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Memoirs of Siberian deportees¹ as a historical source in the research on the process of deporting Polish citizens deep into the USSR (1940–1941)²

In the Polish lands annexed to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (below referred to as USSR) in 1939, there were four large-scale deportations of Polish citizens in the years 1940-1941. Those people were resettled mainly to the northern areas of European Russia, to Siberia and to Kazakhstan.³

¹ The term was described very thoroughly by Wiktoria Śliwowska, Małgorzata Giżejewska and Janusz Ankudowicz in one of their publications, where they state: “*Sybir – as the vast areas of exile were called by the Russian name – was and remained in the Poles’ consciousness not only as a geographical term with exact boundaries on the map, but also a call sign of a complex of life experiences, occurrences and reflections concerning their own or their loved ones’ forcible separation from the homeland and patrimony. In this sense, Siberia included – before and then – all the areas of residence in the Russian Empire (with sentences to forced settlement, residence, hard labour, prisoner companies, etc.) and in the USSR (spetsposelenie (spetspereselenie), forced-labour camps, stroybats, etc.). This is how the exiles themselves felt it, regardless of whether they were to the west of the Ural Mountains (in Perm, Ufa, Vyatka, etc.) or in the Far East, Asian steppes, or even Caucasus. This is also how this issue was seen by the first scholars: Zygmunt Librowicz and Michał Janik.*” Quoted after: *Tryptyk kazachstański. Wspomnienia z zesłania: Marian Papiński, Rodzina Małachowskich, Lesława Domańska (The Kazakhstan Triptych. Memoirs of Exile: Marian Papiński, the Małachowski Family, Lesława Domańska)*, selection and compilation W. Śliwowska, M. Giżejewska, J. Ankudowicz, Warszawa 1992, p. 7; This is how the term is understood nowadays and the existent Association of Siberian Deportees is open to people who were deported to various parts of the USSR: both to Irkutsk or Novosibirsk and to Kolyma, Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan, and their memoirs have been published by the association under the following title: *Wspomnienia Sybiraków (Memoirs of Siberian Deportees)*.

² This article was also published in the Polish language and appeared in the publication: *Pamiętniki, dzienniki i relacje jako źródła do badań historycznych (Diaries, journals and reports as sources for historical research)*, ed. K. Karolczak, Kraków 2011, p. 245-261.

³ In this article, the terms “deportation” and “exile” are understood as the repressive resettlement of people in February, April and June 1940 as well as in June 1941 on the strength of

The first deportation was carried out on 10 February 1940. The deportees included families of settlers and forest rangers who possessed 3-4 morgens of land when the record was made and who enjoyed the privilege of the Polish state concerning settlement in the east. The families deported then also included Ukrainian families of settlers and forest rangers.⁴

On 13 April 1940, the deportees included the families of the repressed and of people who were in the prisoner-of-war camps: former officers of the Polish army, policemen, prison service, military policemen, intelligence agents, former landowners, factory owners and high-ranking officials of the Polish state apparatus. The deportees included also the families of: judges and prosecutors, university professors, Ukrainian nationalists, Jewish and Belarusian activists, people arrested before for political crimes and all the people who had escaped abroad, were in hiding or were wanted. Many of them were single-parent families because the fathers had been arrested earlier and not always joined their families during the transportation. Others, like the officers of the Polish army, policemen and people arrested before April 1940 were in camps or prisons.⁵

The third group of the deportees consisted of refugees from western and central Poland who were in the area occupied by the Soviets but declared that they wanted to leave for the area occupied by the Third Reich. These people came to the Eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic as early as in September 1939, fleeing from the German army, and after the end of the military activities, most of them did

the decisions of the central Soviet authorities to the determined – usually faraway (deep in the USSR) – places of residence permanently or for a definite time. Colloquially, the term “exile” has a broader meaning and is used to refer not only to deportees but also to people who landed in Soviet forced labour camps or in prisoner-of-war camps. The terms “deportees” and “exiles” are used interchangeably here to refer to people who were taken deep into the USSR during the deportations in the years 1940-1941. These matters are defined similarly by: D. Boćkowski, *Czas nadziei: obywatele Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w ZSRR i opieka nad nimi placówek polskich w latach 1940-1943* (*The Time of Hope: the Citizens of the Republic of Poland in the USSR and the Care Provided for Them by the Polish Institutions in the Years 1940-1943*), Warszawa 1999, p. 11; S. Ciesielski, *Polacy w Kazachstanie 1940-1946. Zesłańcy lat wojny* (*The Poles in Kazakhstan 1940-1946. The Exiles of the War Years*), Wrocław 1996, p. 8.

⁴ S. Ciesielski, G. Hryciuk, A. Srebrakowski, *Masowe deportacje radzieckie w okresie II wojny światowej* (*The Soviet Mass Deportations During the Second World War*), Prace Historyczne [Instytutu Historycznego Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego], Wrocław 1994, vol. 3, p. 37; Centralne Państwowe Archiwum Społecznych Organizacji Ukrainy w Kijowie (Central State Archives of Public Organisations of Ukraine in Kiev), f. 1, op. 16, spr. 18, k. 49-51; *ibid.*, spr. 19, k. 1-4.

⁵ A. Głowacki, *Sowieci wobec Polaków na ziemiach wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1939 – 1941* (*The Soviets Towards the Poles in the Eastern Lands of the Second Polish Republic 1939 – 1941*), Łódź 1998, p. 351; D. Boćkowski, *Czas nadziei...*, p. 75, 81-82.

not manage to come back to their pre-war places of residence.⁶ These people, unemployed and often homeless, repeatedly changing their place of residence and evading registration by the authorities, were considered a danger to the Soviet order and to the new rules of the organisation of the social life. Their deportation took place on the night of 28 June 1940.

