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The role of the Polish Army in the military settlement action in the years 1945–1948

Rola Wojska Polskiego w akcji osadnictwa
wojskowego w latach 1945–1948

Summary: The article discusses the issue of military settlement on the so-called Recovered Territories in the years 1945–1948. The text examines the role of the army and military institutions in this process, the status of military settlers and the system of mutual links between military and civilian institutions dealing with military settlement. The article presents the overall organizational effort related to military settlement, difficulties accompanying settlers, problems of cooperation between military institutions and civil administration and the scale of military settlement against the background of the nationwide settlement action. The action of military settlement took place in extremely difficult conditions (e.g. migration and resettlement of the Polish and German population, or war damage). Despite this, between 1945 and 1948, about 534,000 people with the status of military settlers (including demobilized soldiers, as well as members of their families and families of fallen soldiers) settled in the so-called Recovered Territories. Of these, fewer than 180,000 people settled in the districts designated in June 1945 only for military settlements, while the vast majority (354,000) lived outside these districts. Nevertheless, the settlement of 180,000 people in border *powiats* can be considered a great success in the process of their development, conducive to better protection of the new Polish-German border. Military settlers played an important role in the process of settling the so-called Recovered Territories, because they constituted almost 12% of all settlers. Due to the extensiveness of the issue concerning the broadly understood Polish settlement in these lands in the first post-war years, the subject matter discussed in the article was limited to selected issues of military settlement, which were discussed on the basis of archival materials and Polish historiography related to the topic of this type of settlement.

Keywords: military settlement, military settler, Recovered Territories, history of Poland after World War II

Streszczenie: Artykuł omawia zagadnienie osadnictwa wojskowego na tzw. Ziemiach Odzyskanych w latach 1945–1948. W tekście omówiono rolę wojska i instytucji wojskowych w tym procesie, status osadnika wojskowego oraz systemu wzajemnych powiązań instytucji wojskowych i cywilnych zajmujących się osadnictwem wojskowym. W artykule zaprezentowano całokształt wysiłku organizacyjnego związanego z osadnictwem wojskowym, trudności towarzyszące osadnikom, problemy współpracy instytucji wojskowych z administracją cywilną oraz skalę osadnictwa wojskowego na tle ogólnokrajowej akcji osiedleńczej. Osadnictwo wojskowe przebiegało w niezwykle trudnych warunkach (np. ruchy migracyjne i przesiedleńcze ludności polskiej i niemieckiej, czy zniszczenia wojenne), lecz mimo to na tzw. Ziemiach Odzyskanych osiedliło się w latach 1945–1948 około 534 tys. osób mających status osadnika wojskowego (wliczając w to zdemobilizowanych żołnierzy, jak i członków ich rodzin oraz rodziny po poległych żołnierzach). Spośród nich, w powiatach wyznaczonych w czerwcu 1945 r. wyłącznie dla osadnictwa wojskowego osiedliło się 180 tys. osób, podczas gdy zdecydowana większość (354 tys.) zamieszkała poza tymi powiatami. Tym niemniej, osiedlenie 180 tys. osób w powiatach przygranicznych można uznać za duży sukces w procesie ich zagospodarowania, sprzyjający zarazem lepszej ochronie nowej granicy polsko-niemieckiej. Osadnicy wojskowi odegrali ważną rolę w procesie zasiedlania tzw. Ziemi Odzyskanych, bowiem stanowili niemal 12% wszystkich osadników. Z uwagi na obszerność zagadnienia dotyczącego szeroko rozumianego osadnictwa polskiego na tych ziemiach w pierwszych latach powojennych – poruszaną w artykule tematykę ograniczono zasadniczo do wybranych zagadnień osadnictwa wojskowego, które omówiono w oparciu o materiały archiwalne oraz dorobek polskiej historiografii związanej z tematem tego typu osadnictwa.

Słowa kluczowe: osadnictwo wojskowe, osadnik wojskowy, Ziemie Odzyskane, historia Polski po II wojnie światowej

Introduction

Military settlement in 1945–1948 was an important part of the process of settling and developing the so-called Recovered Territories and post-war migration. It sheds light on the key issues that accompanied the nationwide settlement action. The change of Poland's post-war borders triggered major migrations in the Polish lands, and military settlements were obviously linked to them, especially with regard to the so-called repatriation of the Polish population from beyond the Bug River. This is because a large part of the soldiers of the so-called People's Polish Army came from the former Eastern Borderlands, from where their families arrived to Poland as part of resettlement, hoping for new homes and land in the former German territories.

Military settlement played an important role in the first period of the development of the so-called Recovered Territories, when Poles from the former Polish territories – which were part of the Polish state before 1939, as well as after World War II) – were afraid to settle on lands taken from the Germans due to their ambiguous legal status. Poles from the Eastern Borderlands had similar dilemmas, but were offered little choice in the matter. Of course, over time, as the influx of settlers increased rapidly as part of a nationwide settlement campaign, the role of military settlement in this process diminished significantly – as did the military’s participation in the takeover and development of the so-called Recovered Territories. The purpose of this article is to discuss the overall organizational effort related to military settlement in 1945–1948, the structures of military institutions involved in this settlement, the difficulties accompanying the settlers, the factual cooperation between military and civilian institutions, and the role of military settlement in the process of populating the so-called Recovered Territories. Due to the extensiveness of the issue concerning the broadly understood Polish settlement in these lands in the first post-war years, the subject matter discussed in the article was limited to selected issues of military settlement. The considerations were based on the findings of Polish historiography regarding this type of settlement, as well as on archival materials from the Archives of New Records and the Central Military Archives.

Substantive findings

With the end of World War II, a new stage in the history of Poland began, one of the elements of which was the settlement of the so-called Recovered Territories including the southern part of the former East Prussia, Central and Western Pomerania, the Lubuskie Land, and Lower Silesia with the Opole region. In the face of the new territorial shape of Poland imposed by the Soviet Union, the Polish communist authorities, whose formation in July 1944 was catalyzed by the Soviets, devoted considerable space in their propaganda to the question of moving away from the orientation of the Jagiellonian-era Poland to the Piast-era Poland. This had already been intimated in the PKWN [The Polish Committee of National Liberation] manifesto from July 21, 1944, which stressed the need for action to return to the “motherland of the Piast lands.” A week later, on July 27, the Committee concluded a secret agreement on the matter with the Soviet government, which was to support the shape of the future Polish western border based on the line of the Lusatian Neisse and the Oder (with Szczecin remaining on the Polish side). Disputes on this issue between the victorious powers resulted in the fact that it was not until the Potsdam Conference (July 17–August 2, 1945) that Poland was granted the right to manage the German lands located east of the line of the aforementioned rivers. Definitive recognition of this border was to take place at the planned peace conference, which never happened.

Consequently, for a number of years, the unsettled legal status of the Polish-German border aroused controversy between the authorities of the Polish People's Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany.¹ It should be noted that at the Potsdam Conference, the course of the aforementioned border was *de facto* accepted, which was indirectly confirmed by the superpowers' agreement to displace the German population from the lands taken over by Poland, which accelerated their Polonization.²

The settlement and management of the so-called Recovered Territories by Poland was neither an easy nor a quick task, as the not fully regulated status of these lands raised many concerns about their eventual nationality, which was not conducive to the process of their settlement by Polish settlers. Another problem was that the territories were still inhabited by the German population, whose displacement did not begin until the first few years after the war. Nevertheless, already in the first months of 1945, the Polish authorities – based on the secret agreement concluded with the Soviet Union in July 1944 – took steps to create the germ of their own administrative structures in the so-called Recovered Territories, which before the Potsdam Conference meant, in fact, carrying out a policy of accomplished facts. As early as February 2, 1945, the Office of the Western Territories was established (headed by Edmund Giebartowski), which in April was subordinated to the Ministry of Public Administration (MAP).³ As a result, all matters related to the process of settling the new lands were concentrated in the hands of the head of this ministry, i.e., Edward Ochab, who also assumed the post of Plenipotentiary General for the Recovered Territories. Meanwhile, under a March 14 resolution of the Council of Ministers, the entire area⁴ was

1 In practice, this continued until the signing of the treaty between Poland and West Germany on December 7, 1970, and the confirmation of its provisions in the course of German unification signed on September 12, 1990.

