

SUMMARY

Rzeszow voivodeship society in regard to their new socio-political reality (1944-1956)

After a long, difficult and dangerous occupation period as well as warfare waged on the Polish state, post war reality was not easy for its citizens, not only because of the scale of destruction but mainly because of the new political system and imposition of communist authority. Creating new state administration and security apparatus, Lublin government representatives directed relevant special operation groups to the areas controlled by the Red Army. These groups consisted of Polish communist delegates who were loyal, NKWD trained and 'proper ideology' oriented. Initially militia and UB ranks as well as various positions in administration and government, were filled with people opposing or even defying new government. Rzeszow voivodeship, which in fact was established in 1945, was one of the many areas in the country, where destruction was immense. Infrastructure was completely destroyed; generally the area was lacking everything, food, shelter, jobs, to name the few. Additionally back in 1944, Red Army forayed the area and soldiers had to be provided for, which was a huge strain for the people in the area, especially that said soldiers were not very well controlled and soon enough robberies, rapes, larcenies, possession seizures and murders executed by the soldiers, become a gloomy every-day reality. During that time people feared for their safety, leading normal life was impossible in many parts of Rzeszow voivodeship, which was caused mainly because of the Ukrainian underground, which was very active in the area. As a consequence of shortages and lack of essentials, there was a growing concern and pessimistic atmosphere among the people. During the Second Republic this region was considered poorly urbanized and undeveloped, lacking industrial centers, which led to lacking working class. Social structure wasn't varied, dominated by peasants. Despite agricultural reform, need for lands have not been satisfied, still, small acreage farms were in majority. Peasant's attitude towards land allocations varied, among the supporters were mainly the smallholders and the landless. As a part of the

reform, agriculture collectivization was introduced in 1948, however people in the area especially peasants voiced their strong opposition as well as refused to join the cooperatives. Rural population was the majority in the province of Rzeszow and generally accepted their new reality. After the war, ethnic diversity in small towns changed, as a result of Nazi ideology, number of Jews in general was reduced drastically, Ukrainians resettlement began and came to its peak in 1947. The area was flooded with repatriates from Polish territories incorporated into the Soviet Union, forced laborers, taken during the war, labor and concentration camps survivors and soldiers. These factors influenced people's attitudes towards their new sociopolitical reality. After the war most of the people in the area was not politically active, whether on authorities side or in the opposition however the reality as it was often forced people to use mimicry or hide their hostility towards new government. Many felt confused; they wanted to lead normal life after facing hardships and dangers during the war, therefore they were more inclined to adapt, which only created a discord between their views and actions. The battle for power was fought on different levels, including political one. People's attitudes in Rzeszow Province towards Popular Voting and SU elections varied from ostentatious support, through neutral to boycotting. The idea of vote rigging was much alive just after the election, as people believed it happened before with the referendum, which in turn led to attitude changes among majority of people in the area. Most of the people now preferred to adapt rather than openly oppose and despite general hostility towards new government, they gave up and any will to resist was virtually non-existent. Additionally, as mentioned before, many people just wanted to lead their lives, work, learn and participate in rebuilding of their country. Many gave in to propaganda. Public perception and opinion about the government was highly influenced by repression applied by the secret police (UB), intrusive propaganda and society's indoctrination. The Communist Party invested much in propaganda, to better manipulate and convince society to their ideology and as a result subordinate people, social engineering was used as a way to gain acceptance. Most of the people were focused on their daily lives and struggles rather than on politics, especially

that, at that time engaging in political matters could have been dangerous and even lead to death, which was very discouraging for people. It could be assumed that many members of militia, secret police or even The Communist Party, after the war joined the ranks of the above not because of their beliefs but because of their opportunism and pragmatism.