During the fourth deportation in May and June 1941, the deportees included: people from intellectual spheres; refugees staying in towns and cities; families of railwaymen; families of people arrested by the NKVD during the second year of occupation; the closest relatives of people who were sentenced to the capital punishment, families of people from the underground movement; families of those arrested persons who were considered the leaders and devoted activists of counter-revolutionary insurgent organisations and of persons against whom inquiries were in progress; the closest relatives of the repressed landowners, traders and factory owners; members of the families of the repressed military policemen, policemen, high-ranking civil servants and officers of the Polish army.⁷

Memoirs of Siberian deportees against the background of other sources for the research on the process of deporting Polish citizens deep into the USSR in the years 1940–1941

The state of research on the deportation process is becoming more and more complete each year. As early as after the war, research was carried out by historians in emigration, but it was developed again in the early 1990s both in Poland and abroad. Only then there appeared opportunities, albeit still very limited, of using secret documents from Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian archives. Moreover, numerous memoirs about what happened in the Eastern Borderlands during World War II were published. These circumstances made it possible to begin a detailed study of the deportations of Polish citizens.⁸

⁶ It is estimated that there were around 400-450 000 refugees in the area of the Soviet occupation. The German and Soviet sides concluded agreements on population exchange on 28 September and on 16 November 1939. However, Germany accepted a rather small number of refugees compared to the number of people that were willing to leave. The exchange stopped suddenly in the middle of November 1939. Desperate people tried to cross the border on their own and many of them died or were crippled in the course of this. The question of the exchange was still relevant and as a result of agreements, in April and May 1940, Germany accepted 66 000 people, which was a rather small number. After: A. Głowacki, *Sowieci wobec Polaków...*, p. 351; D. Boćkowski, *Czas nadziei...*, p. 21.

⁷ D. Boćkowski, *Czas nadziei...*, p. 87.

⁸ As I do not aim at presenting the achievements of the Polish historiography on the deportations of Polish citizens to the USSR, which are already considerable, I will mention

However, there are numerous documents produced by the Soviet authorities, mainly by the NKVD, which are still unavailable for historians. This problem is solved to a small extent by the published collections of documents about deportations from Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian archives.⁹ The Polish editions were possible thanks to, among other things, the agreement on cooperation between the Polish Ministry of Interior and Administration and the Federal Security Service of Russia, and the agreement between the Polish Ministry of Interior and Administration and the Institute of National Remembrance.

An institution that contributed largely to the popularisation of the information about the deportations of Polish citizens in the years 1940-1941 to the USSR and has had great achievements as far as searching and publishing archive materials on this subject is concerned is the Russian Research, Information and Popularisation Centre “Memorial,”¹⁰ which cooperates with the “Karta” Centre in Warszawa. The East-

only some publications: S. Ciesielski, G. Hryciuk, A. Srebrakowski, *Masowe deportacje ludności w Związku Radzieckim (The Mass Deportations of People in the Soviet Union)*, Toruń 2004; Ciesielski S., Hryciuk G., Srebrakowski A, *Masowe deportacje radzieckie w okresie II [drugiej] wojny światowej (The Soviet Mass Deportations During World War II [Two])*, Wrocław 1993; D. Boćkowski, *Czas nadziei: obywatele Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w ZSRR i opieka nad nimi placówek polskich w latach 1940-1943*, Warszawa 1999; Żaroń P., *Deportacje na kresach [1939-41] (Deportations in the Eastern Borderlands [1939-41])*, Warszawa 1990, Żaroń P., *Ludność polska w Związku Radzieckim w czasie II wojny światowej (The Polish Population in the Soviet Union During World War II)*, Warszawa 1990; Wielhorski W., *Trzy pytania i trzy odpowiedzi: prawda o deportacji Polaków pod panowaniem sowieckim (Three Questions and Three Answers: the Truth about the Deportation of the Poles under the Soviet Rule)*, Kraków 1986; Głowacki A., *O deportacji osadników wojskowych w głąb ZSSR (w świetle materiałów NKWD) (On the Deportation of Military Settlers Deep into the USSR (in the Light of Materials of the NKVD))*, Warszawa 1994; Grześ B., *Deportacja nauczycieli do ZSRR [Związku Socjalistycznych Republik Radzieckich] 1939-1941 (The Deportation of Teachers to the USSR [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics] 1939-1941)*, Warszawa 1995.

⁹ „Zachodnia Białoruś” 17 IX 1939 r.-22 VI 1941 (“Western Belarus” 17.09.1939-22.06.1941), vol. 2: *Deportacje Polaków z północno-wschodnich ziem II Rzeczypospolitej 1940-1941 (Deportations of the Poles from the North-Eastern Lands of the Second Polish Republic 1940-1941)*, ed. Bernadetta Gronek, Grzegorz Jakubowski, Warszawa 2001; *Deportacje obywateli polskich z Zachodniej Ukrainy i Zachodniej Białorusi w 1940 roku (Deportations of Polish Citizens from Western Ukraine and Western Belarus in 1940)*, editorial board Viktor Komogorov et al., Warszawa 2003; *Deportatsiyyi – zakhidni zemli Ukrayiny kintsya 30-kh – pochatku 50-kh rr. Dokumenty, materialy, spohady u tr’okh tomakh*, vol. 1, 1939-1945, Lviv 1996.

