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The Jews and the evacuation of Russians from the Kingdom of Poland in 1915

The evacuation of Russians from the Kingdom of Poland in 1915 was accompanied not only by the most violent expulsions, but also by scorched earth policy. Emissary of one of the rescue committee in his reports from the Lublin *gubernya* wrote: "One travels for hours through an absolute emptiness; no towns, no villages, no people. On the left hand side and on the right hand side – nothing; as far as the eye can see a melancholic, desperate emptiness which is not broken at all by the buildings of a railway station; the microscopic sheds patched together out of boards"¹.

The lists prepared by various institutions do not show how many damages were caused by the Russians, and how many by Germans and Austrians, although, undoubtedly, the direct material damages in the areas where the battles were not fought, were mostly caused by the tsarist troops during their evacuation in summer 1915.

Analyzing the course of the military operations in the Kingdom of Poland during the first year of the war and the Russian evacuation, we can point out that the results of these operations were: loss of population and forced migration movement, serious material losses and pauperisation of the population, and, last but not least, worsening of the Polish-Jewish relations as a result of politics of the Russian military authorities and worsening of the living conditions.

Although deportations and expulsions had not ceased almost since the first days of the war, the great exodus of the population reached its peak in summer of 1915 and was caused by the Russian evacuation. It is difficult to establish the true number of the people who were forced to migrate. The groups of the exiles grew as the front lines were moving; however, some researchers estimate that in the years 1914-1915, the Russians evacuated from the Kingdom of Poland about 1150 to 1200 thousand people: the Tsarist officials and their families, the military personnel, the Russian Orthodox Church priests, the Polish workers and the railwaymen².

¹ Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych w Warszawie [then: AGAD], K.u.k. Militärgeneralgouvernement in Lublin [then: MGGL], sign. Präs. 1790 nn.

² J. Holzer, J. Molenda, *Polska w pierwszej wojnie światowej*, Warszawa 1963, p. 64; W. Najdus, *Uchodźcy polscy w Rosji w latach 1917-1918*, „Kwartalnik Historyczny” 1957, nr 6, p. 26.

The attempt to estimate the number of the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Poland who were forced to move to Russia due to the war events is not easy. It is estimated that up to the moment when the Central States started to occupy the country, 800,000 to 1,000,000 people – besides the ethnic Russians – were either forced to move or voluntarily left the Kingdom, but those figures include also the parts of Galicia invaded by the Russians³. The Polish rescue institution named the Central Citizens' Committee quoted – for the 1 October 1916 – the total number of 744,319 displaced registered by the Polish aid organisations in Russia. A year before, in 1915 the other periodical, "Hasło" (*The Password*) cited 850 thousand Poles forced to leave their homes and about 150 thousand evacuated officials, the Orthodox Church priests, the railwaymen and workers. We can assume that the total number of the displaced, the evacuated and those who escaped from the Kingdom and Galicia, excluding the Polish POWs, the subjects of the foreign states and the Polish soldiers serving in the Russian Army was around one million and that figure appears most often in the specialist literature. The other sources quote the number of 850 thousand of the displaced people from the Kingdom itself, and in the estimates of the People's Committee for the Polish Affairs we can find the number of 1,500,000 exiles from the Polish provinces⁴. And according to the data collected by the above mentioned Central Citizens' Committee when the Russian evacuation was still on the way, the number of the people chased away from the country was approximately 400 thousand. In later reports on the activities of this Committee, the number of 500,000 people displaced from the Kingdom and Lithuania is cited, and "Dziennik Kijowski" (*The Kiev Daily*) wrote in October 1915 about 900 thousand evacuees from the Kingdom of Poland⁵. Accepting the most often quoted total number of 1,000,000 people displaced from the Polish territories and taking into consideration the fact that the Polish aid organisations did not register and did not know about the fate of all the evacuated people, we may estimate the number of the escapees from the Kingdom as 750 – 850 thousand.

