

Summary

In summer 1932 the Lesko district was rocked by the wave of peasant uproars, commonly known as „Lesko insurrection”. It lasted shortly, from 21st June to 9th July, however, it was widely commented and caused a great deal of controversy. It is clearly visible when we read newspaper's articles written by different political orientations. Generally, there was a belief about the enemy activity of communism propagandists on this area. That version was spread by the official statements. Leaving out all the newspapers speculations, it is true that the Lesko uproars were done by Polish and Ukrainian together. It was caused by difficult material situation and deteriorating life conditions as the effect of the existing recession at the time, which in 1932 was in peak. The Lesko rebellion was a part of a wider wave of peasant incidents in all the country, for example, there were incidents in Małopolska region in Lubla (Krosno district) or in Łapanów (Bocheński district). Of course, we cannot omit the possibility that there were led agitations by both Polish and Ukrainian organisations, which in that economic situation were easily accepted. However, there are not any historic sources which could verify that.

The main reason of the burst of the peasant uproars in the Lesko district became preparations to the celebration of the „labour day”, that is voluntary works to improve the state of roads, bridges, building of schools and other useful buildings for people. The creator of this „labour day” was count Jan Nepomucen, the owner of Rymanów Zdrój city. In his neighbourhood this vision was accepted friendly. That idea also interested Lesko foreman Emil Wehrstein. So the „labour day” in the Lesko district was planned on 23rd June 1932. The main aim was the works to mend the road from Berehów Dolny to Łodyny. This road was very important to the transportation of the wood from the nearest forests.

Local folks, however, engaged in that event with reserved enthusiasm, sensing a kind of a trap. Despite this, on 21st June 1932 district agricultural instructor Stefan Zięba came to Berehów Dolny to check the mood of the peasants personally. There came to some fight with local people and as a result Mr Zięba was beaten and the police arrested 36 people.

Moreover, it was rumoured that „nobles” were planning to re-establish serfdom. The rumours were spread very quickly by, according to the police, messenger walkers, horse riders or cyclists, who going from village to village called people to join together. Other

sources claim that those informations were conveyed among the peasants from mouth to mouth at the markets or on other meetings. The peasants armed with bats, sticks, pitchforks and axes started to gather in the villages and wait for landlords with the mission of re-establishing the serfdom. More violent event took place on 30th June in Łobozewo – the peasants rushed into a roman-catholic vicarage, they also disarmed a police patrol that stayed nearby and attacked the mansion where the officers were hiding. The victims were also two land owners and a local parson, who were beaten.

The Lesko foreman seeing that incidents were becoming more violent asked Lwów provincial governor to send extra army. To suppress the riots there were involved officers from Sanok and Przemyśl, and also one company of the 2nd Regiment Podhalań Archers that stayed in Sanok.

Inflamed situation resulted in the break of the peasant uproars which lasted from 21st June to 9th June 1932. The main clash between the peasants and the joined forces of the police and the army took place on 1st July in Teleśnica Sanna. Both sides were shooting as the peasants had weapons from officers who they disarmed a few days earlier. The result of the fight was 5 killed people, 8 hurt people and 106 others were arrested.

Seeing that the conflict was festering, Lwów provincial governor Józef Rożniecki ordered to strengthen the police and the army forces on that area. At the same time the border with Czechoslovakia in Lesko, Turczan and Krosno district was closed. To calm down the atmosphere the Lesko foreman issued an appeal in Polish and Ukrainian. The leaflets with that appeal were dropped from the plane over that area.

The uproars were suppressed on 9th July 1932. The police arrested 278 people altogether – 269 men and 9 women. At the beginning the number of detainees was higher, however, in the course of the investigation many were released. Moreover, 4 peasants, recognised as the main leaders, were charged in the court. The hearing took place on 20th-22nd July. As the result, 3 of accused, 28-year-old Wasyl Dunyk, 23-year-old Michał Małecki and 34-year-old Piotr Madej were sentenced to capital punishment and the fourth, 28-year-old Antoni Paślawski, was sentenced to life imprisonment. However, the president Ignacy Mościcki used his right to give a pardon and changed a capital punishment for a life imprisonment.

The creation of the legend about the „Lesko insurrection” mainly fell into the early fifties of the XX century. Communism propaganda from that time at every turn tried to discredit the system of IIInd Polish Republic and to show the superiority of its own form of the statehood. All the more, the possibility of claiming its right to the participation in the outbreak

of the „Lesko insurrection” was given by the reform authorities in 1932, which seeking the reason of that outbreak, the all fault unloaded on the communism propaganda.

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