¹⁰ The Centre “Memorial” in Moscow conducted, for instance, surveys and research on the Soviet repression against Polish citizens in the years 1939-1956. The cooperation with the “Karta” Centre in Warszawa brought several studies of the repressed Poles as well. Publications on the deportations include: *Indeks Represjonowanych (Index of Victims of Soviet Repression)*, vol. 14: *Deportowani w obwodzie archangielskim (Deported to the Arch-*

ern Archive of the “Karta” Centre includes a collection of copies of the documentation of the Soviet authorities that were involved in the deportations of Polish citizens from the Eastern Borderlands. There are similar materials in the Central Military Archives in Rembertów.

Another collection of sources: memoirs and documents of the Polish authorities in exile concerning the situation of Polish citizens staying deep in the USSR during World War II are kept in the archives of the Polish Institute and Władysław Sikorski Museum and of the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust in London.

To sum up, the sources from Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian archives concerning the deportations of Polish citizens in the years 1940-1941 published so far are not numerous and constitute only a small part of the archive material. At present, the access to these archives is limited to a large extent, and to some of them – still impossible. Some organisations and archives in Poland make an effort to solve this problem and try to obtain materials about the fate of Polish citizens under the Soviet occupation. In the future, query should be done at the Central Archive of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation, at the State Archive of the Russian Federation, at the Central Archive of the Federal Counterintelligence Service of the Russian Federation, and at the Russian State Military Archive. Moreover, there are documents in Ukrainian and Belarusian archives, as well as in archives in the regions to which the deportees were directed.¹¹ In Ukraine, these sources are still kept in the archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs¹² or in the archives of the Security Service of Ukraine and their local departments, which can be seen on the basis of both editions of documents and experiences made during hitherto queries.¹³ However, these

angelsk District), part 1, 2, eds E. Rybarska, A. Gur’yanov, A. Rachinskiy, T. Lozinskaya, Warszawa 2003; part 3, eds E. Dzwonkiewicz, A. Gur’yanov, A. Rachinskiy, T. Lozinskaya, Warszawa 2004; part 4, E. Rybarska, A. Gur’yanov, A. Rachinskiy, T. Lozinskaya, Warszawa 2006; part 5, eds E. Kołodziejska, A. Gur’yanov, A. Rachinskiy, T. Lozinskaya, Warszawa 2006; part 6, eds E. Kołodziejska, A. Gur’yanov, A. Rachinskiy, T. Lozinskaya, Warszawa 2007, part 7, eds E. Rybarska, A. Dzienkiewicz, A. Gur’yanov, A. Rachinskiy, T. Lozinskaya, Warszawa 2007; vol. 17: *Deportowani w obwodzie wologodzkiem (Deported to the Vologda District)*, eds E. Rybarska, A. Dzienkiewicz, S. Starostin et al. Warszawa 2005.

¹¹ A part of the source material from state archives of individual districts concerning the deportation of the Poles to Kazakhstan has been published. See: *Z dziejów Polaków w Kazachstanie 1936-1956: zbiór dokumentów z Archiwum Prezydenta Republiki Kazachstanu (From the History of the Poles in Kazakhstan 1936-1956: a Collection of Documents from the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan)*, Warszawa 2006.

¹² It is known that there are extensive sources about the February deportation in Tarnopol in the Archives of the Oblast Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

¹³ More on the subject: A. Zapalec, *Źródła dotyczące obywateli polskich z województwa tarnopolskiego w okresie pierwszej okupacji sowieckiej (1939-1941) [Sources Concerning the Polish Citizens from Tarnopol Voivodeship During the First Soviet Occupation (1939-*

materials have not been handed over to the state archives and, for this reason, historians cannot use them.

For the afore-mentioned reasons, memoirs of deportees are very important for learning about the deportation process, as they are often the main source for a reconstruction of the course of the deportation in a given locality and for finding about the living conditions in exile and the situations of individual families.

Availability and characteristics of different collections of memoirs

During the time of the People's Republic of Poland, the published memoirs about the experiences of Polish citizens in the eastern lands of the Second Polish Republic in the years 1939-1945, did not mention the subject of deportations or did it tentatively.¹⁴ But during the last ten-odd years, various institutions have gathered hundreds of memoirs of Polish exiles, which have become or will become a material for research in the humanities.

This was done by the Executive Board of the Association of Siberian Deportees in Warszawa, in whose office personal questionnaires of deportees and some of the memoirs from the local departments were collected. The association was established in 1988, and follows the tradition of the Association of Siberian Deportees founded in 1928. Nowadays, the association has around 40 000 members, including victims of Stalinist repressions, Polish citizens deported to the USSR and imprisoned there as well as their families. One of its objectives is to commemorate the fate of exiles and, therefore, the central authorities initiate research, collect sources about the experiences of Poles in Siberia (deportations, sentences to forced labour camps, conscriptions into labour battalions, etc.) and carry out publishing activity. So far many memoirs, photographs, documents and other mementoes have been obtained.¹⁵ Some of these materials have been included in the serial publications: „*Wspomnienia Sybiraków*” and „*Materiały źródłowe do dziejów sybirackich*” (the latter were published in the Kraków department).¹⁶

1941)], [in:] *Exodus. Deportacje i migracje (wątek wschodni). Stan i perspektywy badań [Deportations and Migrations (the Eastern Thread). The State and Perspectives of Research]*, ed. M. Zwolski, Warszawa-Białystok 2008, p. 66-67.

¹⁴ *Polacy w Rosji mówią o sobie (The Poles in Russia Speak About Themselves)*, selection and preface E. Walewander, vol. 1, Lublin 1993, p. 15.