2 More on this issue, see: M. Jaworski, *Działalność Ministerstwa Ziem Odzyskanych w latach 1945–1948*, Warszawa 1973; A. Magierska, *Ziemie zachodnie i północne w 1945 r. Kształtowanie się podstaw polityki integracyjnej państwa polskiego*, Warszawa 1978; W. Materski, *Dyplomacja Polski “lubelskiej” lipiec 1944–marzec 1947*, Warszawa 2007.

3 The following abbreviations are used in the text: AAN – Archiwum Akt Nowych [Archives of New Records], CAW WBH – Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe Wojskowego Biura Historycznego [Central Military Archives of the Military Historical Bureau], DP – Dywizja Piechoty [Infantry Division], MAP – Ministerstwo Administracji Publicznej [Ministry of Public Administration], MON – Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej [Ministry of National Defense], MZO – Ministerstwo Ziem Odzyskanych [Ministry of Recovered Territories], OW – Okręg Wojskowy [Military District], PUR – Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny [State Repatriation Office], and WBBH – Wojskowe Biuro Badań Historycznych [Military Bureau of Historical Research].

4 Without the area of the former Free City of Danzig, which was considered part of the so-called “lands given” and on March 30, 1945 was incorporated into the then established province of Gdańsk.

divided into four administrative districts, appointing a Provisional Government plenipotentiary with broad powers in each. These were Gen. Aleksander Zawadzki in District I (Opole Silesia), Stanisław Piaskowski in District II (Lower Silesia), Aleksander Karczocho-Józefski in District III (Western Pomerania) and Capt. Jerzy Sztachelski in District IV (Mazury). These districts served as provincial authorities at the time and functioned until three new provinces (of Olsztyn, Szczecin and Wrocław) were created in their place by a resolution of the Council of Ministers on May 29, 1946.⁵

The lands taken over by Poland were severely devastated (due to warfare, the plundering policies of the Soviet authorities and post-war looting), which – combined with a destroyed communications network, a ruined irrigation system and a shortage of livestock and seed materials – further hampered their settlement. The first organized groups of Polish settlers began arriving in the so-called Recovered Territories in the early spring of 1945, which was actively encouraged by the Polish state authorities in the following months. However, until the middle of that year, the settlement process moved slowly and only accelerated after the Potsdam Conference, when these lands were de facto granted to Poland and it was decided that the German population would be displaced from them.⁶

As part of the Polish settlement campaign in the so-called Recovered Territories, an important role was played by military settlements, which were intended to fulfill four basic purposes: to be a kind of reward for the toil and efforts demonstrated by soldiers during the war, to provide repatriated military families from across the

5 A. Ogrodowczyk, “Udział Wojska Polskiego w przejściu i zagospodarowaniu Ziemi Zachodnich 1945–1947,” *Przegląd Zachodni* 1970, no. 3, p. 122; Z. Misztal, “Udział Ludowego WP w tworzeniu administracji państwowej i zagospodarowaniu kraju po zakończeniu II wojny światowej,” *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny* 1981, R. XXVI, no. 1, pp. 26–27; R. Polkowski, “Rola pełnomocników Rządu Tymczasowego w tworzeniu władzy i administracji państwowej na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych Polski w 1945 r.,” *Zeszyty Naukowe ASW* 1987, R. XV, issue 48, pp. 66–80. On March 30, 1945, Col. Jakub Prawin became the plenipotentiary in District III, and on April 11, Lt. Col. Leonard Borkiewicz became the plenipotentiary in District IV.

6 S. Jankowiak, *Wysiedlenie i emigracja ludności niemieckiej w polityce władz polskich w latach 1945–1970*, Warszawa 2005, p. 86 et seq.; B. Nitschke, *Wysiedlenie ludności niemieckiej z Polski w latach 1945–1949*, Zielona Góra 1999, pp. 75, 221–235; L. Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa Polski w latach 1944–1960*, Łódź 2003, pp. 66–68; D. Sula, *Działalność przesiedleńczo-repatriacyjna Państwowego Urzędu Repatriacyjnego w latach 1944–1951*, Lublin 2002, pp. 82–93; A. Friszke, *Polska. Losy państwa i narodu 1939–1989*, Warszawa 2003, pp. 135–136; P. Kacprzak, *Organizacja i przebieg wysiedleń ludności niemieckiej z Polski w latach 1945–1949*, Sulechów 2008, pp. 212–215. According to D. Matelski (*Niemcy w Polsce w XX wieku*, Warszawa–Poznań 1999, pp. 222, 225), the territory of the Third Reich east of the Oder and Lusatian Neisse was inhabited by around 9.6 million people before the outbreak of war, and after the front passed through it in 1945, only by about 3.7 million people, including 2.5 million Germans and 1.2 million Polish indigenous people.

Bug River with a new place to settle, to accelerate the process of settling and re-Polonizing these lands, and to serve as a type of protective barrier along the border strip. The latter objective was not only to improve the security situation in the border zone (e.g., against looters and robber gangs⁷), but also to inhibit the return of the German population to the east. For this purpose, on June 3, 1945, the Supreme Command of the Polish Army issued Order No. 111 on military settlement action based on the voluntary resettlement of soldiers and their families and priority in receiving farms in the said border strip. Military units and institutions were to compile, as soon as possible, lists of soldiers of the so-called People's Army expressing a desire to settle in the so-called Recovered Territories, as well as lists of soldiers and partisans killed during the war (for obvious reasons, at the time, this generally applied to People's Army partisans) – in order to grant land to their families. At the same time, the commands of the First and Second Polish Army proceeded to take stock of German farms in the designated *powiats*⁸ and drew up relevant lists for each town (including the size of individual farms and the condition of residential and farm buildings). In turn, the General Quartermaster's Office of the Polish Army was ordered to allocate the necessary number of cars and supplies for military settlement purposes. Subsequently, 12 *powiats* were designated along the line of the Oder and Lusatian Neisse rivers, from which the army displaced the German population in late June and early July (implementing, as it were, the policy of accomplished facts, as this was carried out before the Potsdam Conference). These *powiats* were divided into five settlement districts: the first (counting from the north) included the *powiats* of Wolin-Kamień and Gryfino; the second – the *powiats* of Chojna, Sulęcín and Rzepin; the third – the *powiats* of Krosno, Gubin, Żary and Żagań; the fourth – the *powiats* of Lubań and Zgorzelec; and the fifth – the *powiat* of Lwówek.⁹

7 Looting and theft in *powiats* designated for military settlements were almost as common as in the rest of the so-called Recovered Territories. Military settlers had their cows, horses, wagons and home furnishings stolen, which was carried out by both domestic looters and Red Army soldiers. This was undoubtedly one of the more severe problems in these lands in the first post-war years. Archiwum Akt Nowych (henceforth: AAN), Ministerstwo Ziem Odzyskanych (henceforth: MZO), sygn. 196.969, k. 5, Meldunek Wydziału Osadnictwa Wojskowego o kradzieżach w powiecie żagańskim od października 1945 r. do lutego 1946 r.

