

The Ukrainian World Congress
The Ukrainian Canadian Congress



Association of Ukrainians "Zakerzonnia"

Canadian Lemko Association

Association "Peremyschchyna"

Association "Yaroslavshchyna"

OPERATION "WISLA"

Operation "Wisla" ("Akcja Wisla" in Polish) was the final stage of ethnic cleansing executed in 1947 by the Polish communist government on Ukrainian ethnic territories that became a part of Poland after WWII. These territories are known as Lemkivshchyna, Boikivshchyna, Nadsannia, Kholmshchyna and Pidlashia. As the result of the operation, some 150,000 Ukrainians were forcefully deported from lands where they inhabited for over a millennium. Ukrainians were expelled from over 1000 villages and towns, hundreds of churches were destroyed, some 4,000 people were imprisoned and tortured in the Jaworzno concentration camp, and more than 1,000 Ukrainians killed during the process were added to the lists of the thousands of victims of previously carried out pacifications, executions, and torture. The most western part of the Ukrainian ethnic territory ceased to be inhabited by Ukrainians.

Operation "Wisla" was planned from the very beginning as "the final solution of the Ukrainian problem in Poland." This task was given to the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces as early as the fall of 1946. All military particulars of the operation were planned with the above intention in mind. Propaganda elements were added in the process to politically justify the operation. One such propaganda justification was the killing of General Karol Swierczewski and was used as a pretext for the beginning of the operation.

Operation "Wisla" began on April 28, 1947 at 4:30 in the morning and lasted to July 28, 1947. Six combat divisions of the Polish Army, a few thousand soldiers of other Polish military formations as well as Russian NKVD units and detachments of the Czechoslovak Army, altogether about 25,000 soldiers, were thrown against the Ukrainian civilian population. Ukrainians were given a two hour notice to pack their possessions and head for gathering locations. From there, all the deportees were transported in thousands of railway cars to the western and northern parts of Poland, former German territories which were awarded to Poland after WWII.

In their new places of settlement, the deported Ukrainians were subjected to harsh repressive regulations: they were settled far apart from each other so that they would constitute no more than 10% of the population; they were settled in remote and neglected areas; they were strictly prohibited from moving from place to place; they were forbidden to continue their organized religious and cultural life; they were constantly monitored by Polish secret service agents. All of the above repressive measures had only one aim in mind - that to quickly assimilate the deported Ukrainians.

After the completion of the expulsion of the Ukrainian population, the destruction of the Ukrainian cultural heritage began: hundreds of churches and chapels were turned into ruins, centuries-old books and documents were changed into ashes, rich material culture was destroyed, material wealth was taken over, tens and tens of villages disappeared from the landscape of the land. Together with the people, the rich dialects of the Ukrainian language of Lemkivshchyna, Boikivshchyna, Nadsannia, Kholmshchyna and Pidlashia were destroyed as they could not survive the scattering of the population all over the western and northern parts of Poland.

The aftermath of Operation "Wisla" is tragic. It brought physical and mental suffering to thousands of people who were exiled from their ancestral lands. It meant that hundreds of Ukrainians were sentenced to death and executed without trial. It annihilated the rich and unique material and spiritual culture of the deportees. It created a hypocritical and untrue stereotype of a Ukrainian. This burdens the present and the coming generations.

Operation "Wisla" represents an unprecedented action by the Polish government against its citizens and an ethnic minority. It remains an open wound in the Polish-Ukrainian relations.

More in: Eugeniusz Misilo *Akcja "Wisla,"* Warsaw: Archiwum Ukrainkie, 1993.

JAWORZNO Concentration Camp for Ukrainians, Poland, 1947 - 1949

The Jaworzno concentration camp (officially called the Central Labour Camp in Jaworzno) was one of the repressive methods used by the Polish authorities against the Ukrainian population during and after Operation "Wisla." It was located on the site of the infamous concentration camp SS-Lager Dachgrube - a branch of the Auschwitz KZ-Lager near Krakow. The entire infrastructure of the Auschwitz concentration camp was utilized, along with the same methods of physical and mental torture and abuse inflicted upon the imprisoned. The German methods were supplemented by the Soviet slave labour camp practices and experiences.