¹⁵ *Materiały źródłowe do dziejów sybirackich ze zbiorów Komisji Historycznej Związku Sybiraków Oddział w Krakowie (Source Materials for the History of Siberian Deportees from the Collection of the Historical Commission of the Association of Siberian Deportees Kraków Department)*, Kraków 1995, p. 5.

¹⁶ *Wspomnienia Sybiraków (Memoirs of Siberian Deportees)*. Vol. 1: “*Polsza budżet kagda woron zbieliejiet (Pol'sha budet kogda voron sbeleet)*,” [prepared by J. Przewłocki]; the

The memoirs of Siberian deportees that were in the Executive Board of the Association of Siberian Deportees, collected by Janusz Przewłocki, were handed over as a deposit to the Eastern Archive of the "Karta" Centre more than a year ago. By contrast, some of them are still kept in the local departments of the Association, which obtained them from their members. For example, the Kraków department has collected 119 memoirs of Siberian deportees, some of which concern deportations. On the initiative of the Historical Commission, 58 memoirs from this collection were published in the years 1995-2008 in 14 volumes of the series entitled: *Tak było... Sybiracy (It Was Like That... Siberian Deportees)*.¹⁷

The sources of the memoir type for the research on deportations are also kept in the Central Archives of Modern Records (Archiwum Akt Nowych, AAN) in Warszawa, where the particularly significant collection is *Kolekcja Andersa (Anders's Collection)*¹⁸ including, among others, relations and memoirs of the Polish exiles who went from the Soviet Union to Iran as the soldiers of the Polish army. The memoirs were written shortly after the event and present a look from the perspective of two or three years, which distinguishes them from most memoirs concerning deportations. It results in certain research advantages, e.g. a greater probability of remembering the course of events and their chronology correctly than in memoirs written

Association of Siberian Deportees. Executive Board. The Historical Commission, Warszawa 1990; *Wspomnienia Sybiraków*, vol. 2: "Kto nie był tot budiet, kto był tot nie zabudiet (Kto ne byl tot budet, kto byl tot ne zabudet)," [compilation J. Przewłocki]; the Association of Siberian Deportees. Executive Board. The Historical Commission, Warszawa 1990; *Wspomnienia Sybiraków*, vol. 3: "Maskwa sliozam nie wierit (Moskva slëzom ne verit)," [compilation J. Przewłocki]; the Association of Siberian Deportees. Executive Board. The Historical Commission, Warszawa 1990; *Wspomnienia Sybiraków*, vol. 4: "Popał Stalinu w ruki, nie ždi pomilowania (Popal Stalinu v ruki, ne zhdi pomilovaniya)," [prepared by J. Przewłocki]; the Association of Siberian Deportees. Executive Board. The Historical Commission, Warszawa 1991; *Wspomnienia Sybiraków*, vol. 6: "Kak nie sidiel w tjur'mie, tak nie graždanin Sowjetskogo Sojuza (Kak ne sidel v tyurm'ye, tak ne graždanin Sovetskogo Soyuz), [prepared by J. Przewłocki]; the Association of Siberian Deportees. Executive Board. The Historical Commission, Warszawa 1992; *Wspomnienia Sybiraków*, vol. 9: "Tajga - zakon, miedwied' - prokuror (Tayga - zakon, medved' - prokuror)," [prepared by J. Przewłocki]; the Association of Siberian Deportees. Executive Board. The Historical Commission, Warszawa 1997; *Materiały źródłowe do dziejów sybirackich ze zbiorów Komisji Historycznej Związku Sybiraków Oddział w Krakowie (Source Materials for the History of Siberian Deportees from the Collection of the Historical Commission of the Association of Siberian Deportees Kraków Department)*, Kraków 1995, p. 5; *Materiały źródłowe...*, vol. 2: *Listy z Sybiru. Część I (Letters from Siberia. Part I)*, Kraków 1996.

¹⁷ The Archive of the Historical Commission of the Kraków department of the Association of Siberian Deportees.

¹⁸ The Central Archives of Modern Records in Warszawa (Archiwum Akt Nowych; AAN) includes also microfilms from the Hoover Institution in Stanford, USA.

down after a very long period of time. This, however, has to be confirmed by the criticism of the source.

An abundant group of memoirs is kept in the above-mentioned Eastern Archive in Warszawa, as the most important part of its archive collections concerns the history of the Eastern Borderlands of the Second Republic of Poland and the experiences of Polish citizens under Soviet occupation. The materials of special importance there are the sources testifying to the persecution of Polish citizens in the USSR in the years 1939-1956. Apart from the information about the executed by firing squads, the internees, the prisoners of forced labour camps, the conscripted into the Red Army, also materials about the deportees can be found there. The collections of the Eastern Archive include among others: 1,258 recorded and written relations and 3,240 memoirs and diaries. Some of these materials are the result of competitions that were organised.¹⁹

Documents, relations, memoirs and other sources for the research on Polish deportations, including those concerning the deportations of Polish citizens deep into the USSR in the 20th century are kept by the manuscript departments of the Jagiellonian Library, the National Library and the Ossolineum as well as the Jewish Historical Institute in Warszawa and the Scientific Archive of the Polish Ethnological Society in Wrocław. The latter distinguished a collection of over 800 files of original memoirs of Poles exiled and staying deep in the USSR in the years 1939-1956. They are the result of the competition for “memoirs of Siberian deportees” jointly organised by the Polish Ethnological Society and the academic and literary bimonthly “Literatura Ludowa.” Some of these source materials have been popularised by the publishing house “Biblioteka Zesłańca” (“The Exile’s Library”), which was established at the Executive Board of the Polish Ethnological Society. Memoirs of experiences in Siberia, Kazakhstan, the Far East and other areas of the USSR have been published. Moreover, memoirs of people who asked for the publication and gave their texts to the society have been printed. Moreover, the society undertook to reissue books on the history of Poles in Siberia and 21 volumes of “Biblioteka Zesłańca” have been published so far.²⁰

What is a special kind of source materials, having external features of an office source, and containing in its content memoir sources is the witness interview reports of deportees collected as part of investigations done by the Institute of National Remembrance. They include a great deal of valuable information about the course of deportation, the financial, social and family situation. Most of them close with men-

¹⁹ <http://www.karta.org.pl/archiwumwschodnie.asp.html> (04.05.2009).

