of the whole nations, national minorities and/or followers of a given religion*⁸⁶. Perhaps the best example here would be provided by the city of Birobidzhan, the capital of Jewish Autonomous Oblast, which was, according to Stalin’s plans, destined to be transformed to a Jewish farming colony. Zvi Gitelman states that it was a part of the Five-Year Plan of 1928, in the framework of which Stalin wanted to settle 100.000 colonists in Birobidzhan⁸⁷. However, in the year 1933 the whole area of JAO was inhabited by no more than 8200 Jews⁸⁸. From the economic point of view, despite a significant aid from the state, the project was a failure, and, as claims R. Weinberg, probably no-one expected anything else⁸⁹.

Today it can be finally concluded that Soviet attempts to create ethnically uniform socialist states was not successful at all. Even though the repatriation process was carried out on a large scale, the territory of Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine was still inhabited by a relatively numerous Polish community. Such situation shall be attributed to the obstacles posed by the Soviet administration responsible for the evacuation of Poles in the years 1944-1946 and to the

⁸³ This trend was predicted by the Greek ambassador in Paris, Nicola Politis, in 1940. See more: Krystyna Kersten, “Przemiany struktury narodowościowej Polski po II wojnie światowej. Geneza i wyniki”, *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 2 (1969), 343.

⁸⁴ Tyszka, *Nacjonalizm w komunizmie*, 89.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁸⁶ Marcin Kula, “Migracje: Zmienne zjawisko długiego trwania”, *Przegląd Polonijny* 2 (2007), 13.

⁸⁷ *Stalin's Forgotten Zion. Birobidzhan and the Making of a Soviet Jewish Homeland. An Illustrated History, 1928-1996*, ed. Robert Weinberg, introduction: Zvi Gitelman (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 1998), 7.

⁸⁸ Anna Shternshis, *Soviet and kosher: Jewish popular culture in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Bloomington Indiana University Press, 2006), XV.

⁸⁹ *Stalin's Forgotten Zion*, ed. Weinberg, 8.

unwillingness of local Polish inhabitants to abandon their homes on the basis of a restricted, but still voluntary repatriation.

Polish communists and the change of the borderline of Poland

What was the view of Polish leaders on the issue of the annexation of the Eastern Borderlands, especially that Polish Workers' Party (PPR – Polska Partia Robotnicza) gave its consent for the separation of a number of Polish provinces: lwowskie, nowogródzkie, wileńskie and the others⁹⁰? What were the grounds on which such proceedings were legitimized?

Five drastic years of war, two occupations, poverty and constant fear of the future transformed Polish spirit completely; Poles became more patriotic and at the same time more nationalism-oriented. In such circumstances, no political leader would win the elections if he would put the words 'communism' and 'nationalism' on his banners. The representatives of Polish Workers' Party knew it even before the war, which is why in 1942, when the party was formed, its name lacked the term 'communist'⁹¹. It was not a mistake, but a well-planned strategy suggesting the reorientation of the party's policy to more nation-related questions. Its members tried to develop a certain image of the organization in common awareness of the citizens and among the lower-level party activists which would testify that the party is of democratic and nation-wide character and that it would guarantee a safe development and reconstruction of the country after the war⁹². The ideas of socialism and working class were expressed implicitly under patriotic covers. This strategic line was sustained by the party leaders until the very end, even after its merger with Polish Socialist Party (PPS – Polska Partia Socjalistyczna) and after the formation of Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR – Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza). The attempts at a nationalistically-based legitimization of communist power were quite elaborately described in an excellent monograph by M. Zaremba⁹³.

The first Secretary of the Party, Władysław Gomułka, was perfectly aware that the society was not quite favorable to the decision on separation of the Eastern Borderlines. As he stated in his letter from March 1944:

“In Poland, even if the saintest of all saints would dare to support the idea of revision of the Eastern border, he would immediately be proclaimed by the reactionists ‘the apostle of Kremlin’ with his hand in Stalin’s pocket, trying to sell Poland to Soviet oppressors”⁹⁴.

Nevertheless, the Party considered the decision on separation to be true. The official propaganda spread the idea that the annexation of the Eastern Borderlands to the USSR and its subsequent incorporation to the neighboring Soviet republics was justified historically, as the lands in question were inhabited by 'nationally distant, non-Polish peoples'⁹⁵. The notion of self-determination was also quoted as one of the foundations for such an action, as well as the righteousness of the idea of ethnographic separation of the states on the basis of nationality of their inhabitants⁹⁶.

