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Resettlement of the Orthodox Lemkos to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1944-1946

Introduction

The resettlements to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) from 1944-1946 had a significant impact on the fate of the Orthodox Church in Lemkivshchyna. These events profoundly depleted its social and material base. They led to the disintegration of parish communities and disorganized the Church structures created in the inter-war period. They also had an impact on the subsequent process of the revival of the Orthodox Church in this area. The aim of the article is to present the activities of the Church towards the displacement action to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Orthodox people from Lemkivshchyna. Presenting that they resulted primarily from concern for providing a pastoral service for the faithful remaining in Poland, as well as for the fate of the Church property left behind. In the latter case, it was in danger of being taken over by the state authorities, the Roman Catholic Church or simply looting. In addition, showing the actions of the authorities of the Orthodox Church, its hierarchy and clergy, directed against forced relocation and in the process of securing the abandoned Church property. The study uses archival resources collected in the Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw, State Archives in Kraków and Rzeszów, and the Archives of the Warsaw Orthodox Archdiocese. The analysis also includes the reports of Orthodox clergy residing in Lemkivshchyna during the period of resettlements to the USSR and memories of priests and displaced Lemkos.

Displacement action to the territory of the USSR

The resettlement to the territories of the USSR in the years 1944-1946 took place on the basis of the agreement of September 9, 1944, signed between the USRR government and the Polish Committee of National Liberation. Under the agreement, the right to resettlement was held by Ukrainians who had Polish citizenship until September 17, 1939, who after signing the agreement lived in the Kraków, Rzeszów and Lublin provinces (this also concerned Belarusians and Russians living in this area). It also introduced the concept of

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Polish citizens of Ruthenian nationality. This concerned people from the Greek Catholic and Orthodox denominations residing in Lemkivshchyna and Bojkowszczyzna who did not identify themselves with Ukrainian nationality. According to the assumptions, the evacuation (the term used in the official documentation) was to be voluntary, without the use of direct or indirect coercion. The basis for resettlement were lists to which people declaring their will to leave Poland were signed. The declarations could be submitted in writing or orally (in the latter case unlimited possibilities of abuse were created) (Misiło, 1996: 9-10)².

The genesis of resettlements, the course of action related to the removal of the Ukrainian and Lemko populations from Poland and the settlement process in the territory of the Ukrainian SSR was thoroughly presented in the literature on the subject³. Officially, resettlements began on October 15, 1944, and ended on June 15, 1946 (in fact, the entire operation was carried out until the end of the year). As they lasted, due to the avoidance of resettlement, in mid-1945, despite the earlier arrangements for their voluntariness, pressure was put in place to increase the number of applicants for travel (including through the cancellation of taxes or quota for those applying for a trip, imposing and ruthless collection of taxes and recourse to penal battalions of all conscripts who did not report for a trip) (Archives of Modern Records [hereinafter AAN], 1945, sign. 166)⁴. Also, the army was used to force displacement of the population. At that time, the villages were pacified, acts of violence, humiliation and murder of the civilian population were committed⁵.

In total, during the operation, about 494 thousand people were displaced (including over 70 thousand Lemkos)⁶. This number includes about 170-180 thousand Ortho-

² In addition, the system contains information on, among others, placement of displaced persons in the territory of the USSR according to their wishes (on a kolkhoz farm or on an individual farm), applied allowances for people leaving Poland (including cancellation of all tax arrears, exemption from taxes and insurance charges) and what was allowed and what was not allowed for them to take. The organization of the evacuation, its plenipotentiaries and representatives were specified. To the system, executive and supplementary instructions were issued, which detailed the mode, course and organization of resettlements. Issues related to the entire action are discussed in (Pisuliński, 2009).

³ More about the resettlement action to the territory of the USSR (see: Szcześniak, Szota, 1973; Kwiek, 1998; Kabaczij, 2012).

⁴ The reports of governor of the county Józef Łabuz were characteristic. In the information to the main representative of the Polish Government for evacuation, he stated: "I imposed 100% of the obligation to submit a quota and all other benefits, in which the effect is that the population would in 200% provide all benefits, so as not to go" (AAN, 1945, sign.166).

⁵ The murders of the Ukrainian population began already in the first months of 1945. According to Grzegorz Motyka, between 2600 and 3900 Ukrainians living in the border zone from Lubaczów to Sanok were murdered in this period. The most famous crime took place on March 3, 1945, in the village Pawłokoma (Brzozów county), in which soldiers of the Home Army under the command of Lt. Józef Biss "Waclaw" murdered about 360 Ukrainians (see more: Motyka, 1999: 238-241).