The area of the camp contained 14 typical barracks, the same as were used in Auschwitz, baths, a kitchen, and a sanitary barrack. The security of the camp was composed of 12 brick watchtowers as well as double rows of barbed wire connected to a high voltage source. From one side the camp there was a 3-meter-high brick wall. The camp was guarded by a detachment of the Polish Internal Security Forces.

Almost 4,000 Ukrainians were prisoners of the camp, including more than 800 women and 20 children. In order to speed up the process of denationalization, almost the entire Ukrainian intelligentsia were arrested and imprisoned in the camp. As a result of torture, hunger, and inhumane conditions more than 160 Ukrainians died in the camp.

More in: Eugeniusz Misilo *Akcja "Wisla,"* Warsaw: Archiwum Ukrainskie, 1993.

Translation from Polish

APPEAL OF POLISH INTELLECTUALS CONCERNING OPERATION "WISLA"

In 1997, it will be 50 years since the execution of Operation "Wisla" in result of which the Ukrainian population of south-eastern and central-eastern regions of Poland fell victims to massive resettlement and collective repressive actions. The memory of this dreary "operation" casts a shadow on both the social coexistence inside our country and the relations between the Polish and Ukrainian nations.

The past of the Polish-Ukrainian relations includes beside painful and tragic pages also memories of good coexistence and cooperation between the two nations. Ukraine and Poland, reborn in their independent and democratic life, have a very important role to play in building a new European order. It is very important not to allow the ghosts of the past to weaken the possibility of fulfilling such a role and to prevent us from building Polish-Ukrainian bond of common interests and undertakings. This requires both sides to justly evaluate the past.

Operation "Wisla" was the result of a Stalinist system and the consequence of a totalitarian ideology and policy. We condemn the operation univocally and with all our strength. We pay respect to its victims, express our sympathy to all who endure painful memory of the injustice

done to their families and their community, and express our hope that the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, to the extent presently possible, will do all it can in order to redress the wrongdoings then inflicted.