8 A *powiat* is a unit of local government and administration in Poland, equivalent to a county.

9 Ibidem, sygn. 196.965, k. 9–10, Instrukcja dla referatów wojskowych przy PUR z 19 VII 1945 r.; L. Grot, "Organizowanie osadnictwa wojskowego na ziemiach północnych i zachodnich," *Zeszyty Naukowe WAP* 1971, no. 23(69), pp. 67–68; *Pomorski Okręg Wojskowy 1945–1987. Zarys dziejów*, ed. A. Karnowski, Bydgoszcz 1989, pp. 52–53; A. Ogrodowczyk, *Pomorze przywrócone. Wkład Wojska Polskiego w przejęcie i zagospodarowanie Pomorza Zachodniego w latach 1945–1947*, Warszawa 1974, pp. 97–100; idem, "Osadnictwo wojskowe," [in:] *Ludowe Wojsko Polskie w walce, służbie i pracy na ziemiach*

The assumptions of the military settlement action contained in the order of June 3, 1945 were further developed in an instruction of June 18 and in an order of the Supreme Command of the Polish Army of June 21. Under the latter, the General Inspectorate of Military Settlement was established in Poznań, headed by Gen. Karol Świerczewski, hitherto commander of the Second Polish Army (Col. Piotr Jaroszewicz became his deputy). Moreover, the Central Military Settlement Commission in Poznań was established, which was subordinate to the General Inspectorate, and district and *powiat* military settlement inspectors were appointed (the latter in settlement districts consisting of at least two *powiats*). The district inspectors were: in the first settlement district – Col. Wiktor Lemontowicz (commander of the 12th DP), in the second district – Col. Stanisław Kupsza (commander of the 5th DP), in the third district – Col. Andrzej Czartoryski (commander of the 11th DP), in the fourth district – Col. Paweł Jaroszenko (commander of the 7th DP), and in the fifth district – Col. Aleksander Struc (commander of the 10th DP). In order to streamline the settlement action, the district and *powiat* inspectors further established district and *powiat* military settlement commissions. Subsequently, three Central Distribution Points were established for *powiats* designated for military settlement: in Stargard Szczeciński for *powiats* that were part of the Pomeranian OW (Lt. Józef Nowakowski became the head of this point, and from August 4, Lt. Stanisław Moskaluk), in Gorzów Wlkp. for the *powiats* of the Poznań OW (Capt. M. Studziński), and in Żagań (later transferred to Legnica) for *powiats* of the Silesian OW (Capt. Edward Klita). In addition, *powiat* distribution points were organized in each of the 12 *powiats* in charge of directing incoming settlers to particular localities.¹⁰

zachodnich i północnych 1945–1950, ed. S. Gać, Poznań 1983, pp. 189–190; K. Mamak, *Osadnictwo wojskowe na Ziemi Lubuskiej*, Poznań 1979, p. 36; S. Banasiak, *Działalność osadnicza Państwowego Urzędu Repatriacyjnego na Ziemiach Odzyskanych w latach 1945–1947*, Poznań 1963, p. 130. On the other hand, Z. Wojdalski (“Ludowe Wojsko Polskie w odbudowie kraju w latach 1944–1948,” *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny* 1974, R. XIX, no. 2, p. 471) reported that there were 13 *powiats* designated for military settlements, mentioning separately the *powiats* of Wolin and Kamień, which in other publications were often listed as the *powiat* of Wolin-Kamień. Moreover, H. Wichrowski (“Z problematyki osadnictwa wojskowego na Warmii, Mazurach i Powiślu w latach 1945–1948,” *Zeszyty Naukowe WAP* 1981, no. 107, p. 76) reported that in the autumn of 1945, the *powiat* of Lidzbark was designated in the Mazurian District for the settlement of disabled veterans.

¹⁰ AAN, MZO, sygn. 196.964, k. 259–261, Instrukcja o osadnictwie wojskowym z 18 VI 1945 r.; H. Dominiczak, *Wróciliśmy na Ziemię Lubuską. Udział Wojska Polskiego w zasiedleniu i zagospodarowaniu Ziemi Lubuskiej w latach 1945–1948*, Warszawa 1974, p. 83; A. Ogrodowczyk, *Nad Odrą i Bałtykiem. Osadnictwo wojskowe na zachodnich i północnych ziemiach Polski po drugiej wojnie światowej*, Warszawa 1979, p. 90; C. Osękowski, “Osadnictwo wojskowe na Ziemi Lubuskiej w latach 1945–1948,” [in:] *Polskie tradycje wojskowe Środkowego Nadodrza*, ed. A. Toczewski, Zielona Góra 1986, pp. 98–99; idem, “Oficjalne i faktyczne cele osadnictwa wojskowego na pograniczu

As part of the military settlement action, a general assumption was made that military settlers would be directed only to the designated 12 *powiats*, to which the MAP and the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform would stop the influx of civilian settlers. In order to facilitate military settlements, military settlement offices were established at the provincial branches of the State Repatriation Office (PUR).¹¹ This was important, because in the initial period, it often happened that military units sent their own operational groups – bypassing the civil administration and PUR offices – who then independently took over German farms the discussed *powiats*, which in practice hampered the process of coordinating military settlement actions.¹²

However, despite the efforts made (including the July 16, 1945 establishment of the principles of cooperation between the military authorities and the MAP, PUR and the Polish Western Union), it was not possible to develop harmonious cooperation between all the institutions involved in the military settlement process, as this was, objectively speaking, extremely difficult in the conditions of the time. On the one hand, military institutions tried to informally expand the scope of their competence in the aspect of military settlement actions, often ignoring local administrative authorities; on the other hand, the state settlement apparatus created resettlement outposts also in *powiats* designated for military settlement, which led to frequent disputes over competence.¹³ There had been attempts to standardize these issues by the order of the Supreme Command of the Polish Army of September 24, 1945, which forbade commanders of military units to settle military settlers in designated *powiats* without consulting the civil administration, and ignoring this prohibition was to be subject to severe penalties.¹⁴ This clearly indicates that in the summer of that year there was considerable independence in the process of military settlements on the part of military commanders and a lack of cooperation in this regard with local civilian authorities. As a result, in *powiats* designated for military settlements, these authorities also tolerated the settlement of others or transferred livestock from there to civilian settlers in other *powiats*. For example, a report dated

polsko-niemieckim po drugiej wojnie światowej,” *Śląskie Studia Historyczne* 1993, no. 3, pp. 55–57.

11 K. Kersten, “Osadnictwo wojskowe w 1945 roku. Próba charakterystyki,” *Przegląd Historyczny* 1964, no. 4(55), pp. 646–647; A. Ogródowczyk, *Osadnictwo wojskowe...*, pp. 196–197; L. Styś, *Osadnictwo wojskowe na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1948*, Wrocław 1978, p. 14; C. Osękowski, *Oficjalne i faktyczne...*, pp. 55–56. More about PUR’s activities: S. Banasiak, op. cit., p. 29 et seq.; D. Sula, op. cit., p. 25 et seq.

12 S. Banasiak, op. cit., p. 132.

13 K. Kersten, op. cit., p. 648.

14 AAN, Ministerstwo Administracji Publicznej (henceforth: MAP), sygn. 199.2468, k. 19, Pismo pełnomocnika rządu na Dolny Śląsk z 18 VII 1945 r.