²⁰ *Tryptyk kazachstański...*, p. 16; <http://ptl.free.ngo.pl/strony/jedn.html> (08.05.2009); A. Kuczyński, *Od redakcji (From the Editors)*, [in:] S. Chmielewski, *Zapiski niebohaterskich przeżyć (Notes of Unheroic Experiences)*, Z. Chmielewski, *W sowieckiej niewoli (In Soviet Captivity)*, „Biblioteka Zesłańca,” vol. 18, Wrocław 2002, p. 5-6.

tions of the situation of the families after the end of the war i.e. where they came back and where they settled. This material, which should be classified as a primary source, is a considerable source basis and can form the rudiment for many thorough studies. Only for the Tarnopol Voivodeship, there are 87 volumes of records including approximately 3,500-4,000 witness interview reports concerning the deportation carried out in February 1940. Apart from that, ten-odd volumes of source materials testifying to the deportations of April 1940, June 1940 and May and June 1941 have been collected. The witness statements have been supplemented with mementoes from family archives, letters, photographs, map sketches, identity cards, and passports.²¹

In the end, it is worth noting that there are many memoirs in regional archives and private collections, some of which have been published.²²

²¹ The Archives of the Departmental Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation of the Institute of National Remembrance in Kraków (IPN KŚZpNP Kraków Department), catalogue no. 23/00/ZK, *Akta główne czerwiec 1941 (The Main Records June 1941)*, *ibid.*, catalogue no. 24/00/ZK, *Akta główne śledztwa dotyczące deportacji w maju – czerwcu 1940 r. obywateli polskich mieszkańców województwa tarnopolskiego (The Main Records of the Inquiry Concerning the Deportation of Polish Citizens – Inhabitants of Tarnopol Voivodeship in May and June 1940)*; *ibid.*, catalogue no. S 25/00/ZK, *Akta główne śledztwa dotyczące deportacji w dniu 13 kwietnia 1940 r. obywateli polskich mieszkańców województwa tarnopolskiego (The Main Records of the Inquiry Concerning the Deportation of Polish Citizens – Inhabitants of Tarnopol Voivodeship on 13 April 1940)*; *ibid.*, catalogue no. S 26/00/ZK, *Akta główne śledztwa dotyczące deportacji w dniu 10 lutego 1940 r. obywateli polskich mieszkańców województwa tarnopolskiego (The Main Records of the Inquiry Concerning the Deportation of Polish Citizens – Inhabitants of Tarnopol Voivodeship on 10 February 1940)*.

²² E. Kołpak, *Piętnaście lat tułaczki: 1940-1955 (Fifteen Years of Wandering)*, Kraków 1990; A. Monieta, *Stygmaty bólu psychicznego u Sybiraków (The Marks of Mental Pain in Siberian Deportees)*, Białystok 2004; *Na nieludzkiej ziemi (In an Inhuman Land)* [preface and compilation Bolesław Smólski]; the Association of Siberian Deportees. The Voivodeship Department in Radom, Radom 1999; *Syberia poza życiem: relacje, przeżycia i pamiętniki witnickich sybiraków (Siberia Beyond Life: Relations, Experiences and Memoirs of Siberian Deportees from Witnica)*, ed. M. J. Dudziak, Witnica 1999; *Wschodnie losy Polaków (The Eastern Experiences of the Poles)*, vol. 1-4, selected by W. Myśliwski; preface by A. Garlicki, Łomża 1991; *Z Syberii na Podlasie: wspomnienia (From Siberia to Podlasia – memoirs)*, T. Łazowski (compilation), Biała Podlaska 2002.

The assessment of the usefulness of the memoirs of Siberian deportees for the research on the process of deportation (selected aspects of source criticism)

While examining the question of the usefulness of the memoirs of Siberian deportees for the research on the process of deportation, a historian faces two fundamental problems, which I will mention here first, although they concern internal criticism.

One problem results from the fact that many memoirs, if not most of them, were written many years after the event, which influenced their content. Each person's memories are effaced to some extent after a long time and only snatches of them remain. The process of forgetting occurs at a more or less steady pace during the whole period since the events took place. Also the nature of memories changes and some of them superimpose on different ones, which causes distortions.²³ Even though the research on autobiographical memory determined that it was a long-term memory, and a lot of evidence shows that in the long-term memory the process of forgetting does not occur and that information recorded in this type of memory is not lost,²⁴ the research on the properties of autobiographical memory proved that it depended on the age of the information. Fresh information about recent events is remembered in a completely different way than distant information. There are differences not only in the accuracy and exactness but also in the form of information storage.²⁵ A historian cannot disregard these questions in the case of the internal criticism of the memoirs of Siberian deportees, neither can he or she disregard the influence of traumatic experiences on the functioning of the human memory. At the Centre for Victims of Political Persecution at the Department of Social Pathology at the Chair of Psychiatry of the Collegium Medium of the Jagiellonian University, there was a study of a group of 61 people who were in exile in Siberia or Kazakhstan in their childhood and the results were published in 2002. On the basis of tests, it was found that 80% of the people suffered from a posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and in 25% of the examined it coexisted with a depressive disorder. 20% of the examined persons experienced a permanent personality change after an extreme situation and 38% of them complained about memory disorders.²⁶ The research on the nature of traumat-

²³ *Pamięć: zjawiska zwykłe i niezwykłe (Memory: Usual and Unusual Phenomena)*, ed. E. Czerniawska, Warszawa 2005, p. 60.