The data above relate, first of all, to the Polish population and it is difficult to establish how many Jews and people of other nationalities were forced to emigrate. The calculations are often more difficult because of the fact that especially the Jews "were not exiled out of the borders of the country but were pushed around within its borders which resulted in bigger towns becoming the shelter of the Jews from the nearby smaller towns"⁶. According to the statistics prepared by the Jewish aid committees in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev and Odessa for the day of 20 May 1915, 526,000 Jews from the Kingdom of Poland, the Lithuanian Provinces, the Volhynia, the Podole and the Kurland, as well as the occupied part of Galicia were exiled, evacuated or escaped because of the approaching troops⁷.

³ M. Korzeniowski, *Na wygnanym szlaku... Działalność Centralnego Komitetu Obywatelskiego Królestwa Polskiego na Białorusi w latach 1915-1918*, Lublin 2001, p. 107.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 107-109. See also: P. Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking. Refugees in Russia during World War I*, Bloomington - Indianapolis 1999, p. 15, 17-34, 51-52, 57, 79, 88, 129-135, 139, 142, 154-157.

⁵ Archiwum Państwowe w Krakowie [then: APK], Naczelny Komitet Narodowy [then: NKN], sign. 90 p. 30.

⁶ YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York [then: YIVO], Lucien Wolf & Dawid Mowschowitch Papers [then: WM], sign. 59, f. 4854.

⁷ K. Zieliński, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach Królestwa Polskiego w czasie pierwszej wojny światowej*, Lublin 2005, p. 137-139.

Table 1. The numbers and the territorial affiliation of the registered exiles staying in Russia under the care of the Central Citizens' Committee in 1916.

Province	Number of exiles
Łomża	81 654
Chełm*	57 811
Lublin	56 898
Suwałki	25 835
Radom	21 101
Piotrków	10 834
Płock	11 059
Kalisz	4348
Kielce	3603
Warsaw – City	43 562
Warsaw	28 400
Total	336 105

* Before the war, the Chełm Province was directly included into the borders of the Empire but covered the territories earlier forming a part of the Kingdom, hence the Central Citizens' Committee aided also the escapees from that Province.

Source: M. Korzeniowski, *Na wygnńczym szlaku ... Działalność Centralnego Komitetu Obywatelskiego Królestwa Polskiego na Białorusi w latach 1915-1918*, Lublin 2001, p. 116 (*On the Path of the Exiles ... The Activity of the Central Citizens' Committee of the Kingdom of Poland In Belarus In the years 1915-1918*).

According to Max Warburg, one of the leading members of the Hilsverein für Deutschen Juden, about 340,000 Jews from the Kingdom of Poland were forced to leave the country for ever or temporarily. Also the other estimates show that out of the number of 1,700,000 Jews living in the Kingdom in 1914, about 340,000 left the country, most often under compulsion. Out of those that remained in the Kingdom, about 455,000 starved and were provided aid by the charity institutions. Besides, about 50,000 were evacuated and chased away behind the front lines if those lines had run close to where they lived (these people not always left the country)⁸. One should remember that those were the data given by the rescue committees, based on the number of the Jews who used the aid of the committees or the institutions, which these committees supported and do not include those escapees who did not reach the rescue bureaus or did not want or could not use that help, and finally, those who left the Kingdom with the groups of the population of other nationalities⁹. The data concerning the support provided to the Jews by the religious communities or vocational organisations are also not precise, so the most often cited number of 340,000 have to be treated only as the estimate data. Taking into consideration, however, that the war rolled over the whole Kingdom, there was almost no single Jewish family, particularly on the right bank of the Vistula River which was not affected by the compulsory migrations, even if it only meant

⁸ Among the refugees from the areas invaded by the Central States and Galicia occupied by Russians, there were 67,5% of the "Great Russians" (the Russians, the Ukrainians and the Belarusians), 13,2% of the Poles, 6,4% of the Jews, 4,9% of the Latvians and 8% of the refugees of other nationalities. Those figures had been established on the basis of the statistical studies carried out on the sample of 526 thousand refugees (15 April - 1 May 1916). Among the refugees both evacuating voluntarily and displaced by force, the village population constituted 80%.: Gatrell, p. 213-214.