January 26, 1946 stated that on the orders of West Pomeranian Governor Leonard Borkiewicz, 50 cows were moved from the landed estates included in the military settlements in the *powiat* of Kamień to Szczecin, which hindered the settlement action, as military settlers usually did not have their own livestock.¹⁵

Lt. Franciszek Górecki wrote about other problems of military settlers in relation to the activities of the District Inspectorate of Military Settlement of the Pomeranian OW in 1945. Here are some characteristic examples of this:

[...] when a settler's family arrives in the designated area, having no assigned farm or housing, they are forced to suffer hunger and cold in the open air, because the railroad does not allow them to stay in the wagon for more than three hours, and it does not consider the settler's position that for the time being, before they get a roof over their heads, they must stay in the wagon. [...] Throughout the District there are almost no Polish doctors and no pharmacies. This is one of the most pressing issues [...] the health condition of the settlers who are undernourished, emaciated and own no warm clothes requires particularly urgent medical care. In the area, there used to be well-stocked hospitals, doctors' and dentists' offices, and pharmacies, all of which were plundered, goods smuggled out and sold privately while the rest was destroyed. [...] The security office and Militia do not provide sufficient guarantees of peace and safety for the people settled here; they are mostly recruited from people who are irresponsible and do not understand their tasks, often abusing their power. There are frequent incidents of assaults, looting, and even murders [...] With few exceptions, efforts to establish cooperation between the Military Settlement and the Civil Administration and the various Offices have so far yielded no positive results [...] None of the settlers are able to pay the taxes imposed by the local government, or pay benefits in kind, and the best evidence of this is the great number of petitioners applying for relief in each Inspectorate.¹⁶

15 Ibidem, sygn. 196.969, k. 17, Pismo mjr. Buszkiewicza, Inspektora Osadnictwa Wojskowego w powiecie kamieńskim z 26 I 1946 r.

16 “[...] gdy rodzina osadnika przyjedzie na wyznaczony teren, nie mając przydzielonego gospodarstwa, czy też mieszkania, zmuszona jest cierpieć głód i chłód pod gołym niebem, bo kolej nie pozwala na zatrzymanie się w wagonie dłużej niż trzy godziny i nie wchodzi w położenie osadnika, że na razie, zanim zdobędzie dach nad głową, musi pozostać w wagonie. [...] Na całym Okręgu prawie że lekarzy Polaków nie ma, jak również i aptek. Jest to jedna z najbardziej palących spraw [...] stan zdrowotny osadników niedożywionych, niezaopatrzonych w ubrania ciepłe, wynędzniałych – wymaga więcej niż kiedykolwiek opieki lekarskiej. Były na terenie dobrze zaopatrzone w sprzęt szpitalne, gabinety lekarskie, dentystyczne i apteki, wszystko to zostało rozkradzione, wywiezione, sprzedane prywatnie, a reszta zniszczona. [...] Urząd bezpieczeństwa i Milicja nie daje wystarczającej gwarancji spokoju i bezpieczeństwa osiedlonym tu ludziom, rekrutuje się przeważnie z ludzi nieodpowiedzialnych i nierozumiejących

In another report regarding the military settlement, Lt. F. Górecki stated that its “condition is exceptionally severe and in addition to an enormous amount of work, it requires the need to organize everything almost anew and from the ground up.”¹⁷ The Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform reported on the situation of military settlers in a similar vein – for example, a letter dated January 28, 1946 noted that: “the military settlers and their families have poor access to provisions and no means of subsistence as they have taken over the farms after the harvest and have no food stores or livestock,”¹⁸ while a letter dated February 4 stressed the following:

Military settlers and their families in *powiats* designated for military settlement are in very difficult material conditions [...] There are no more supplies or livestock on their assigned farms. They generally lack clothing, warm underwear and footwear. Having no financial resources of their own and receiving no aid, they cannot purchase these things. The group that suffers the most as a result of the clothing shortages are the children attending schools that are sometimes several kilometers away.¹⁹

swych zadań, często nadużywających swej władzy. Częste wypadki napadów, grabieży, a nawet morderstw [...] Wysiłki nawiązania współpracy Osadnictwa Wojskowego z Administracją Cywilną i poszczególnymi Urzędami nie dały dotychczas pozytywnych wyników, poza wyjątkami [...] Żaden z osadników niezdolny jest opłacać podatków wymaganych przez samorząd, ani też uiszczać świadczeń rzeczowych, a najlepszym tego dowodem, jest ich wielka ilość, jako petentów o zapomogi w każdym Inspektoracie.” Ibidem, sygn. 196.966, k. 4-7, Sprawozdanie z działalności Okręgowego Inspektora Osadnictwa Wojskowego por. Franciszka Góreckiego za czas od 1 X do 15 XI 1945 r.

17 “stan jest wyjątkowo ciężki i wymagający poza olbrzymim nakładem pracy, konieczności organizowania wszystkiego niemal od nowa i od podstaw.” Ibidem, sygn. 196.966, k. 12, Memoriał Okręgowego Inspektora Osadnictwa Wojskowego por. Franciszka Góreckiego z 12 XI 1945 r.

18 “osadnicy wojskowi i ich rodziny są w złych warunkach aprowizacyjnych nie mając środków do życia, ponieważ objęli gospodarstwa po zbiorach i nie mają żadnych zapasów żywnościowych ani inwentarzy.” Ibidem, sygn. 196.964, k. 206, Pismo Ministerstwa Rolnictwa i Reform Rolnych w sprawie aprowizacji osadników wojskowych z 28 I 1946 r.

19 “Osadnicy wojskowi i ich rodziny w powiatach przeznaczonych na osadnictwo wojskowe znajdują się w bardzo ciężkich warunkach materialnych [...] Nie znajdują oni już w przydzielonych gospodarstwach żadnych zapasów, ani inwentarza. Z reguły brak im odzieży, ciepłej bielizny, obuwia. Nie mając własnych pieniężnych zasobów i nie otrzymując żadnych zapomóg nie mogą tych rzeczy nabyć. Wskutek braku odzieży najwięcej cierpi dziatwa uczęszczająca do szkół odległych nieraz o kilka kilometrów.” Ibidem, sygn. 196.964, k. 209, Pismo Ministerstwa Rolnictwa i Reform Rolnych w sprawie opieki nad osadnikami wojskowymi z 4 II 1946 r.

These are, of course, only examples of the difficulties that military settlers faced almost daily, although gradually, most of them were overcome. However, this process was neither easy nor quick.

Another problem was the issue of whether the military settlements in the *powiats* designated for this type of settlement should cover their entire area, only a narrow border strip or rural areas, as signaled in a letter dated July 18, 1945. S. Piaskowski, Government Plenipotentiary for District II (Lower Silesia), postulated limiting military settlements in districts bordering with German lands to: "a) a border strip 20 km wide excluding the remaining parts of these districts from military settlement, b) the rural settlement, lifting all restrictions on the specialized urban professionals within the entire border strip designated for military settlement purposes."²⁰

The rationale for these demands was prosaic: the eastern areas of these *powiats* (located at least 20 kilometers from the border) were no longer to exhibit the characteristics of borderlands, while urban settlement required specialized professional staff (both in administration and industry) that military settlement could not provide. In both of these matters, the civilian authorities did not strictly adhere to the initial guidelines, as the district military settlement plenipotentiaries signaled in their reports. For example, Col. Ludwik Dmyszewicz (plenipotentiary in the Silesian OW) reported in a letter dated February 5, 1946 that "an increasing number of civilian settlers or repatriates from abroad are now being settled in the military settlement *powiats*."²¹

The matter was not normalized until February 1946, when the Ministry of Recovered Territories (MZO) stated that other settlers could also be sent to *powiats* designated for military settlement to populate rural areas (they should, however, have their own livestock in this case) and urban areas (all kinds of professionals were to be sent there, such as doctors, clerks, craftsmen or engineers).²² Interesting data on this subject is contained in the report of the Regional Plenipotentiary for Military Settlement of the Silesian Military District Command, dated March 15, 1946, on the inspection of the five *powiats* designated for military settlement (of Lwówek, Lubańsk,

20 "a) pasa granicznego w szerokości 20 km z wyłączeniem pozostałych części tych obwodów spod osadnictwa wojskowego, b) osadnictwa wiejskiego przy uchyleniu wszelkich ograniczeń odnośnie wyspecjalizowanego miejskiego elementu fachowego na terenie całego pasa granicznego przeznaczonego na cele osadnictwa wojskowego." AAN, MAP, sygn. 199.2468, k. 2, Pismo pełnomocnika rządu na Dolny Śląsk z 18 VII 1945 r.