²⁴ The advocates of this idea claim that only apparent forgetting is possible and that one may not have access to some of the events of one's own biography but can recall this seemingly lost information. There are techniques of seeking the "paths of access," including the knowledge structure analysis and the visualisation of certain scenes. It is discussed in T. Maruszewski, *Pamięć autobiograficzna (The Autobiographical Memory)*, Gdańsk 2005, p. 24.

²⁵ More on the subject: T. Maruszewski, *Pamięć...*, p. 34-36.

²⁶ J. Walczewska, J. Furgał, K. Rutkowski, *Ocena aktualnego stanu zdrowia osób deportowanych na Syberię w latach 1940-1953 (The Assessment of the Current Condition of People*

ic situations shows that in the face of extreme danger, people direct all their resources to cope with this danger and not to remember the information about the situation. Thus, they have access only to a part of information. The entire situation is perceived fragmentarily and some pieces of information never get encoded. However, there is a phenomenon consisting in the fact that the information recorded in the memory of people who experienced trauma sometimes can “be activated on their own, without the participation of attention, and sometimes against the will of an individual.” Then there appear flashes of memory – “they have the original traumatic situation before their eyes.”²⁷ Thus, the traumatic situation is reconstructed repeatedly and forcibly, “including both the information from the traumatic situation and very strong negative emotions.”²⁸

Another fundamental problem that a historian faces while criticising memoirs of Siberian deportees is the situation pointed out by sociologists, consisting in the fact that “the biographical narrative about a war combines in a unique way the dimension of an individual experience with collective images built in the collective picture of the past.”²⁹ This collective dimension is clearly visible in the memoirs of deportees. What is characteristic is the structure of the memoirs, in which the following elements can be distinguished: detention, transportation, exile, amnesty, return to the country, description of problems in the new place of settlement. Moreover, the texts are similar as far as giving meaning to landmark events is concerned.³⁰

The difficulties arising from the functioning of the human memory and from the existence of collective images of the past can be solved to a large extent by us-

Deported to Siberia in the Years 1940-1953), “Gerontologia Polska” (“Polish Gerontology”) 2002, no. 4, p. 186-189.

²⁷ T. Maruszewski, *Pamięć...*, p. 85, 184; In E. Zdankiewicz-Ściagała and M. Przybylska’s publication on traumatic experiences, we can read that C. R. Barclay’s research into the memoirs of Holocaust survivors revealed that these memoirs “lacked temporal organisation, and these people were unable to understand the meaning of what they had experienced,” and the narratives were written ex post on the basis of snatches of information. An individual tried to make the memoir meaningful but sometimes could assume the aggressor’s perspective. After: E. Zdankiewicz-Ściagała, M. Przybylska, *Trauma: proces i diagnoza. Mechanizmy psychoneurofizjologiczne (Trauma: the Process and the Diagnosis. Psychoneurophysiological Mechanisms)*, Warszawa 2002, p. 33.

²⁸ E. Zdankiewicz-Ściagała, M. Przybylska, *Trauma...*, p. 34; K. Rutkowski, *Następstwa urazów psychicznych doznanych w dzieciństwie (The Consequences of Childhood Traumas)*, Kraków 2006, p. 33.

²⁹ Kaźmierska K., *Doświadczenia wojenne Polaków a kształtowanie tożsamości etnicznej: analiza narracji kresowych (The War Experiences of Poles and the Development of the Ethnic Identity: an Analysis of Narratives from the Eastern Borderlands)*, Warszawa 1999, p. 11.

³⁰ A. Rzepkowska, *Sluchając wspomnień Sybiraków. Antropolog wobec doświadczenia zesłania (Listening to the Memoirs of Siberian Deportees. An Anthropologist in Regard to the Exile Experience)*, „Lud” (“People”) 2008, vol. 92, p. 21.

ing for the research a comparative source material, created shortly after the event. As such a comparative material one can use diaries and relations written systematically or memoirs written shortly after the event,³¹ in which e.g. the collective images of the event will occur to a lesser extent than in later sources. Such a collection is the one including the memoirs and relations of 10 000 soldiers and their family members who left the USSR and went to Iran with Gen. W. Anders.³² This collection was kept in the Hoover Institution in the United States and now, copies of these materials in the form of microfilms are in the AAN, including the so-called Anders's Collection. Additionally, available materials of the Soviet and Polish offices concerning the situation of deportees should be used.³³

What is important in the internal criticism is to determine the sources of the author's information about the past used to create the narrative in order to assess which events were observed by the author directly, because these were better remembered and less distorted. Such details are sometimes given by authors, when they write how they obtained information about the past – whether from relations of other people or from their own experience, or from the literature used to fill in memory gaps when writing down their memories many years later. Additionally, taking into consideration the context of the content of the memoirs, the way of creating the narrative, next editions of the memoirs (there can be clear differences in the text), and, say, the age of the author, we can determine the degree of possibility that they experienced and remembered the facts described by them. These measures are aimed at seeking an answer to the question which facts were experienced by the author and which of them are a result of the acquired historical erudition and whether somebody else was a co-author of the memoirs. By definition, a memoir should be a narrative based on the experience of the author, without external or unwitting additions. It is not a simple procedure to distinguish these two layers of a narrative, namely the one based on the author's own experience and the one based on the acquired erudition, but it is necessary to understand and verify the information in a memoir.³⁴

³¹ Recent information, no more than two-year-old, includes a lot of vivid details. After: T. Matuszewski, *Pamięć...*, p. 32.