⁶ The total number of 494,805 displaced persons is given by Jan Pisuliński (Pisuliński, 2009: 508). Various numbers of expellees to the Ukrainian SSR are provided in the literature on the subject. According to Eugeniusz Misiły, it was 483,808 people (Misiło, 1996: 357). The number of 70 thousand is given (Reinfuss, 1990: 129). However, Kwilecki finds about 96,800 resettled Lemkos (Kwilecki, 1967: 82).

dox believers from Chełmszczyzna and southern Podlasie, and about 15 thousand from Lemkivshchyna (Urban, 1995: 115). It is difficult to determine how much of the Lemko population left voluntarily (declarations of this type were made by, among others, Lemkos from Biała Woda, Jaworek and Szlachtowa), and to what extent the coercion of departure was applied. Julian Kwiek rightly observed that in general they did not want to leave their native villages, and the authorities themselves pointed out that they related unfavourably to the action of resettlement to the territories of the USSR. Andrzej Kwilecki, when analyzing the attitude of the Lemkos to the resettlement, emphasized that people from the areas under war were voluntarily leaving, as well as the poor population, hoping to improve their fate. Some, however, left to subordinate to the authorities' orders (Kwilecki, 1967: 267-277; Kwiek, 1998: 107). It seems that the mechanisms of attachment to the place of birth and the feeling of being at home worked above all. The Lemkos already knew the realities of life in the Soviet Union, they were aware that "sausages do not hang there on the fences" (a propaganda term aimed at encouraging the Lemko population to travel to the 'rich' Ukraine).

The Orthodox Church against the deportation action in Lemkivshchyna

The Orthodox Church and religion played an important role in the history of Lemkos. Almost to the end of the 17th century, it was an area belonging to the Orthodox Przemyśl diocese. Only after Bishop of Przemyśl, Innocent Winnicki, had joined the Union of Brest in 1691, the process of spreading the influence of the Greek Catholic Church in this area began (Gerent, 2005: 21-47). It proceeded sluggishly, because most of the Lemkos were attached to 'their' religion. However, in several dozen years, Orthodoxy in this area disappeared. The first cases of return to fathers' faith took place even before the First World War. In 1911, part of the village of Grab with priest Maksym Sandowicz converted to Orthodoxy. At the turn of 1911 and 1912, the majority of residents of the villages of Czarne, Długie, Lipna, Nieznajowa and Radocyna reported a change of religion to the Orthodox Church. The reasons for returning to the Orthodox Church varied. The exclusion from the liturgy of the word "Orthodox" (replaced by the word "right-believing") by many Greek Catholic priests, disputes between the faithful and the priests, material issues (including increasing fees for religious services) (Moklak, 1997: 31).

The mass conversion to Orthodoxy in Lemkivshchyna took place in 1926-1932. The so-called Schism of Tylawa on November 16, 1926, was the beginning of the process (Nowakowski, 1992: 325; Wójtowicz-Huber, 2015: 339-349). Until 1928, the authorities agreed to the legalization of six pastoral points (they also conducted the activities of pastoral units not recognized by the authorities). In total, over 40 villages with around 20,000 faithful returned to the Orthodox Church. The process of converting to Orthodoxy at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s fundamentally changed the denominational structure in this area (Dubec, 2005: 73; Stępień, 1990: 216). During the occupa-

tion, the Orthodox parishes functioning in Lemkivshchyna became part of the Diocese of Kraków-Lemko (founded on 30 September 10, 1940), which was later enlarged to the Galizien district and on August 6, 1941, it became the Diocese of Kraków-Lemko-Lvov⁷.

Before the start of resettlements in Lemkivshchyna, there were 42 pastoral centers (having the status of a parish and a branch). The largest groups of the faithful were grouped in: Florynka (1246), Mszana (about 1200), Polany (1170), Tylawa (950), Świątkowa Wielka (815), Izby (800), Bartne (738 people), Bogusz (671), Wołowiec (665), Lipowiec (643), Binczarowa (633), Królowa Ruska (567), Śnietnica (564) and Trzciana (540) (Dubec, 2011: 21-31). It should be remembered that before 1941, as a result of the agreement between Germany and the USSR, about 5,000 Lemkos left to the east (among them there were both Orthodox and Greek Catholics)⁸. After the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, part of this population returned to the areas formerly inhabited (during the resettlement to Ukraine, knowing the realities of life in the east most of them refused to be evicted). In addition, the Lemkos avoided trips, including by hiding in nearby forests, temporary escapes to cities, Slovakia, or paying bribes (including livestock)⁹. It was also attempted to remain in Lemkivshchyna by changing religion¹⁰. However, in the latter case, the Ministry of Public Administration in a special letter to the Kraków Voivodship Office pointed out that “[...] the conversion to a new religion or rite does not cause any changes in nationality” (AAN, 1945, sign. 781)¹¹. Cases of this type were noted, among others, in the Nowy Sącz county, and mainly concerned the Greek Catholic population