Andrzej Ananicz Andrzej K. Aumiller Leszek Balcerowicz Marek Balicki Jacek Baluch Jerzy Bartmiski Wladyslaw Bartoszewski Bogumila Berdychowska Zygmunt Berdychowski Andrzej Bober Henryka Bochniarz Jacek Borkowicz Wojciech Borowik Adam Borowski Andrzej Borowski Bogdan Borusewicz Juliusz Braun Jaroslaw Broda Piotr Buczkowski Ryszard Bugaj Zbigniew Bujak Andrzej Celinski Miroslaw Chojecki Jolanta Chocholak Jerzy Ciemniewski Ireneusz Cieslik Leszek Chwat Grzegorz Cygonik Izabella Cywinska Waldemar Dabrowski Maria Dmochowska Krzysztof Dolowy Jan Dworak Roman Duda Malgorzata Dzieduszycka Jerzy Esymont Czeslaw Fiedorowicz Krzysztof Figel Grzegorz Figura Tomasz Fijalkowski Zbigniew Florczak Wladyslaw Frasyuniuk Andrzej Friszke Wojciech Gasparski Radoslaw Gawlik Andrzej Geberle Bronislaw Geremek Jerzy Giedroyc Zbigniew Gluza Jaroslaw Gowin Marian Grzeszczak Jerzy Gwizdz Adam Hanuszkiewicz Jozefa Hannelowa Lothar Herbst Adam Hlebowicz Gustaw Holoubek Stanislaw Husakowski Barbara Imiolczyk Aleksander Jackowski Zbigniew Janas Andrzej Janowski Jan Janowski Tomasz Jarnot Miroslaw Jasinski Adolf Juzwenko Malgorzata Kaminska Wieslaw Kaminski Zdzislaw Kaminski Bogdan Klich Jerzy Kloczowski Antonina Kloskowska Aleksander Koj Eugeniusz Koko Jerzy Kolczynski Miroslaw Kopydowski Stanislaw Kracik Jan Krol Krzysztof Krol Waldemar Kuczynski Zofia Kuratowska Joanna Kurczewska Jacek Kurczewski Jacek Kuron Marek Kurzyniec Marek Langda Irena Lipowicz Jan Litynski Krzysztof Luks Andrzej Los Andrzej Machowski Janusz Maciejewski Piotr Madajczyk Agnieszka Magdziak-Miszewska Tadeusz Maj Zbigniew Makarewicz Aleksander Malachowski Piotr Marciniak Henryk Markiewicz Tadeusz Mazowiecki Zbigniew Maczka Jerzy Meyszowicz Andrzej Micewski Adam Michnik Zdobyslaw Milewski Czeslaw Milosz Piotr Mitzner Leszek Moczulski Kornel Morawiecki Piotr Mucharski Zdzislaw Najder Malgorzata Niespodzinska Zbigniew Nosowski Maria Nowakowska Jerzy Marek Nowakowski Piotr Nowina-Konopka Barbara Okoniewska Jan Okonski Michal Okonski Jan Olszowski Janusz Onyszkiewicz Zbigniew Opacki Mieczyslaw Orski Piotr Pankanin Aleksander Paszynski Robert Pawlowski Krzysztof Piesiewicz Wieslaw Pietruszak Piotr Polmanski Adam Pomorski Jerzy Przystawa Wlodzimierz Puzyna Anna Radziwill Krzysztof Radziwill Jan Maria Rokita Andrzej Romanowski Zbigniew Romaszewski Andrzej Rosciszewski Jan Rulewski Jozef Maria Ruszar Pawel Saar Henryk Samsonowicz Tomasz Schoen Krystyna Sienkiewicz Jacek Sieradzki Wlodzimierz Siwinski Bohdan Skaradzinski Krystyna Slominska Leszek Slominski Wieslaw Slominski Artur Smolko Stefan Starczewski Joanna Starega-Piasek Tadeusz Stegner Bozena Steinborn Stanislaw Stepien Maria Stolzman Tomasz Strzembosz Hanna Suchocka Boleslaw Sulik Tadeusz Syryjczyk Jaroslaw Szostakowski Adam Szostkiewicz Bernard Szweda Iwona Sledzinska-Katarasinska Jacek Taylor Ludwik Turko Jerzy Turowicz Andrzej Urbanik Andrzej Wajda Roman Wapinski Jan Waszkiewicz Andrzej Werner Andrzej Wielowiejski Stefan Wilkanowicz Tomasz Wiscicki Jerzy Wocial Jacek Wozniakowski Henryk Wozniakowski Jerzy Woznicki Wojciech Wrzesinski Ludwika Wujec Henryk Wujec Krystyna Zachwatowicz Bogdan Zadura Maria Zajackowska Andrzej Zakrzewski Pawel K. Zalewski Marek Zielinski Franciszek Ziejka Wieslawa Ziolkowska.

The list includes 191 signatures, among them many prominent Polish intellectuals:

1. **Czeslaw Milosz** (Literature Nobel Prize winner);
2. **Hanna Suchocka** (former Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland);
3. **Tadeusz Mazowiecki** (former Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland);
4. **Jerzy Giedroyc** (prominent Polish intellectual, director of the famous Literary Institute in Paris; during the time when communists were in power, he and his monthly *Kultura* were the conscience and voice of free Poland);
5. **Leszek Balcerowicz** (former Minister of Finances and the author of the Polish transition to market economy)
6. Politicians and former Solidarity movement activists: **Bogdan Borusewicz, Ryszard Bugaj, Wladyslaw Frasyuniuk, Bronislaw Geremek, Zbigniew Janas, Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik, Kornel Morawiecki, Janusz Onyszkiewicz, Jan Rulewski, Henryk Wujec, Jan Litynski, Miroslaw Chojecki;**
7. Famous Polish film and theatre directors, actors, and actresses: **Andrzej Wajda, Adam Hanuszkiewicz, Gustaw Holoubek, Krystyna Sienkiewicz, Krystyna Zachwatowicz, Izabella Cywinska** (former Minister of Culture of the Republic of Poland);
8. Writers: **Jerzy Marek Nowakowski, Lothar Herbst;**
9. Scholars: **Prof. Henryk Samsonowicz** (former Rector of the University of Warsaw), **Prof. Bronislaw Geremek** (presently the Head of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Polish Parliament), **Prof. Henryk Markiewicz;**
10. Distinguished media representatives: **Jerzy Turowicz, Jozefa Hannelowa, Jacek Sieradzki.**