21 Ibidem, MZO, sygn. 196.969, k. 5, Pismo ppłk. L. Dmyszewicza do Pełnomocnika Naczelnego Dowództwa WP ds. Osadnictwa Wojskowego z 5 II 1946 r.

22 Ibidem, sygn. 196.969, k. 3, Pismo MZO w sprawie osiedlania repatriantów cywilnych na terenach osadnictwa wojskowego do centrali PUR w Łodzi z 28 II 1946 r.

Zgorzelec, Żary and Żagańsk), which shows that by that time, a total of 74,424 Poles had been settled in them, including 46,653 on the rights of military settlers, which meant that almost 38% of the population in that area were civilian settlers.²³

At the end of September 1945 – in connection with the ongoing process of transition of the Polish Army to a peacetime footing – the military settlement system was reorganized by incorporating it into the structures of civilian settlement, which was aptly summarized by K. Kersten: “After the reorganization, military settlement lost its character as a separate, organized form of settlement.”²⁴ To this end, the Supreme Command of the Polish Army issued an order on September 24 to dissolve the Central Military Settlement Commission and to subordinate the General Inspectorate of Military Settlement to the Minister of Public Administration. From that point forward, the Inspectorate only supervised military settlement through three district inspectorates subordinate to it, with headquarters in

TABLE 1. Military settlement in five *powiats* in the area of the Silesian Military District according to a report dated March 15, 1946.

Specification	<i>powiat</i> of Lwówek	<i>powiat</i> of Lubańsk	<i>powiat</i> of Zgorzelec	<i>powiat</i> of Żary	<i>powiat</i> of Żagań	total
arable land (ha)	35,000	21,700	27,000	25,000	21,000	129,700
settled military families	4,745	3,904	2,213	2,655	1,272	14,645
vacant farms	–	–	356	1,794	1,128	3,278
total settled Polish population	29,550	17,694	7,360	13,570	6,250	74,424
including military settlers	24,104	12,300	3,346	4,288	2,615	46,653

Source: CAW WBH, Biuro Pełnomocnika ds. Osadnictwa Wojskowego, sygn. IV.500.7.4, Sprawozdanie Okręgowego Pełnomocnika ds. Osadnictwa Wojskowego Dowództwa Śląskiego OW z 15 III 1946 r., k. 56.

²³ Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe Wojskowego Biura Historycznego (henceforth: CAW WBH), Biuro Pełnomocnika ds. Osadnictwa Wojskowego, sygn. IV.500.7.4, k. 56, Sprawozdanie Okręgowego Pełnomocnika ds. Osadnictwa Wojskowego Dowództwa Śląskiego OW z 15 III 1946 r.

²⁴ K. Kersten, op. cit., p. 657.

Szczecin, Poznań and Legnica – these, in turn, were subordinate to the *powiat* inspectorates still operating in the *powiats* designated for military settlement. Based on the aforementioned order, a new body was also established in the form of the Plenipotentiary of the Supreme Command of the Polish Army for Military Settlement, who, through the General Inspectorate of Military Settlement (part of the MAP), represented the affairs of the army in the area of military settlement and ensured the cooperation of the field civil and military administrations in the matter of assistance to military settlers. The position of plenipotentiary was assumed by Gen. Waclaw Szokalski (former commander of the Pomeranian OW). Essentially, civilian bodies (including provincial and *powiat* commissions for military settlements) took over all matters related to military settlements, and the role of the army was limited to providing assistance in terms of transportation and material resources for agriculture and medical care for settlers. To this end, in late 1945, district military settlement plenipotentiaries were appointed in the Pomeranian, Poznań, Silesian and Warsaw OWs (in selected *powiats* of the latter, military settlers also began to be settled) to coordinate military settlement activities. At the end of 1945 and the beginning of 1946, these positions were assumed by Lt. Col. Marian Frühauf in the Warsaw OW, Lt. Col. Juliusz Sielecki in the Pomeranian OW, and Lt. Col. Ludwik Dmyszewicz in the Silesian OW (no data on this subject from the Poznań OW).²⁵

Furthermore, military settlement commissions were established in civil administration structures at the provincial and *powiat* levels. The provincial commissions consisted of the governor as chairman, the OW commander, the president of the Provincial Land Office, the provincial head of the PUR, the district inspector of military settlement, and the delegate of the provincial Union of Settlers, while the *powiat* commissions were comprised of the *starosta*²⁶ as chairman, an officer appointed by the OW commander, the land commissioner, the *powiat* head

25 CAW WBH, Biuro Pełnomocnika ds. Osadnictwa Wojskowego, sygn. IV.500.7.1, k. 169, Rozkaz Naczelnego Dowództwa WP w sprawie osadnictwa wojskowego z 24 IX 1945 r.; AAN, MAP, sygn. 199.2468, k. 18–19, Pismo pełnomocnika rządu na Dolny Śląsk z 18 VII 1945 r.; ibidem, MZO, sygn. 196.965, k. 1, Rozkaz Naczelnego Dowództwa WP o osadnictwie wojskowym z 24 IX 1945 r.; ibidem, k. 2, Zarządzenie w sprawie osadnictwa wojskowego na Ziemiach Odzyskanych z 24 IX 1945 r.; AAN, Wojskowe Biuro Badań Historycznych (henceforth: WBBH), sygn. IV.3.56, B. Bełczewski, *Osadnictwo wojskowe na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych* (typescript), p. 40; ibidem, sygn. 47, W.L. Ząbek, *Warszawski Okręg Wojskowy w latach 1945–1949*, Warszawa 1990 (typescript), p. 438; A. Ogrodowczyk, *Pomorze przywrócone...*, pp. 100–104; S. Chojnecki, “Wkład Wojska Polskiego w zasiedlanie ziem zachodnich i północnych,” [in:] *Z historii tamtych lat. Ludowe Wojsko Polskie w akcjach społeczno-politycznych 1944–1975*, Warszawa 1980, p. 170.