⁷ Ihumen Palladiusz (Wydybida-Rudenko) was ordained the Ordinary of the Diocese of Kraków-Lemko on February 8, 1941. In 1944, the diocese was raised to the rank of archbishopric. In the years 1945-1947, the outposts in Lemkivshchyna were administratively subordinate to the Deanery of Kraków (actually, at the beginning of 1945, the division into three Lemko deanery ceased to exist). Due to the remoteness of Kraków and the communication difficulties resulting from it, attempts were made to create a deanery in Florynka. Administratively, it was to include all parishes in Lemkivshchyna. As a result of displacements as part of the “Vistula Operation”, its creation did not take place (see: Sziling, 1988; Urban, 1995: 101-102).

⁸ The trips took place on the basis of the agreement of September 28, 1939, in which there was a confidential report on the departure of the people of German nationality from the areas belonging until then to the USSR and on the abandonment by Ukrainians and Byelorussians of the territories occupied by Germany (Kwilecki, 1967: 76). The author emphasizes that the number of 5 thousand is reported by the German sources and may be inflated, as it also included Ukrainians from outside Lemkivshchyna. Lower number – 3 thousand Lemko is given by (Tarnowycz, 1954: 67).

⁹ During one of the agitation meetings in the group of Bodaki (Sękowa municipality), the mayor even declared that in case of “forced evacuation of the Lemkos, everyone will come out [...] but into the forest” (AAN, 1945, sign. 781). At the same time, in August 1945, Józef Bednarz informed the MAP that the resettlement of Lemkos living in the Kraków and Rzeszów voivodships is very reluctant, and probably voluntary evacuation will not give positive results (AAN, 1945, sign. XII/116).

¹⁰ Most Lemkos, among others, from the villages of Czzyrna, Królowa Ruska and Bogusz converted to Catholicism. In the entire Nowy Sącz county, the change of religion could concern about 500 people. The conversion could have a total of about 1000 people throughout Lemkivshchyna. The general scale of religious change is difficult to determine (see: Kwiek, 1998: 114; Pisuliński, 2009: 100-102).

¹¹ The issue of religious conversion was also used during the deportations to the territories of the USSR (AAN, 1945, sign. 781).

(however, it cannot be ruled out that even the Orthodox attempted that to avoid the displacement) (State Archive in Kraków [hereinafter APK], 1945, sign. 1082). When displacing residents of Lemkivshchyna, the authorities often used as an additional legal aspect, concerning residence in the border zone, which made it necessary to leave the area due to the alleged security of the state¹².

In order to secure the Church structures (including abandoned property), Metropolitan Dionizy (Waledyński) entrusted in July 1945 the function of the administrator of the existing parish to Fr. Vitaly Sahajdakowski. In the middle of October 1945, he informed the Warsaw Orthodox Religious Consistory that only 5 parishes along with 6 branch offices operated in Lemkivshchyna¹³. Probably the data was incomplete. It resulted, among others, from terrible communication conditions and difficulties in reaching most villages (AAN, 1945, sign. 1050). Activity of Fr. Sahajdakiwskyj was discontinued in autumn 1945. Under the pressure of the authorities, he was forced to leave Lemkivshchyna (Sahajdakiwskyj, 1977: 142-144).