Toronto, May 4, 1997

The Honourable Aleksander Kwasniewski
President of the Republic of Poland
ul. Wiejska 10
00-902 Warsaw, Poland

The Honourable Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz
Premier of the Republic of Poland
Al. Ujazdowskie 1/3
00-583 Warsaw, Poland

The Honourable Deputies of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland
The Sejm of the Republic of Poland
ul. Wiejska 4-6
00-902 Warsaw, Poland

Mr. President, Mr. Premier, Honourable Deputies,

We, Canadians, are gathered here on May 4, 1997, in front of the Ontario Provincial Legislature, Toronto, Canada, to commemorate the 50-th anniversary of the infamous Operation "Wisła" ("Akcja Wisła"). We are the victims of the operation, and the descendants, friends and relatives of those who were forcefully deported. We have assembled here to pay our respects to them. In the name of international law and universal human values, we urgently request that you take the following reparatory measures to correct the grave injustices that were inflicted upon the Ukrainian population in Poland by the Polish State in 1947:

In particular we request:

1. That Operation "Wisła" be declared an unlawful act and its effects rehabilitated.
2. That the decrees issued in connection with Operation "Wisła" be declared null and void.
3. That due rights be granted to the former prisoners of the Jaworzno Central Labour Camp.
4. That the perpetrators of the crimes committed on the Ukrainian population be brought to justice.
5. That all of the communal and private properties illegally seized at that time be returned to their rightful owners, and

That the recently accelerated sale of the former Ukrainian properties in the south-eastern part of Poland to third parties be stopped.

6. That a fund be established to fully renew the destroyed cultural, religious, social and political life of the Ukrainian minority in Poland.
7. That an active role in fighting intolerance and discrimination be taken and that resolved actions against any tendencies to assimilate the autochthonous Ukrainian minority and to deprive it of its cultural heritage be initiated.
8. That the government take an active role in fostering understanding among the various ethnic minorities and the Polish authorities, and that an accurate historical research and analysis of modern Polish-Ukrainian relations be facilitated.

Having our future generations and the desire to remove obstacles from the developing Ukrainian-Polish relations in mind, we ask that you take the above measures to remedy all the discriminatory policies and to commence immediately rehabilitating the victims and their descendants.

RALLY

(50th ANNIVERSARY of OPERATION "WISLA")
Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario
May 4, 1997 at 4:00 p.m.

P R O G R A M

1. 3:45 p.m. - Ukrainian Youth Ensembles Corporation
Band "Avangard", Musical director - Wasyl Kardash
2. 4:00 p.m. - ATTENTION - *Marta Masley*
3. O CANADA - *Band "Avangard"*
4. INTRODUCTION - *Marta Masley*
 - a) objectives
 - b) welcome (guests, organizations...)
5. SILENCE - *Marta Masley*
(In memory of the victims of Operation "Wisla")
6. SURMACH - *Band "Avangard"*
7. PRAYER - *Bishop I. Borecky, Bishop Y. Kalishchuk,*
Band "Avangard"
8. RALLY ADDRESSES:
 - *Carl De Faria, M.P.P., Sponsor of the Rally*
 - *Wasyl Weryha, 1st Vice-President of Ukrainian World Congress*
 - *Oksana Sokolyk, President of World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations*
 - *Marika Shkambara, President of Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Toronto Branch*
9. *Band "Avangard"*
10. Main speaker: *Dr. Evhen Roslycky, President of Ukrainian Canadian Congress Province of Ontario*
11. *Band "Avangard"*
12. Main speaker: *Yuri Shymko, former M.P.P.*
13. *Band "Avangard"*
14. APPEAL to the POLISH AUTHORITIES
15. UKRAINIAN NATIONAL ANTHEM - *Band "Avangard"*
16. CONCLUSION