⁹ YIVO, WM, sign. 58, f. 4737-4738; YIVO, WM, sign. 109, f. 13339-13340.

a temporary absence from home without leaving the borders of the Kingdom. As a rule, the Jews were ordered to move as far away from the front as possible¹⁰. Anne Kahan, a Jewish refugee from Siedlce, wrote in her diary (4 July 1915): "While returning home, I saw the refugees from the Radom Province. The avenue which led to the synagogue was crowded with the carts full of women, children and the old men. The (prayer) school was packed with people. The crowd was gathering around a weeping man. His wife had died on the road, leaving him with nine children"¹¹.

It is necessary to underline that the Jewish population terrorised by almost every military unit they encountered and by the armed gangs, marauders and the deserters from the Tsarist Army, also experienced the hostility of the Christian population. A catalyst of it was an anti-Semitic witch-hunt unleashed by the Russian command soon after the outbreak of the war when the Jewish treason and cooperation with the Germans and Austrians were openly proclaimed. It created a favourable atmosphere for the anti-Semitic attitudes, particularly so, since those were the inhabitants of the Kingdom, mostly Polish peasants, who fought in the Russian Army. So, the "Jewish traitors" supported the enemy and the opinions on the Jewish-German cooperation, had been widely spread for a long time. The Russian propaganda made – in connection with such action like barbarian bombardment of Kalisz by the German troops – that anti-Jewish riots, aggression, denunciations, and assaults of espionage and sabotage sometimes be organised under the banner of "the Russian patriotism". Not counting robberies of their Jewish neighbours' possessions together with Cossacks and soldiers, some Poles saw – in a larger perspective – a chance to replace Jews in economy¹².

Indeed, in many causes the situation of the Jewish population was tragic; there were plunders committed by the locals, and there were rapes and assassinations, although the latter ones were most often "the deeds" of the local dregs of the society, marauders and armed gangs roaming the roads. There was usually no reaction of the Russian authorities to the attacks by the local non-Jewish population. It is true that the governors and military commanders in Warsaw, Piotrków and also in Vilna and Grodno were to declare their opposition to "the perpetrators of the pogroms" and warn them of punishments, appealing in their proclamation for maintaining peace but – as we can read in the Jewish sources – neither the government nor the Poles treated those warnings seriously¹³.

Hostage-taking has become almost common practice. In many towns, after the Germans and Austrians who managed to take over the town for a short time have been chased away, the authorities carried out – under the most trivial pretexts – massive arrests among the local population. The problem concerned not the only Jews, but also local elites and people of German origin in particular; in fact, the most frequent passengers of the trains

¹⁰ M. Paléologue, *Rosja carów w czasie Wielkiej Wojny*, [w:] *Polska w pamiętnikach Wielkiej Wojny 1914-1918*, wybór i oprac. M. Sokolnicki, Warszawa 1925, p. 308-309.

¹¹ A. Kahan, *The Diary of Anne Kahan. Siedlce, Poland, 1914-1916*, „YIVO Annual” 1983, vol. 18, p. 208.

¹² Zieliński, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie*, p. 127-153.

¹³ YIVO, WM, sign. 112 nn.

which transported the exiled to the East were Germans and Jews, commonly suspected of being traitors and arrested in a sort of a preventive way¹⁴. The military authorities recalled the order of the Highest Command in which it recommended such a procedure because the Jews allegedly are engaged in spying and instigated the enemy troops against the Christian population in territories from which the Russians had been temporarily driven out¹⁵.