26 *Starosta* is the head of a *powiat* administration.

of the PUR, the *powiat* inspector of military settlement, and the delegate of the *powiat* Union of Settlers. The provincial commissions henceforth set plans for military and civilian settlement in their subordinate areas, collected funds for settler assistance, established rules for material assistance to military settlers and supervised the activities of *powiat* commissions. The latter (in addition to implementing the military settlement plans approved for them) also organized a network of agricultural instructors and security guards comprised of settlers, who received support in every area.²⁷

To give the settlement process a more organized form – apart from the already existing PUR – based on the decree of November 13, 1945 “On the Administration of the Recovered Territories,” a new department was established in the form of the Ministry of the Recovered Territories, which was headed by Władysław Gomułka throughout its existence (i.e., until January 21, 1949). Within this ministry, a Settlement Department was created, which, through its subordinate settlement sections in provinces (districts) and settlement offices in *powiats*, directed the entire settlement action in the so-called Recovered Territories.²⁸

However, there were still disputes between civilian and military institutions (albeit on a smaller scale). For example, the leadership of the Ministry of Defense (MON), while aiming to accelerate military settlement, did not pursue a consistent policy: on the one hand – it forbade military settlers and their families from settling in designated *powiats* without permission of the civil administration, while on the other – it allowed them to settle outside these *powiats* although, in this case, they did not receive the rights of military settlers. An additional problem was the inadequate cooperation between military institutions and civilian authorities, both in terms of coordinating military settlement in the *powiats* designated for it, as well as the allocation of post-German farms, assistance to military settlers, or in matters of excessive tax burdens. There were, of course, at least several reasons for this state of affairs, including the poorly qualified staff in the civil administration in the so-called Recovered Territories, the bureaucratic manner in which settlers’ affairs were handled, the not always clear regulations and competencies of the various military and civilian institutions involved in the military settlement action, as well as the frequent changes in the regulations themselves. These problems were quickly recognized, as can be seen from a report dated August 20, 1945:

27 CAW WBH, Biuro Pełnomocnika ds. Osadnictwa Wojskowego, sygn. IV.500.7.1, k. 169–170, Rozkaz Naczelnego Dowództwa WP w sprawie osadnictwa wojskowego z 24 IX 1945 r.

28 Dziennik Ustaw 1945, no. 51, item 295, p. 451. Ministerstwo Ziem Odzyskanych rozwiązano w styczniu 1949 r. (ibidem, 1949, no. 4, item 22, p. 20).

Based on the order of the Commander-in-Chief issued to halt civilian settlement in the *powiats* along the Oder and Nissa rivers – they [civilian authorities – W.J.] are sending us whole masses [of civilian settlers – W.J.] who are taking over the best houses, leaving old and dilapidated ones for the military settlers; this is one of the reasons why our foundations are undermined and the military settlers are obstructed.²⁹

A report of June 5, 1946 further notes: “Land offices generally have a negative attitude toward soldiers. The same also persists in other settlement offices, especially in the Poznań and Pomeranian provinces.”³⁰

Indeed, in the summer of 1945, the structure of the military settlement mechanism was designed so that a permanent apparatus dealing with this settlement on behalf of the MAP operated alongside the military authorities (which were assumed to be temporary). In theory, the two divisions (military and civilian) were supposed to work in tandem and coordinate their activities, but in practice this was not always the case.

Hence, on February 1, 1946, the Ministry of Defense handed over all matters of military settlement to civilian authorities (that is, to the MZO, in which the Military Settlement Department was created, and to the PUR agencies) while dissolving the provincial and *powiat* inspectorates of military settlement. From that point on, the action of settling the so-called Recovered Territories (now managed by the aforementioned ministry) accelerated, partly thanks to the creation – by order of the ministers of the MZO and MAP on March 29 – of settlement departments in the offices of general administration authorities at the provincial and *powiat* levels.³¹ A little earlier, by order of the Minister of Defense No. 70 of February 28, 1946 – the hitherto existing military agricultural estates were liquidated, while the so-called “barrack-adjacent farms” [*gospodarka przykoszarowa*] were organized at military units, the purpose of which was to grow fresh vegetables and vegetables for their own needs

29 “Według rozkazu Naczelnego Wodza wydanego w celu wstrzymania osadnictwa cywilnego na tereny pow. nad Odrą i Nissą – przesyłają nam [władze cywilne – W.J.] całymi masami [osadników cywilnych – W.J.], którzy zajmują najlepsze domy, pozostawiając dla osadników wojskowych stare i zniszczone – jest to jeden z powodów, które podważają nasze fundamenty i tamują osadników wojskowych.” AAN, Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny (henceforth: PUR), sygn. 200.XI.241, k. 457, Raport por. Józefa Nowakowskiego z 20 VIII 1945 r.

30 “Urzędy ziemskie z reguły odnoszą się do żołnierzy negatywnie. Ten sam stosunek jest i w innych urzędach osiedleńczych, zwłaszcza w województwie poznańskim i pomorskim.” Ibidem, MZO, sygn. 196.965, k. 41, Sprawozdanie z przebiegu akcji osadnictwa wojskowego z 5 VI 1946 r.

31 Ibidem, Związek Osadników Wojskowych, sygn. 418.10, k. 1–3, Okólnik ministra Ziem Odzyskanych nr 61 z 5 VI 1946 r.; ibidem, MZO, sygn. 196.965, k. 29, Pismo MZO w sprawie akcji osadnictwa wojskowego z maja 1946 r.

(the property and livestock of the liquidated agricultural estates had been transferred to civilian authorities).³²

After the introduction of the above-mentioned changes, the military settlement action was concentrated in the offices of the general administration authorities: settlement departments in provincial offices and settlement offices in *starostwa*. On behalf of the army, it was henceforth only supervised by district and *powiat* military settlement plenipotentiaries, acting under the direction of the Plenipotentiary of the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army for Military Settlement.³³ Soon, in order to further improve the coordination of military settlement affairs with civilian authorities, by order No. 95 of June 12, 1946, this post was replaced by Office of the Plenipotentiary of the MON for Military Settlement, thanks to which the previous plenipotentiary, Gen. W. Szokalski, was able to penetrate more effectively into all matters relating to this settlement (in 1947, his deputy was Major Bohdan Tuszowski).³⁴ Incorporating all matters of military settlement into the nationwide settlement campaign directed by the Military Settlement Department in the MZO, PUR agencies and other general administration offices, proved to be the right solution, as it streamlined and accelerated the difficult process of developing the so-called Recovered Territories.³⁵

At the same time, the area of military settlement began to expand. In addition to the previous western border *powiats*, by the end of 1945 it also included the Baltic coastal strip from Elbląg to Wolin Island (parts of the *powiats* of Szczecin, Nowogard, Kołobrzeg, Sławieńsk, Wejherowo, Gdańsk and Elbląg), and based on an MZO decree of January 30, 1947, as well as the northern areas of Warmia and Mazury,

32 Ibidem, MZO, sygn. 196.965, k. 33–34, Rozkaz ministra Obrony Narodowej nr 70 z 28 II 1946 r.

33 CAW WBH, Główny Zarząd Polityczno-Wojskowy, sygn. IV.502.1.27, bp., Rozkaz NDWP nr 220 z 24 IX 1945 r.; AAN, MZO, sygn. 196.965, k. 43–44, Pismo Śląsko-Dąbrowskiego Urzędu Wojewódzkiego w sprawie osadnictwa wojskowego z 12 VIII 1946 r.; H. Dominiczak, *Wróciliśmy...*, pp. 100–102; S. Chojnecki, *Wkład Wojska Polskiego...*, pp. 162–167; A. Ogrodowczyk, *Osadnictwo wojskowe...*, pp. 195–197, 221; idem, *Żołnierze Wojska Polskiego na Śląsku Opolskim i Dolnym 1945–1948*, Opole 1978, pp. 92–95.

34 CAW WBH, Biuro Pełnomocnika ds. Osadnictwa Wojskowego, sygn. IV.500.75, k. 60, Rozkaz MON nr 1005 o reorganizacji Biura Pełnomocnika MON ds. Osadnictwa Wojskowego z 18 VIII 1947 r.