³² B. Pasierb, *Pytania o istotę stalinizmu (Questions about the Essence of Stalinism)*, [in:] D. Boćkowski, *Jak piskłęta z gniazd. Dzieci polskie w ZSRR w okresie II wojny światowej (Like Chicks from Nests. Polish Children in the USSR during World War II)*, Warszawa-Wrocław 1995, p. 384-385.

³³ What is meant here is the documentation from both abroad archives and from home. For example: The Central Archives of Modern Records in Warszawa (AAN), unit 2149: *Polski Obwodowy Dom Dziecka i Szkoła w Monetnej koło Swierdłowska 1943-2001 (The Polish District Children's Home and School in Monetnaya Near Sverdlovsk 1943-2001)*.

³⁴ This subject is elaborated on in: Z. Wojtkowiak, *Nauki pomocnicze historii najnowszej: źródłoznawstwo, źródła narracyjne (The Auxiliary Sciences of the Recent History: Source Studies, Narrative Sources)*, part I: *Pamiętnik, tekst literacki (A Diary, a Literary Text)*,

An analysis of the content and structure of memoirs by carrying out external and internal criticism, for which it is useful to know the basic principles of the functioning of the human memory, will lead to the ascertainment of the degree of usefulness of individual memoirs.

It is of fundamental importance to determine in the course of external criticism who and when wrote the memoir not only due to the afore-mentioned issues but also because it makes it possible to identify the author's competence arising from e.g. their age, or the role they played during the events. There are quite a lot of memoirs of deported children, which has its consequences in the narration. The anthropologist Aleksandra Rzepkowska, who did research into the biographical experiences of those deported in the years 1940-1941 on the basis of interviews with people who were exiled in their childhood, wrote: "*so the stories of Siberian deportees form something like a palimpsest, they are an area of merging and accumulation of two types of memory – one's own and other people's: substitute memory, borrowed, and more or less consciously, adopted from others.*"³⁵ It was so because children were unable to remember and understand the events fully, therefore, in their memoirs, "*the perspective of the autobiographical memory*" merges with "*the perspective of the adopted or borrowed memory.*" The phenomenon is strongest in people who were born in exile or were deported during the first years of their lives. It is relatively easy to recognise it in the structure of the content of the memoir because such authors often quote information obtained from their parents, siblings, grandparents and friends.³⁶

Apart from the afore-mentioned situations, there are also memoirs written by the offspring of deported families on the basis of their parents' notes or stories, while they never experienced deportation themselves (the phenomenon of "*post-memory*" occurs here).³⁷ Apart from them, there are also memoirs of people who only witnessed deportation but did not experience it themselves.

Thus, there are diverse situations, as far as the authors and the time of writing down of the memoirs of Siberian deportees are concerned, and it is extremely im-

Poznań 2001, p. 81, 86; L. Purolnik, *Rzeczywistość i konfabulacja obrazu getta warszawskiego w pamiętniku Martina Graya „Wszystkim, których kochałem”* (*Reality and Confabulation of the Image of the Warszawa Ghetto in Martin Gray's Memoir "For Those I Loved"*), *Dzieje najnowsze dociekane przez adeptów* (*The Recent History Investigated by Young Historians*), vol. 1, ed. Z. Wojtkowiak, Poznań 2006, p. 45.

³⁵ A. Rzepkowska, *Słuchając wspomnień...*, p. 20.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 18, 20.

³⁷ The term was introduced by Marianne Hirsch, an author of studies of collective memory and the manner of writing down the experience of World War II and the Holocaust in the literature and memoirs. She defines "*post-memory*" as the knowledge of the past based on somebody else's experience that preceded the existence of the person referring to it. After: A. Rzepkowska, *Słuchając wspomnień...*, p. 19.

portant to determine these details in order to assess the usefulness of the memoirs for research. In the case of most of the published ones, the publisher determined who the author was and when the text had been written. But even then it is absolutely necessary to reflect on the authenticity of the source and to be aware of the fact that there may be some flaws that arose during edition (printer's errors, mistakes in dates, names of people and places, sometimes abbreviations of the content of the manuscript).³⁸

It is equally important to ask the question what the purpose of writing the memoir was and for whom it was written, which will determine the motives of the writer. This information is sometimes given by the authors themselves in the first words of their autobiographical narrative. For example: Stefan Paluch, who was deported on 10 February 1940 with his parents and siblings, years later wrote a memoir in order, as he states, "*to familiarise all the readers with the real picture of the tragedy of many Poles who, in September 1939, found themselves under Soviet occupation and were deported in groups deep into the Soviet Union.*" Another witness described the Siberian experiences to commemorate his father: "*My father and I always mentioned that we would describe in detail the experiences connected with the stay in Siberia, we talked about it a lot, but he did not manage to fulfil his intentions.*"³⁹ Eugeniusz Sz wajkowski wrote his memories down "*at the request of his family and friends.*"⁴⁰ It is not necessary to cite further examples. The ones mentioned above are enough to acquaint us with the problem that historians face, not only in the case of these sources, namely that the motive of writing a memoir provides important information – why and for whom the author writes. It is important for the source criticism because it enables a historian to discern what influences the author of a memoir, which they are very often not aware of themselves. Meanwhile, as we can read in one of works on study and analysis of memory, "*recollecting is regulated, on the one hand, by the interests of the memoir author, including the desire for attractiveness and understanding, and on the other hand, by the interests of the audience, or strictly speaking, by how the memoir author imagines these interests. What seems to be important as well is the way the memoir author perceives the interpretation abilities of the audience, or how the author assesses the possibility of being understood.*"⁴¹ The way of constructing the narrative and the language used depends on these efforts.