The Jewish hostages were to be not only a guarantee of loyalty of the Jewish population accused of sympathising with the Central Powers, but it was also a convenient way of extorting contributions from the communities or bribes from particular families. In the case of Jews, as well as in the case of Germans, the population which remained in towns and villages had an excellent chance to multiply their possessions and they knew how to make the most of every such opportunity¹⁶.

Since the beginning of 1915, the Russian Supreme Command intensified its efforts to seek "those responsible" for the defeats it suffered. General Iwanow, the commander of the south-western front excluded in January of that year the Jews from the supplies units, and in March all the Jewish soldiers were ordered to be sent to the front¹⁷. The common practice was to move the Jewish soldiers serving in the Tsarist Army, from garrison to garrison under the pretext that they would cooperate with the enemy. In the report of one of the chiefs of staff of the army operating on the south-western front from June 1915, one can read even such sensational and seriously treated information that the Jewish organisations in Germany were paying prostitutes to infect the Russian soldiers and officers with venereal diseases. The women suspected of being the members of those organisations were to be punished according to the severe rules of martial law, and the military authorities in some places issued many edicts on controlling the places where prostitution was cultivated. The careless customers responsible for spreading venereal diseases were to be additionally deported¹⁸.

Jewish depute to Duma N. M. Frydman, turning to his colleagues in July 1915 spoke cautiously about the crimes committed by the Tsarist army on the civil population: "Dear Sirs, you have to remember that on the Polish soil and in other parts of the country there is, blood of Jews and other nations flowing and unfortunately, these people do not die only from the hand of the enemy"¹⁹. Frydman was supported by Meir Bomasz, another Jewish depute from Łódź, who was an initiator of addressing some other parliamentary questions. They did not bring any results, however, and they were received passively also by his party

¹⁴ F. M. Schuster, *Between all fronts: The impact of World War I on Eastern-European Jewry*, „Medaon – Magazin für jüdisches Leben in Forschung und Bildung” 2016, No. 10 (18), p. 4, online http://www.medaon.de/pdf/medaon_18_schuster.pdf [30.12.2016].

¹⁵ Zieliński, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie*, p. 119-122.

¹⁶ *Zbiór dokumentów dotyczących sprawy polskiej. Sierpień 1914 r. – Styczeń 1915 r.*, b.m.w. 1915, p. 40-41.

¹⁷ S. Goldin, *Deportation of Jews by the Russian Military Command 1914–1915*, „Jews in Eastern Europe” 2000, No. 1 (41, Spring), p. 40-73; J. Piotrowskij-Sztern, *Jewrei w russoj armii 1827-1914*, Moskwa 2003, p. 353-354.

¹⁸ A. Yarmolinsky, *The Jews and Other Minor Nationalities Under the Soviets*, New York 1928, p. 39. See also the orders and the correspondence concerning the invigilation of the prostitutes from the Bureau of the Chief of the Department of the Protection of Order and Public Safety in Warsaw: Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii, Moskva, Fond 493: Warszawskaja Ispolnitel'naja Policia, op. 1 d. 15, p. 1-2.

¹⁹ More about activity of N. M. Frydman and M. Ch. Bomasz, see: K. Zieliński, *Problematyka żydowska i deputowani-Żydzi w rosyjskiej Dumie Państwowej (1906-1914)*, in: *Z dziejów pewnego eksperymentu. Parlamentaryzm rosyjski na progu XX stulecia w kontekście kształtowania się świadomości politycznej narodów imperialnej Rosji*, red. A. Duszyk, K. Łatawiec, M. Mądziak, Radom 2008, p. 99-119.

colleagues (the Cadets). The right wing press in Russia reported that “the Jewry which is surrounding us from all sides has its exemplary representatives, the Bomasz and Frydmans”²⁰.