35 Ibidem, sygn. IV.500.7.2, k. 1, Rozkaz NDWP nr 95 z 12 VI 1946 r.; AAN, MZO, sygn. 196.964, k. 146, Pismo MZO w sprawie organizacji referatów osadnictwa wojskowego z 20 II 1946 r.; A. Ogrodowczyk, *Osadnictwo wojskowe...*, pp. 221–228; S. Chojnecki, “Udział wojska w akcji osiedleńczej na ziemiach zachodnich i północnych,” [in:] *Udział Ludowego Wojska Polskiego w wielkich akcjach społeczno-politycznych w latach 1944–1973*, ed. M. Jaworski, Warszawa 1977, pp. 202–213; H. Wichrowski, op. cit., p. 82.

several *powiats* of Białystok Province,³⁶ and in January 1948, the entire so-called Recovered Territories.³⁷

Settlement Order No. 111 of June 3, 1945 defined the categories of military persons who could be granted the military settler status. These included soldiers and partisans who took part in the fighting, as well as the families of soldiers and partisans killed in combat (of course, this generally referred to soldiers of the so-called People's Army and leftist partisans). A month later (under Instruction No. 2 of the Military Settlement Commission, dated July 19), the possibility of acquiring the rights of a military settler was also extended to Polish soldiers who had been outside the country during the war – as it was defined – “not of their own volition.” It referred to those serving in the Polish Armed Forces in the West and was presumably intended to incentivize them to return to the country.³⁸ A military settler could receive a 10-acre plot of land (the number of farm buildings corresponded to the size of the family), so-called “first-class” food stamps, free medical care, a six-month cash benefit, as well as priority in obtaining various types of permits to establish craft workshops. After the law “On the Agricultural System and Settlement in the Recovered Territories and the Former Free City of Danzig” came into effect on October 13, 1946 (passed on September 6), the area of land per farm ranged between 7 and 15 hectares – depending on the class of land and climatic and terrain conditions. Plots of land could be obtained for ownership (free of charge) by Polish citizens who arrived in the so-called Recovered Territories as part of the settlement campaign conducted by the state authorities, as well as by people who had lived there before January 1, 1945 – as long as they held Polish citizenship. Moreover, five categories of persons who had priority in receiving a farm were defined:

- 1) demobilized soldiers and disabled service members of the Polish army who took part in the battles for Poland; and participants in partisan fights for Poland, except for those who acted against Democratic Poland; 2) security service officers who became disabled in connection with their service in defending the democratic principles of the system of the Polish State; 3) widows and orphans of soldiers and partisan combatants who died fighting for Poland, as well as widows and orphans of security

36 The military settlement was extended to the following *powiats* of Olsztyn province: Bartoszyce, Braniewo, Giżycko, Iława, Kętrzyn, Lidzbark, Morąg, Olsztyn, Pasłęka, Reszel and Węgorzewo, as well as to three *powiats* of Białostok province: Elk, Gołdap and Olecko.

37 W. Gieszczyński, *Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny w osadnictwie na Warmii i Mazurach (1945–1950)*, Olsztyn 1999, p. 111.

38 A. Ogrodowczyk, *Pomorze przywrócone...*, pp. 98–99; C. Osękowski, *Oficjalne i faktyczne...*, pp. 59–60.

service officers who died in connection with their service in defense of the democratic principles of the Polish State, and persons whose sole breadwinners were the aforementioned soldiers, partisan combatants and security service officers; 4) repatriates; 5) owners of smallholder and dwarf farms located in the areas of the Polish State (outside the Recovered Territories and the former Free City of Danzig).³⁹

The concept of a “military settler” was further clarified in an MZO order of January 14, 1948, issued in consultation with the MON and MAP. According to this legislation, military settler status could be granted to the following persons: 1) disabled veterans (with a loss of earning capacity of at least 45%) who were seriously injured between September 1939 and May 9, 1945 while serving in the so-called People’s Army, in Polish military formations adjacent to the allied armies, soldiers of the Polish Army from the September 1939 campaign, as well as disabled veterans participating in partisan fights against the Germans and their allies in the ranks of the People’s Guard, the People’s Army, the Home Army, the Peasant Battalions, the Polish People’s Army and the Security Corps; 2) demobilized soldiers of the so-called People’s Army, other Polish military formations adjacent to the allied armies from September 1939 to May 9, 1945, participants of the September 1939 campaign, and soldiers demobilized after the end of the war who settled in the so-called Recovered Territories with the consent of the state authorities before May 9, 1946 (provided they did not act against “Democratic Poland”); 3) participants of the organizations listed in the first point taking part in partisan combat against the German occupiers, who settled in the so-called Recovered Territories with the consent of the state authorities before May 9, 1946, having done military service; 4) in special cases, the Minister of Recovered Lands could also recognize other persons who took part in the fight against the Germans as military settlers (provided they had the appropriate certificate from the Minister of National Defense), including security officers who became disabled in the defense of “Democratic Poland,” widows and orphans of soldiers, partisan combatants killed in the fight for Poland, or in defense

³⁹ “1) zdemobilizowani żołnierze i inwalidzi wojska polskiego, którzy brali udział w walkach o Polskę; oraz uczestnicy walk partyzanckich o Polskę z wyjątkiem tych, którzy występowali przeciwko Polsce Demokratycznej; 2) funkcjonariusze służby bezpieczeństwa, którzy w związku ze służbą w obronie demokratycznych zasad ustroju Państwa Polskiego zostali inwalidami; 3) wdowy i sieroty po żołnierzach i uczestnikach walk partyzanckich poległych w walkach o Polskę, jako też wdowy i sieroty po funkcjonariuszach służby bezpieczeństwa, którzy polegli w związku ze służbą w obronie demokratycznych zasad Państwa Polskiego, oraz osoby, których jedynymi żywicielami byli wymienieni żołnierze, uczestnicy walk partyzanckich i funkcjonariusze służby bezpieczeństwa; 4) repatrianci; 5) właściciele gospodarstw małorolnych i karłowatych, znajdujących się na obszarach Państwa Polskiego (poza obszarem Ziemi Odzyskanych i b. Wolnego Miasta Gdańska.” *Dziennik Ustaw 1946*, nr 49, poz. 279, p. 515.

of post-war power, as well as persons whose only breadwinners were representatives of the above-mentioned groups.⁴⁰

The military settlement action began in June 1945 and lasted until July 1948. In the first months – until October 1945 – it was carried out exclusively by the military authorities, through the commands of the three western military districts (Pomeranian, Poznań and Silesian). Later, there was a fundamental development of the military settlement lasting from October 1945 to July 1948, in which civilian offices in charge of nationwide settlement took over the leadership. Military authorities merely cooperated with them in this regard, providing assistance to military settlers.⁴¹

Detailed rules for organizing the military settlement action in its initial period were included in the order of the Supreme Command of the Polish Army No. 141 of July 5, 1945. It stipulated that each military unit ought to settle between a dozen and several dozen military families in the *powiats* designated for military settlement. This was supposed to be carried out as soon as possible and unaided to create “settlement nests” for further settlement action. To achieve this, unit commanders prepared lists of soldiers who expressed a desire to resettle with their families in the border *powiats* along the Oder and Lusatian Neisse line. Officers were then to be sent to the Inspector of Military Settlement in Poznań in order to determine the settlement area for a given unit, and later – in agreement with local civilian authorities – a specific village or several villages allotted for military settlement were to be selected for the unit. Based on soldiers declaring their willingness to settle in the western peripheries of Poland, operational groups were formed, which, after reaching the designated localities, performed the necessary preparatory work, such as repairing residential and farm buildings, obtaining livestock and grain for planting, and, if necessary, displacing Germans still living in those localities. After a few weeks, other operational groups were formed to organize the transportation of military settlers’ families to their new place of residence – usually this was done by rail transport under the protection of the soldiers of the unit organizing

40 1) zdemobilizowani żołnierze i inwalidzi wojska polskiego, którzy brali udział w walkach o Polskę; oraz uczestnicy walk partyzanckich o Polskę z wyjątkiem tych, którzy występowali przeciwko Polsce Demokratycznej; 2) funkcjonariusze służby bezpieczeństwa, którzy w związku ze służbą w obronie demokratycznych zasad ustroju Państwa Polskiego zostali inwalidami; 3) wdowy i sieroty po żołnierzach i uczestnikach walk partyzanckich poległych w walkach o Polskę, jako też wdowy i sieroty po funkcjonariuszach służby bezpieczeństwa, którzy polegli w związku ze służbą w obronie demokratycznych zasad Państwa Polskiego, oraz osoby, których jedynymi żywicielami byli wymienieni żołnierze, uczestnicy walk partyzanckich i funkcjonariusze służby bezpieczeństwa; 4) repatrianci; 5) właściciele gospodarstw małorolnych i karłowatych, znajdujących się na obszarach Państwa Polskiego (poza obszarem Ziemi Odzyskanych i b. Wolnego Miasta Gdańska.” *Dziennik Ustaw 1946*, no. 49, item 279, p. 515.

