The Adaptation of Refugees from Greece in the Polish Bieszczady Mountains (1951-1970)

In the years 1946-1949 the Greek Civil War was fought between the Greek government army and the communist Democratic Army of Greece (DSE). Poland dominated by Soviets extended support to the Greek communist guerrillas through secret operations. As a result of the civil war 13-15 thousand refugees from Greece (ethnic Greeks and Macedonians) came to Poland in years 1948-1956. Most of them was settled in the region of Lower Silesia.

In 1951 Poland held an exchange of border areas with the USSR. As a result Polish authorities set up a new district (Ustrzyki poviat) in the province of Rzeszow (Rzeszów voiewodship). New district covered depopulated area in the Bieszczady Mountains. Earlier the authorities displaced indigenous Ukrainian population from the Bieszczady mountains in operation against Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). In late 1951 Polish authorities started to settle first refugees from Greece in this area. According to Polish authorities plan it was natural to settle refugees from mountainous Greece to depopulated area of the Bieszczady mountains. Most of the refugees were shepherds and peasants prior to the Greek Civil War. In 1953 there was 3000 refugees from Greece in the Bieszczady Mountains. In some small towns (e.g. Krościenko) and surrounding villages refugees from Greece were majority of the population. The paper analyses adaptation of refugees from Greece in the area of the Bieszczady mountains with special focus on economic (e.g. cooperatives), political and educational spheres of life.

The paper is mostly based on source literature and Polish archival materials from archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Institute of National Remembrance and the Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw.

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