Those were not only the Jews who were repressed, yet the differences – let us say in methods – of making those people leave their homes were clear. Also meeting a Cossack unit on the road meant most frequently something different for Jews and for the peasants. The Russian terror reached also the Poles, yet its scale was smaller. Stephanie Laudyn wrote that “the Polish nation wanted to forgive the Russians [the past] and knew how to forgive; the Russian Army understood that and in a simplicity of its soul, repaid the Poles wholeheartedly”²¹. A French journalist wrote in April 1915 that “in spite of the repressions, the inhabitants of Warsaw or Lublin treated the wounded Russian soldiers with a great care, and the Polish society remained loyal towards the Russian Army”²². And in May that year, a French ambassador Maurice Paléologue wrote about the fate of the Jewish population:

Since the beginning of the war, the Jews from Poland and Lithuania had suffered cruel repressions. In August, they were forced to leave en masse the border area without giving them time to take any of their possessions. After a short break, the displacements started anew, equally massive, equally rapid, equally brutal and reaching every day further out to the east. Gradually, all the Israeli population from Grodno, Łomża, Płock, Kutno, Łódź, Piotrków, Kielce, Radomsko, Lublin was being pushed towards the Podole and Wołyń Regions. Everywhere, the departure was preceded by the scenes of violence and plunder with the silent approval of the authorities. Thousands of those poor Jews were seen paddling through deep snows, driven as cattle by the Cossack troops, abandoned in miserable railway stations, camping out in the fields at the outskirts of towns, dying of hunger, exhaustion and cold. [...] Within the course of its tragic history, Israel has never experienced a more tragic expulsion. And in the Russian Army, there are about 240 thousand Jews and they are pretty fine soldiers!²³

The ultimate retreat of the Tsarist Army from the Kingdom was accompanied by the most violent expulsions, and also by the scorched earth policy. Many houses and community buildings in smaller towns were ruined. For instance, only in the Krasnystaw County, Turobin almost burnt to the ground, as well as the centre of Krasnystaw; in Puławy the whole Jewish quarter was burnt. In Markuszów near Puławy the retreating Russian troops set the town on fire, which led to the destruction of 80% of the houses. In Siedliszcze near Chełm, a synagogue and the baths were burned, when the local Jews did not manage – under an unknown pretext – to pay on time the contribution ordered by the commander of a Cossack unit. In some places, the tombs from cemeteries were used to build the military strongholds²⁴.

²⁰ „Russkoje Znamja” 1916, nr 122.

²¹ S. Laudyn, *A World Problem. Jews – Poland – Humanity*, Part I, transl. A. J. Zieliński, W. K., Chicago 1920, p. 80.

²² W. Śladkowski, *Opinia publiczna we Francji wobec sprawy polskiej w latach 1914–1918*, Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków – Gdańsk 1976, p. 102–103.

²³ Paléologue, p. 308–309.

²⁴ Zieliński, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie*, p. 141.

From official "The List of 51 towns and small towns, in which the number of the buildings destroyed due to the military activities exceeds 30%, and where carrying out the measurements, developing the situation and the regulation plans, and carrying out at least partial enclosure is necessary" from April 1918, results that the many *shtetles*, small towns and settlements were almost totally destroyed. For instance, in the vicinity of Ilża, Ożarów, Opatów, Chełm, Krasnystaw over 90% of the buildings were consumed by fire²⁵.

In the rural communities, the largest losses were noted among the Christians. It results from the study by Zygmunt Limanowski, published in 1918 under the title *Zniszczenia wojenne w budowlach b. Królestwa Polskiego* (*The War Destruction of Buildings in the Former Kingdom of Poland*) that in the years 1914-1915, due to the military operations about 6530 villages were destroyed in about 20%, 89 851 estates (11,2%) and 275 751 buildings (11,2%).²⁶ The value in roubles of the demolished and burnt buildings in the villages reached the sum of 34 862 070 (not including the Suwałki Province and four counties in the Siedlce Province).²⁷ The statistics prepared after the war by the Main Liquidation Bureau show that nearly 45 million zlotys had to be spent on the compensations covering only a part of the war damages²⁸.