It is necessary to mention the position of the authorities of the Orthodox Church in relation to the deportation action in Lemkivshchyna. On October 19, 1945, the Warsaw Orthodox Spiritual Consistory wrote letters to the County Offices in Gorlice and Nowy Sącz regarding the leaving of the Orthodox Lemkos in these counties. A similar letter was sent a few days later to the voivode of Rzeszów (State Archive in Rzeszów [hereinafter APR], 1945, sign. 466). In January and March 1946, Metropolitan Dionizy intervened in the Ministry of Public Administration against the displacement of the Orthodox from Lemkivshchyna (AWMP, 1946a). The above-mentioned activities, however, did not bring positive results. I did not find any source materials in which the Warsaw Orthodox Spiritual Consistory hierarchs or clerics would officially condemn the resettlement or strongly oppose it. It seems that in this case the principle of synergy (symphony) in relations with the state, functioning in the Orthodox Church for centuries, was revealed¹⁴. There were, however, clergymen who agitated for the trip to the USSR. According to local authorities, among them was Fr. Grzegorz Cybulko from Jaskowa (APR, 1945, sign. 46). Olha Bućko claims that the Archbishop of Chełm “not only sup-

¹² Such methods were used, among others, in Nowy Sącz county by the then governor Łabuz (Archives of Orthodox Archdiocese of Warsaw [hereinafter AWMP], 1945a).

¹³ Bartne (branch: Przegonina), Florynka (Binczarowa, Wawrzka), Izby (Bieliczna), Królowa Ruska (Bogusza), Uście Ruskie (Kwiatoni). Reactivation of the parishes in Banica, Piorunka and Tylawa was also planned (see: Urban, 1995: 104-105).

¹⁴ The basis of the Church-State relationship in Orthodoxy is the principle of synergy that has been in force for centuries, i.e. the type of cooperation, also known as symbiosis or symphony. The genesis of this phenomenon should be sought in theological assumptions. The socio-political principle commonly expressed by the Orthodox Church was (and is) loyalty to the state power in accordance with the formula “What belongs to Caesar – Caesar, the divine – God”. The basic principle of the Orthodox Church resulting from its historical conditions and apostolic precepts is to express respect and loyalty to authority, even pagan and not very fair. For this reason, in Orthodoxy, we can observe a tendency to be submissive and submit to the state (regardless of the political system) and its policy (both internal and foreign) (Chryń, 2003: 129).

ported the resettlement, but even encouraged parish priests to organize it well” (Bućko, 1997: 28). This attitude must be astonishing. Knowing the denominational conditions in the USSR, people were probably aware of the difficulties faced by displaced persons with satisfying religious needs in new settlement places.

Along with the population, the Orthodox priests were also displaced¹⁵. In the autumn of 1945, using the provisions on residence in the border area, all Orthodox clergy received their personal orders to leave the Nowy Sącz County. Bishop Tymoteusz (Szretter), the Warsaw Orthodox Spiritual Consistory and many more protested against their forced removal (AWMP, 1945b; AAN, 1945, sign. 1051). However, by the end of 1945, the majority of the clergy and the faithful were displaced. Some of them were forced to leave by the NKVD, including Fr. Aleksander Iwanowicz from Bogusza and Fr. Piotr Taranowski from Florynka. The latter did not avoid the deportation despite being the Administrator of the Orthodox parishes in Lemkivshchyna (Horobczenko, 1996: 227; Zwoliński, Merena, 1999: 88-89). The priests who voluntarily or forced left parishes, were among others, Paweł Libow from Radocyna, Terentij Osadczenko from Skwirtny, Grzegorz Cybulko from Jaszkowa, Mikołaj Kucharuk from Świątkowa Wielka, Onufry Orski from Kwiaton, Eugeniusz Gryzentowicz from Czarna, Ignacy Kosma from Piorunki and Jerzy Buczyński from Florynka (he replaced the previously displaced parish priest Fr. Taranowski). The lack of clergy put into question the further functioning of pastoral centers. It should also be noted that the decrease in the number of clergymen was also caused by the earlier deportation for forced labour to Germany of the priest from Tylawa, Fr. Wiktor Masik (1942), and deportation of Fr. Antoni Tatiewski (1940-1946) by the Soviet authorities to Kazakhstan, and Siberia, Fr. Jerzy Pawłyszyn, parish priest of Czarna (he was in exile until 1954; he died in the USSR in 1958). At the beginning of 1946, only two clergymen performed the pastoral ministry in Lemkivshchyna: Fr. Jan Lewiarz (from 1942, parish priest in Bartne with branches in Bodaki and Wołowiec) and priest Dymitr Chylak (from 1928, parish priest in Izby and Bieliczna). Despite the fact that the parish network and the faithful who avoided resettlement had survived, *de facto* pastoral centers in Lemkivshchyna were deprived of pastoral service.

