

The Polish Diplomacy and the Great Famine, 1932-1933

(Summary)

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at the

James Mace Memorial Panel, IAUS Congress, Donetsk, Ukraine

on Wed 19th June 2005.

A thorough examination of Polish archival materials proves that the diplomacy and the governmental circles of the Second Polish Republic were quite well informed about the Soviet Ukraine's situation in the tragic period of 1932-1933. The reliable source of information were from regular reports and analyses from the Polish Legation (then: Embassy) in Moscow (especially from its trade counsellor and military attaché) and from the two consulates established in Ukraine (in Kharkiv and Kiev). The majority of these records were destroyed during and after the WWII, nonetheless some valuable documents survived and some can be recovered basing on "Polska i zagranica" — the inner newsletter edited by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which contains excerpts from the most interesting diplomatic reports. The documents in question provide us mainly with data on the situation in the big urban centres, but Polish observers were equally aware of the Ukrainian countryside's tragedy. In particular they expressed a number of accurate opinions on the reasons and processes that had led to the artificially provoked famine of 1932-1933 and on the estimate number of its casualties.

In Polish documents one can also find very interesting evidence on some questions connected with the problem of the Ukrainian Famine, for example on the attempts to organise an international aid action or on the leading Western "Famine liar", "The New York Times" correspondent, Walter Duranty. Then there are a separate group of the Polish materials which consists of reports on various aspects of the Soviet authorities' anti-Ukrainian campaign, which started in 1933. The Polish diplomats especially attentively examined such matters as: the collapse of the Ukrainization policy, successive cleansings in the CP(b)U, crushing of the Ukrainian scholarly and educational institutions, persecutions against the intelligentsia and re-Russification of public life in Ukraine.

The analysed material convinces us that the Polish authorities were not anxious to give publicity to the information they possessed. It seems rather surprising since in the previous period they demonstrated a notorious hostility toward the Soviets and did not miss a single opportunity to make political and propaganda use of their enemy's troubles — especially in the Ukrainian affairs. This time however it came to the combination of the two independent factors which had changed the Polish attitude. The first was the Polish government's conviction that the Bolshevik regime in Ukraine attained a temporary stability, and the second — the unfavourable changes in the international situation for Poland which determined that Warsaw tried to compromise with the Soviets.