Ending the general remarks about the criticism of memoirs of Siberian deportees as a historical source, I would like to point out that a method which organises the criticism proceedings to a large extent is the method proposed by literary studies.

³⁸ These demands in the criticism of memoir literature are elaborated on in: Z. Wojtkowiak, *Nauki pomocnicze historii...*, p. 75-86.

³⁹ *Polacy w Rosji mówią...*, p. 16, 289.

⁴⁰ E. Sz wajkowski, *Głód (Hunger)*, [in:] *Wspomnienia Sybiraków*, vol. 4, p. 24.

⁴¹ *Pamięć: zjawiska...*, p. 63-64.

It consists in determining distinctive features of various types of narration in memoirs (understood in a broad sense). The first criterion consists in determining the relation between the author and the subject of the narrative – whether the author could observe the events in person or was informed about them indirectly. The second criterion is applied to analyse the structure of relations and consists in investigating the method of the memoir composition resulting from the author's attitude to the subject of the relation formed in time (presentified relation method, retrospective relation method, polytemporal relation method). The last criterion is to recognise the author's motivation for writing a memoir. The proceedings include determining whether the motivation was personal (with the intention of dissemination or without such an intention) or externally inspired. Distinguishing and recognising these features makes it possible to determine the character of various types of memoir literature and diversifies its individual types, emphasising their typical elements influencing the way of describing the past.⁴²

Historians who do research into the process of deportation of Polish citizens deep into the USSR appreciate the merits of the memoir literature. It is so mainly due to the fact that a mutual verification of the sources is possible thanks to the abundance of source materials. Moreover, the mass scale of these sources, combined with other memoir literature, enables one to look at the subject of research through the eyes of a community. Each relation contributes new elements and helps to determine more facts. Stanisław Ciesielski writes: “*a multiple and repeated verification of facts recorded in individual relations concerning virtually the whole area of exiles makes it possible to distinguish clearly typical phenomena and situations, whose individual record has an exemplifying dimension, and unique phenomena, diverging from the standard, though by no means less authentic.*”⁴³

Another advantage is the fact that authors of memoirs come from various social classes and groups, as they include both educated people, who were highly placed in the Polish administration before the war, employees of cultural institutions, teachers, and people who wrote with obvious difficulty. Each of these groups is unique and has a research value. The former ones are characterised by an ordered and organised line of relating, but the authors formulate certain simplifications and look for historical references, make attempts at indicating typical elements in the course of events. As far as the latter group is concerned, the composition of the text is in accordance with the real course of events retained in memory. In the publication by W. Śliwowska, M. Giżejewska and J. Ankudowicz, we can read: “*The significance of something con-*

⁴² Z. Wojtkowiak, *O klasyfikacji i interpretacji pamiętników (On Classification and Interpretation of Memoirs)*, „Studia Źródłoznawcze” (“Source Studies”), vol. XXV (1980).

⁴³ *Życie codzienne polskich zesłańców w ZSRR w latach 1940-1946: studia (The Everyday Life of Polish Exiles in the USSR in the Years 1940-1946: Studies)*, ed. S. Ciesielski, Wrocław 1997, p. 9.

crete (fact, situation) is often – not always consciously – more clear, and the dramatic quality more distinct here.”⁴⁴ Historians sometimes divide the abundant memoir material on the basis of various criteria, e.g. the social-occupational position of the witnesses of events or the age of the authors at the time when they were deported. It depends on the subject of research or on the chosen principle of presenting the material.⁴⁵

Certainly, memoirs of deportees enable historians to find out about the experiences and opinions of individual people and about the living conditions of individuals and their families. They illustrate the hardships of everyday life in the USSR and dealing with these difficulties. They make it possible to characterise the family environments in exile on the basis of both an analysis of individual experiences and an examination of general regularities occurring in groups of families.⁴⁶

To describe general and typical phenomena, a certain number of sources is sufficient depending on the type of questions asked by a historian. However, there is always a stage when analysing and adding new sources becomes pointless, for instance, to find out about typical places of accommodation of deportees in a given region, it is sufficient to analyse several dozen relations.⁴⁷

Memoirs of Siberian deportees are an important source for the research on the process of deportation of Polish citizens deep into the USSR. However, while using this material, one has to have a good knowledge of the historical method and of the basics of sciences which support history, such as e.g. sociology and psychology. So far, not only historians but also psychologists, sociologists, and even anthropologists have used memoirs of Siberian deportees for their research, appreciating the importance of this source.

Translated by „Archeo-Logos: Joanna Dźdża i Grzegorz Żabiński”

⁴⁴ Ibid.; *Tryptyk kazachstański...*, p. 16-17.

⁴⁵ “*W czterdziestym nas Matko na Sybir zesłali...*”. *Polska a Rosja 1939-1942* (“*Mother, We Were Exiled to Siberia in Nineteen Forty.*” *Poland and Russia 1939-1942*), selection and compilation I. Grudzińska-Gross, J. T. Gross, Kraków 2008; The publication presents relations and memoirs of children and adults from their exile in the USSR in the years 1940-1941.

⁴⁶ M. Stopikowska, *Rodzina polska na zesłaniu...* (*The Polish Family in Exile*), p. 21-22.

⁴⁷ *Życie codzienne polskich zesłańców...*, p. 8-9.