The situation changed partly with the return of part of the displaced population and the demobilized from the Red Army. Among others, Lemkos from Słotwin, Królowa Ruska, Bogusza and Florynka voluntarily joined the Red Army. However, most of the Lemkos were forcibly conscripted, their number should be estimated at approx. 500 peo-

¹⁵ Of course, the Greek Catholic priests were also displaced. The authorities saw this as a factor conducive to the liquidation of the Greek Catholic rite. Already in April 1945, the hierarchs of the Greek Catholic Church and some priests were arrested. The situation even worsened after the so-called Synod of Lvov (March 8-10, 1946), on which the Greek Catholic Church in the USSR was banned. The consequence of these events was the arrest and handing over Bishop Jozafata Kocyłowski, and then his suffragan bishop Hryhorija Łakota to the Soviet authorities. According to estimated data, in 1944-1946, 23 Greek Catholic priests were killed and about 300 were displaced. The institutions and religious organizations of this Church were also liquidated (see: Biłas, 1996; Hałagida, 2013).

ple (Doński, 1962: 308-309). In addition, the necessity to secure Church property of inactive parishes forced the authorities of the Orthodox Church to take steps to settle the problem. On March 11, 1946, Fr. Stefan Biegun was appointed to serve parishioners in Bogusz and Królowa Ruska¹⁶. On May 7, Fr. Włodzimierz Wieżański and Fr. Wsiewołod Łopuchowicz were delegated to Lemkivshchyna (AWMP, 1946b)¹⁷. The above actions were supported by the Department of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Public Administration. On May 10, Fr. Aleksy Znosko was also delegated to the parish in Czarna (Gorlice County). However, for unknown reasons he did not reach Lemkivshchyna. The reports of Fr. Wieżański, sent to the Warsaw Orthodox Spiritual Consistory, contained much interesting information about the situation in Lemkivshchyna in the final phase of deportations. Fr. Wieżański celebrated religious services for the Orthodox population, among others, in Bogusza and Florynka. He also informed about the services he held in Czarna, Śnietnica and Bartne. When assessing a stay in Lemkivshchyna, he wrote: "The religious and moral status of the parish I visited was at a high level. The population is moved by their religiousness and attachment to the Orthodox rite" (Urban, 1991a: 37).

In May 1946, the Warsaw Orthodox Spiritual Consistory informed the Department of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Public Administration that the majority of the Orthodox parishes operating there were actually liquidated in Lemkivshchyna (among others Ciechanie, Chyrowa, Czarne, Desznica, Grab, Kamianna, Lipowiec, Milik, Mszana, Radocyna, Wołowiec, Skwirtne, Śnietnica and Świętkowa Wielka) (AAN, 1946, sign. 1047). During this period, Fr. Antoni Tatiewski served in Królowa Ruska and Bogusza, and he managed to organize parishes in Piorunka and Banica (Rusynko, Barna, 2007: 136-137). On July 16, Fr. Michał Popiel, who knew well Lemkivshchyna (among others, in the years 1928-1931, he served parishes in Hyrowa, Mszana, Tylawa, Polany, Lipowiec, Florynka) took over the parish in Uście Ruskie and Kwiatów, and also served in Skwirtne and Regietów.

As a result of resettlements to the USRR, religious life in Lemkivshchyna was disorganized. The Orthodox priests themselves were not aware of how many priests and in which parishes they had pastoral ministry (this was pointed out by priest Jan Lewiarz in reports sent to the Warsaw Orthodox Spiritual Consistory) (Urban, 1991c: 39). Several clergymen led the action of securing left Church property and provided pastoral ministry to the remaining Orthodox population. Their activity was difficult due to, among others, the unfavourable position of the local administrative authorities, in particular the authorities in Nowy Sącz – the advocates of displacement of all Lemkos was

¹⁶ The priest stayed in Florynka until May 19, 1946. Under the pressure of local authorities, he was forced to leave. However, he avoided displacement to Ukraine. He returned to Florynka only in July 1947 (see: Urban, 2000: 16-18).