Shifting one border of Poland to the West, establishing another on Curzon Line and enhancing of the repatriation process⁹⁷ resulted in creation of a nationally homogeneous state.

⁹⁰ Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm*, 122.

⁹¹ Ibid., 125.

⁹² Kazimierz Pudło, “Powojenna Polska państwem jednonarodowym?”, *Sprawy narodowościowe* 11 (1997), 276-277; Tyska, *Nacjonalizm w komunizmie*, 133.

⁹³ Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm*.

⁹⁴ “List KC PPR ‘do tow. D’”, *Zeszyty Historyczne* 26 (1973), 189.

⁹⁵ “Noworoczne orędzie Bieruta”, *Głos Ludu*, 1 January 1946; Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm*, 154.

⁹⁶ Pudło, “Powojenna Polska państwem jednonarodowym?”, 277; Paczoska, *Dzieci Jalty*, 76.

⁹⁷ The resettlement, as a way to create a national homogeneous states in the situation of many people scattering in a particular territory has been written by George Montadon in 1916 – Kersten, *Przemiany struktury narodowościowej Polski po II wojnie światowej*, 339; see also: Piotr Eberhardt, “Struktura narodowościowa Polski północno-wschodniej

Polish people were meant to live in Poland, among other Poles. Belarusians, Lithuanians and Ukrainians were respectively supposed to inhabit the territory of the Soviet Socialist Republics of Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine⁹⁸. According to the official doctrine, this new order should have reduced the number of conflicts⁹⁹ sweeping the Second Polish Republic due to the number of politically emancipated local national minorities¹⁰⁰. One shall bear in mind that according to the data in Polish National Census of 1931 only 69,1% of the citizens of Poland declared Polish as their mothertongue, meanwhile 30% (9 925 000 persons) claimed that they were the native speakers of other languages: Ukrainian, Russian, German, Belarusian, Yidish, Lithuanian, Check etc.¹⁰¹. The ethnic and national uniformity of the post-war Polish society could have constituted a good starting point for the social consolidation¹⁰² through the solidarity of the working masses, which should have entailed *the actions leading to the fundamental transformation of the overall shape of life of the state under the lead of the working class party*¹⁰³.

Eventually, as a consequence of the shift of Polish borderline, separation of the Eastern Borderlands and repatriation of the citizens of the three neighboring Soviet republics to their new states post-war Poland became a mononational country. The leaders of Polish Workers' Party considered it to be a great success¹⁰⁴. The view of Polish citizens on the matter remained unknown, as the referendum of 1946 concerned only the borderline drawn on Baltic Sea, Oder and Lusatian Neisse¹⁰⁵.

w latach trzydziestych XX wieku” in *Spółczesność białoruskie, litewskie i polskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej (Białoruś Zachodnia i Litwa Wschodnia) w latach 1939-1941*, ed. Małgorzata Giżewska, Tomasz Strzembosz, (Warszawa: ISP PAN, 1995), 53.

⁹⁸ Paczoska, *Dzieci Jalty*, 87.

⁹⁹ Pudło, “Powojenna Polska państwem jednonarodowym?”, 279, 281-282; Tyszka, *Nacjonalizm w komunizmie*, 134; Kersten, *Przemiany struktury narodowościowej Polski po II wojnie światowej*, 341, 344, 358.

¹⁰⁰ *W Polsce największą grupą mniejszości narodowych byli Ukraińcy (3 222 tys. osób podało język ukraiński, 1 219 647 - rosyjski) (...). W dalszej kolejności Białorusini (989,9 tys. język białoruski) (...). Pozostałe grupy [w tym Litwini] nie przekraczały stu tysięcy osób. [In Poland, the largest minority group were Ukrainians (3 222 000 people reported Ukrainian language, 1 219 647 - Russian) (...). Subsequently, Belarusians (989 900 Belarusian) (...). Other groups [including Lithuanians] did not exceed over a hundred thousand people]* – Kersten, *Przemiany struktury narodowościowej Polski po II wojnie światowej*, 342.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Stola, *Kraj bez nyscia?*, 24.

¹⁰³ Pudło, “Powojenna Polska państwem jednonarodowym?”, 278.

¹⁰⁴ Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm*, 154.

¹⁰⁵ Paczoska, *Dzieci Jalty*, 88.

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