Among the bigger towns, the largest number of buildings were destroyed in Kalisz, which was bombed by the Germans in the first year of the war, and then, in Warsaw, Łódź and Chełm²⁹. The greatest losses, however, affected the inhabitants of the Provinces situated in the south-eastern and north-eastern parts of the Kingdom: the Lublin, the Chełm and the Łomża Provinces, followed by the Radom and Piotrków *gubernyas*. Those were also the areas where the greatest losses in livestock were noted³⁰.

The lists prepared by various institutions do not show how many damages were caused by the Russians, and how many by the armies of the Central Powers although, undoubtedly, the direct material damages in the areas, where the battles were not fought, were mostly caused by the scorched earth policy used by the Tsarist troops during their evacuation in summer of 1915. The peasants and the Jews were among those town dwellers who suffered the most. According to "The List of the number of families of the harmed urban Christian and Jewish population, excluding landless peasants, there were 20 686 Jewish families and 9594 Christian families³¹.

²⁵ In: M. Przeniosło, *Chłopi Królestwa Polskiego w latach 1914-1918*, Kielce 2003, p. 50-53.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 54-56.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 46.

²⁸ Zieliński, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie*, p. 142.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ M. Przeniosło, *Straty i zniszczenia wojenne na terenach wiejskich Królestwa Polskiego w latach 1914-1915*, in: *Wież polska wobec wyzwania, przełomów i zagrożeń (XIX i XX w.)*, t. I, ed. M. Przeniosło, S. Wiech, Kielce 2002, p. 137-140.

³¹ Zieliński, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie*, p. 142-143.

Table 2. The number of the harmed population and the destroyed estates in the towns of the Kingdom of Poland over 20 thousand inhabitants (the list from 1919).

Town	Province	Total population	Population harmed	Number of harmed families	Number of destroyed properties
Kalisz	Kalisz	60 550	17 848	2975	333
Konin	Kalisz	11 918	468	78	18
Zduńska Wola	Kalisz	23 808	64	11	2
Warsaw	Warsaw	845 130	6945	1157	75
Łódź	Piotrków	459 353	3026	504	55
Zgierz	Piotrków	21 531	281	47	12
Radomsk	Piotrków	20 627	594	99	20
Chełm	Lublin	22 019	1487	248	43
Siedlce	Siedlce	29 031	26	4	1
Łomża	Łomża	26 726	150	25	5
Total	-	1 520 693	30 888	5148	564

Source: K. Zieliński, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach Królestwa Polskiego w czasie pierwszej wojny światowej*, Lublin 2005, p. 143.

Table 3. The destruction of buildings in *gubernyas* of the Kingdom of Poland caused by the military operations 1914-1915.

Province	Total number of properties	Number of the properties destroyed	% of the properties destroyed
Warsaw	147 292	15 024	10,2
Kalisz	109 504	600	0,5
Piotrków	140 904	6917	4,9
Kielce	112 106	4695	4,2
Radom	123 529	16 468	13,3
Lublin	172 658	35 416	20,5
Siedlce	63 313	3085	4,9
Łomża	70 365	18 178	25,8
Płock	55 232	4827	8,7
Total*	994 903	105 210	10,6

* There are no data from the Suwałki Province and four counties of the Siedlce Province: The Biała Podlaska, Konstantynów, Radzyń and Włodawa Counties.

Source: M. Przeniosło, *Chłopi Królestwa Polskiego w latach 1914-1918*, Kielce 2003, pp. 58-61.

“The List of the harmed population of towns and small towns” in the former Kingdom of Poland shows, on the other hand, that among those harmed by the foreign troops (war damages, requisitions, contributions, plunder) there were 22,454 landless peasants living in towns, 59,626 town dwellers, 57,622 people belonging to the category “the remaining Christian population”, and 124,120 Jews³².