¹⁷ Fr. W. Wieżański was to provide religious services for the population in Piorunka and Banica parishes (Nowy Sącz County) and in other towns where there were no Orthodox priests. The mission was not fulfilled by priest W. Łopuchowicz, who was turned back from the road to Lemkivshchyna by the Nowy Sącz authorities (Urban, 1991a: 31).

the chairman of the County National Council, Jan Antoniszczak, and the Nowy Sącz County governor, Łabuz. The latter, for undertaking drastic actions, received the nickname “Łobuz” from the Lemkos. In the autumn of 1946, the Church authorities in Warsaw were informed about the situation in Lemkivshchyna by pastoral priests, including Lewiarz, Popiel and Tatiewski (Urban, 1991c: 42-52). The latter even proposed the creation of a special fund for organizing religious life in Lemkivshchyna. According to Lewiarz “Orthodox population for months without religious care, because the parishes are far away. The situation is exploited by the Roman Catholic and Greek priests and they are trying to eradicate Orthodoxy” (Urban, 1991c: 41). Reports of the clergy fully reflect the realism and at the same time the tragedy of the situation of the Orthodox in Lemkivshchyna during this period.

The lack of clergy still remained the main problem. In September 1946, Jan Gachowicz was additionally delegated to Lemkivshchyna. He took over the parish in Wołowiec, but after a few weeks he left it. The reason for the clergy’s leaving was the threat resulting from the activity of various types of armed units. Among other things, in December 1946, Tatiewski was forced under the death penalty to leave Lemkivshchyna (on May 25, he took over the parish in Bogusz). Staff shortages among the clergy led to the limitation of religious life among the remaining population. The services were celebrated sporadically, often once a month, and the catechesis for children and adolescents was basically limited to the places where the clergyman resided. During this period, it was difficult to determine the number of faithful in individual parishes. They were afraid of identifying with Orthodoxy, which was identified with Ukrainian nationality. In order to avoid displacement, people claimed to be of the Roman Catholic denomination as well (AWMP, 1946, sign. XV/1-539). According to estimates, at the beginning of 1947, between 3.5 and 4.5 thousand followers of the Orthodox Church could have been in the area of Lemkivshchyna¹⁸. Officially, there were 8 parishes with 19 branches. It seems, however, that these figures were overstated. Pastoral centers existed, while they were deprived of both the faithful and the clergy.

Conclusions

As a result of resettlements to the Ukrainian SSR, over 15,000 people of the Orthodox faith left Lemkivshchyna and because of the depopulation of entire villages, most of the parishes were liquidated. The displaced along with the priests took part of the church equipment. However, in the Soviet Ukraine, cultivating religious life was difficult. It was forbidden to celebrate the holidays, laughed at the religiosity of the displaced peo-

¹⁸ According to reports of Tatiewski from the end of July 1946, a significant number of Orthodox people remained, among others in Florynka (620 people), Izby (456), Bartne (about 400 people) Bogusza (318), Banica (267), Piorunka (225), Królowa Ruska (205) and Bieliczna (201). In addition, in September 1946, Fr. Popiel reported on the Orthodox in Kwiaton (122), Uście Ruskie (89), Skwirtna (36) and Regietów (34), (Urban, 1991b: p. 44).

ple: “Lemkos are used to go to the church on Sunday, and here they were driven to the kolkhoz” (Kabaczij, 2012: 253). This concerned the entire displaced population, because “after the atheistic campaign in the USSR, churches survived only in the district and peripheral centers, which is why displaced people from Poland were perceived by the locals as religious fanatics” (Kabaczij, 2012: 253). According to Mykoła Muszynka, the displaced people from Radocyna near Gorlice had to hang an Orthodox bell on a willow and pray under it, because there was no other place in the village (Muszynka, 2001: 26).

As a result of the displacement of the Orthodox population, the Bishops Council of the PAKP (July 15, 1946) decided to liquidate the Diocese of Kraków-Lemko-Lvov. The functioning parishes in Lemkivshchyna were incorporated into the Diocese of Warsaw. Orthodoxy, existing for centuries in south-eastern Poland, remained there in a vestigial form. The displacements to the USRR were the penultimate word for the destruction of the Orthodox Church in Lemkivshchyna. Eventually, this process was carried out as a result of the Vistula “Operation” deportation in 1947.

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Abstract: As a result of deportations to the USSR (1944-1946), more than 15 thousand Orthodox believers left Lemkivshchyna. Most of the Orthodox parishes disappeared as a result of depopulation of entire villages (before the resettlement there were 42 pastoral centers in Lemkivshchyna). These events thoroughly depleted the social and material base of the Orthodox Church (among other things, it lost most of its property: buildings, historic icons, books for church services and vital records). This forced displacement led to a breakdown of parish communities and a disorganization in the structure of the Orthodox Church which had been created in the inter-war period. Obviously, this breakdown had a negative impact on the later process of rebirth of Orthodoxy in the area.

Keywords: Lemko, Lemkivshchyna, Orthodoxy, resettlement

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