

## Summary

### On the edge of the new reality.

#### Socio-political situation in Biala Krakowska and Biala County in 1945.

In 1945 Biala County (Polish: powiat bialski) became the part of the Cracow Voivodeship (województwo krakowskie), covering an area of 635 sq/km with the population of 134 870 people in December 1945. The area was divided into four boroughs – Biala, Kety, Oswiecim(Auschwitz), Wilamowice and eight rural communities. The Red Army stepped into the territory of Biala County at the end of January 1945, but after taking over the control of Biala, the Soviet offensive stopped for a few weeks. In result, the Germans withdrew from the last villages of the Biala County at the beginning of April 1945. During that period indigenous inhabitants suffered not only from warfare and lack of supplies, but especially from Soviets soldiers, who committed a plenty of crimes like murders, thefts, rapes and exortions. Military presence of The Red Army enabled Polish communists to start building new administration. Special operational grup consisted of non-residents Polish communists came over to Biala just after the Soviets conquest of the town. Members of that group were appointed as the heads of institutions like County Authority Office (Starostwo Powiatowe), Secret Political Police (Powiatowy Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego) or Propaganda Office (Powiatowy Urząd Informacji i Propagandy). The control of those offices by communists remarkably facilitated them the proces of taking over the power. Communists and their supporters were also favoured in all national councils (rady narodowe), which were supposed to be local centres of legislative power. Just representatives of four parties - Polish Workers Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza), Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna), People's Party (Stronnictwo Ludowe) and Alliance of Demokrats (Stronnictwo Demokratyczne) were allowed to take a part in the proceedings. In the second part of the year activity of some councils was suspended, when most of the representatives of the SL moved to the oppositional party, led by Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe).

The war significantly changed the ethnic structure of Biala, Oswiecim and a few villages in the region. Most of the Jewish, who had played there an important role in the interwar period were killed. The pre-war German residents and Germans who had come here during the war, fled before the Red Army came. Their deserted properties were taken over by Polish council (Delagatura Tymczasowego Zarządu Państwowego) and later assigned for new Polish residents. In some cases, when the Polish or Jewish pre-war owners came back, the propeties were given back to them.

Those Germans who didn't flee, were usually put into labour camps and later sent to Germany. The expulsion was suspended in autum 1945, when the Soviets stopped

to receive convoys with migrants in their occupation zone of Germany. Volksdeutschs with the category II, III and IV of The Deutsche Volksliste (DVL) had a possibility to stay, but they had to undergo the process of rehabilitation.

In 1945 the Polish government organised the resettlement of Polish citizens from pre-war eastern and central Poland to territories which were given to Poland from Germany in 1945. Volunteers for migration from Biala County were moved to Western Territories (Ziemie Zachodnie) in seven huge convoys, numbering several hundred people each. In autumn 1945 Polish authorities changed the form of convoys. Since that time, volunteers were sent to Western Territories in much smaller groups, up to tens of migrants. Many of them, if they couldn't find a proper place for living, came back to Biala powiat.

One of the most important institutions responsible for resettlement of people was the State Repatriation Office (Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny). Officials of Biala branch of PUR were involved not only in transfer of local residents to Western Territories, but especially in protection of migrants who stopped in Biala region on their way back home. Some migrants who decided to domicile in Biala powiat created their own association (Związek Repatriantów w Białej).

Communists had many organizational problems in their party. Moreover, the new order which was being created by PPR, evoked violent and nonviolent resistance. Like in other regions of Poland, violent resistance was carried out by different armed groups derived from the Home Army (Armia Krajowa) or Polish National Movement. Members of all those groups were arrested, murdered or they just ceased fighting. PSL, with such local leaders as Wojciech Jakielek and Kazimierz Koziel, constituted the main legal, but oppositional party. Also some members of PPS, in Biala County led by Rudolf Klimczak, tried to maintain their independence from PPR. Similar process was noticed in youth organizations linked to the PPR PPS, PSL.

Defiance against the regime was intensified by hard conditions of living. All items, especially food and clothes, were very expensive, whilst the salaries were low and irregular. Dissatisfaction of inhabitants was stronger in the east bank of Biala river, because they could see and compare that the standard of living was better in the towns and villages belonging to Silesian Voivodeship, situated on the west bank of Biala river, nonetheless the percentage of Volksdeutschs was there much higher. In common opinion of Polish people, those who didn't sign DVL should get the better supplies of food and everyday items. That was one of the reasons why authorities from Biala County in 1945 continued the efforts to join Bielsko and its county to Biala and Cracow Voivodeship. The process of merger was completed on 1 January 1951 when Bielsko i Biała became one city – Bielsko-Biała.