³² *Ibidem*, p. 143-144.

Deportations and the behaviour of the Russians towards the civil population, including Jewish pogroms, gave the propaganda of the Central States rise to distribute proclamations addressed to the inhabitants of "the Russian Poland". The Poles were promised freedom, and in the appeals and proclamations directed to Jews, besides commenting the current events from the war theatre and accusing the Tsarist administration of anti-Semitism, there were references to the pogroms from Kishinev, Odessa and to the Bejlis' trial. Similar arguments were also used to persuade the Jews in the Habsburg Monarchy to donate funds for military purposes and to make them believe that the war against Russia was just, since the Central States were bringing liberation to the compatriots of the Jews of Vienna or Berlin³³.

To be precise, the conduct of the Central States armies, particularly the multi-national Austro-Hungarian troops was not without a blemish and compatible with the international conventions. Probably due to the propaganda distributed all over Europe about desecration of churches and places of religious cult committed by the Prussians, a decision had been made to establish the so called Jasna Góra Enclave covering the famous monastery with the adjoining park and a few neighbouring houses and putting it under the Austrian administration. There was truly no lack of the unjustified destructions and abuses of various kinds committed by the soldiers of the Central States. However, in comparison to the Russian soldiers, particularly in the first weeks of the war, the disciplined German and Austro-Hungarian troops behaved relatively correctly, especially in the eyes of Jews. In the eyes of the peasant population the Russian army was considered to be "our". The scorched earth policy in many regions of the country has changed this attitude.

³³ I. Deák, *Jewish Soldiers in Austro-Hungarian Society*, New York 1990, p. 17-18, 21-22; R. Jeřábek, *The Eastern Front 1914-1918*, in: *The Last Years of Austria-Hungary (Essays in Political and Military History 1908-1918)*, ed. M. Cornwall, Exeter 1990, p. 101; E. A. Schmidl, *Juden in der K. (u) K. Armee 1788-1918 (Jews in the Habsburg Armed Forces)*, Eisenstadt 1989, p. 122, 142-143.

The Jews and the evacuation of Russians from the Kingdom of Poland in 1915

It is estimated that during the first year of the war about 1,200,000 people were evacuated from the Kingdom of Poland (including tsarist officers, Russian teachers, officials, Orthodox clergy, workers from military factories and railroaders). The attempt to estimate the number of the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Poland who were forced to move to Russia due to the war events is not easy. It is estimated that up to the moment when the Central States started to occupy the whole country, 800,000 to 1,000,000 people – besides ethnic Russians – were either forced to move or voluntarily left Poland, but those figures include also the part of Galicia occupied by the Russians. The data considers mostly Poles, and it's difficult to establish the number of refugees of other nationalities, especially the Jews, who were often sent from place to place and did not leave the territory of the country. Accepting the most often quoted total number of 1,000,000 people displaced from the 'Russian Poland', Lithuania and Galicia and taking into consideration the fact that the Polish rescue organisations did not register and did not know about the fate of all the evacuated people, we may estimate the number of the escapees from 'Russian Poland' as 750,000 – 850,000 thousand.

According to the statistics prepared by the Jewish aid committees in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev and Odessa for the day of 20 May 1915, 526,000 Jews from the Kingdom of Poland, the Lithuanian provinces, the Volhynia, Podole and Kurland, as well as the occupied part of Galicia were exiled, evacuated or escaped because of the approaching troops. According to some sources, ca. 340,000 of them were inhabitants of the Kingdom of Poland. The evacuation of Russians in 1915 was accompanied not only by the most violent expulsions, but also by scorched earth policy. The peasants and the Jews were among those who suffered the most. However, for the Jews from Poland and Lithuania the war and evacuation was one of the most difficult experiences they had ever encountered. It turned out that the tsarist army was a true pillar of anti-Semitism, but robberies and destructions caused by the army were escalated by the local population.