41 *Dziennik Urzędowy Ministerstwa Ziemi Odzyskanych 1948*, no. 3, item 17, pp. 2–3.

such passage. In the second period of the military settlement action (from October 1945), an order was issued to abandon the previous practice of carrying out settlement with military forces alone, in view of the inclusion of this type of settlement in the nationwide settlement system. To this end, provincial and *powiat* commissions for military settlements were established, as previously stated, to determine settlement plans and ways to implement them. The basic form of military settlement – due to the fact that the main part of the army was peasants – was the allocation of land plots to demobilized soldiers, and in the event of an insufficient number of farms, a type of parceling-cooperative settlement was promoted (in large land estates under military administration). In practice, this form was not as popular as individual settlements. On the other hand, in cities, military settlers were allocated so-called garden-vegetable plots of up to 4 hectares, and in the coastal region, military settlers (usually former sailors) were given ownership of small houses with modest allotments, since the source of their livelihood was going to be their participation in the development of merchant shipping, fishing (sea and inland) and fish processing.⁴²

According to preliminary assumptions from the summer of 1945, by the end of that year, the military authorities planned to settle about 100,000 military settlers (including their family members) in the designated 12 *powiats*; they were going to be distributed mainly in rural areas, with only a small portion in cities. It is worth noting that military settlers were the pioneers of Polish settlement in the summer of 1945. Undoubtedly, the main incentive for them was the larger size of the farms granted to them free of charge than for the other settlers, as military settlers received an average of 10–15 hectares of farmland each. For security reasons, efforts were made to settle them in larger groups in selected localities. The action at the time largely included soldiers coming from the former Eastern Borderlands, who had been forced by the post-war changes to the country's borders to leave their homeland and start a new life in an unfamiliar environment. According to Arkadiusz Ogrodowczyk's findings, in the first period of military settlement in the *powiats* along the new Polish western border, 53,275 people had managed to settle by the end of October (including settled soldiers and members of their families – there were 13,641 such families). Of these, as many as 60% took up residence in the western *powiats* of the Pomeranian OW (mainly the *powiats* of Chojna and Gryfino), about 25% in the western *powiats* of the Poznań OW (mainly the *powiats* of Gubin and Rzepin), and only about 10% in the western *powiats* of the Silesian OW.⁴³ In turn, according to a report by the Plenipotentiary of the Supreme Command of the Polish Army for Military Settlement

42 A. Ogrodowczyk, *Pomorze przywrócone...*, pp. 100–104.

43 Idem, *Osadnictwo wojskowe...*, pp. 190, 202–203, 216.

issued on November 29, 1945 – by that date, more than 160,000 people had settled in all the *powiats* designated for military settlement, of whom about 60% were reported to be military settlers and their families. This meant a significant acceleration of the settlement action, as within a few weeks, the number of military settlers in these *powiats* had almost doubled (from 53,000 to about 95,000).⁴⁴

The results of the military settlement action in 1945 showed how unrealistic the initial assumption was to create a belt settled by a compact settlement community based on the military tradition and enjoying greater privileges over other settlers. Despite official prohibitions, civilian settlers steadily flowed into these *powiats* and soon began to comprise a significant percentage of the settled Polish population there – according to Krystyna Kersten, by the end of 1945, it was already around 40%. On the other hand, almost from the very beginning, the military settlers demanded the right to settle freely in the entire so-called Recovered Territories, which happened, but only at the end of the settlement campaign.⁴⁵

The military settlers – despite promises from the army – were not provided with adequate farming conditions in 1945, and faced many problems on a daily basis: “The supplies were low, grain had been harvested and threshed by Soviet troops, some of it by Polish soldiers, and taken away. The little grain harvested by the settlers is not enough to feed them, much less to sow. The headcount of horned and polled cattle and horses is simply disastrous.”⁴⁶ This situation was probably influenced by the poor cooperation between the military and civilian authorities at the time. In that period, they were actually conducting separate settlement actions, which was one of the reasons why three ministries (National Defense, Public Administration and Agriculture, and Agrarian Reform) combined their efforts in this aspect and in late September 1945 created a nationwide leadership of the settlement action, in which civilian authorities began to play a fundamental role.⁴⁷ This significantly accelerated the military settlement action in 1946, which also included – in addition to the *powiats* designated for military settlement – other *powiats* in the so-called Recovered Territories. In this case, however, the settlers were not entitled to the rights of military settlers, which meant that they benefited to a lesser degree from the assistance provided by both military and civilian authorities, usually receiving neglected farms, with smaller areas and little livestock, and did not qualify

44 CAW WBH, Biuro Pełnomocnika ds. Osadnictwa Wojskowego, sygn. IV.500.7.4, bp., Sprawozdanie z inspekcji terenów osadnictwa wojskowego nad Odrą i Nysą z 29 XI 1945 r.

45 K. Kersten, op. cit., p. 656.

46 CAW WBH, Biuro Pełnomocnika ds. Osadnictwa Wojskowego, sygn. IV.500.7.4, k. 92, Sprawozdanie z inspekcji terenów osadnictwa wojskowego nad Odrą i Nysą z 29 XI 1945 r.

47 A. Ogrodowczyk, *Osadnictwo wojskowe...*, p. 221.

for tax exemptions. This aroused great dissatisfaction among these settlers, and only after months of efforts by the military authorities, in January 1948, were the privileges enjoyed by military settlers extended to the entire area of the so-called Recovered Territories. At that time, the military settlement action was slowly coming to an end, and by order of the Ministry of Defense No. 147 of July 19, 1948, its formal termination came with the dissolution of the Office of the MON Plenipotentiary for Military Settlement: "With the completion of the military settlement action and the Board of Armed Struggle for Independence and Democracy assuming the care for military settlers in the territory of the recovered lands and demobilized soldiers in the central provinces, I order that by August 1, 1948, the Office of the Minister of Defense Plenipotentiary for Military Settlement be dissolved."⁴⁸

In the process of settling and managing the so-called Recovered Territories, one cannot forget the aid that the army provided to military settlers. This consisted not only in supporting and coordinating the military settlement process itself, cooperating in this aspect with local authorities and various civilian institutions, but also in providing direct assistance on the plots of the military settlers, where soldiers serving in the ranks of the army worked and supplied the settlers with the equipment necessary for this work (tools, seeds, beast of burden and breeding animals). The scale of this assistance can be illustrated by the fact that between 1945–1947, the army handed over or sold at lower prices the following: 47,000 head of horned cattle, almost 42,000 horses, 23,000 sheep, 16,000 pigs, several thousand horse-drawn vehicles and more than 40,000 sets of horse harnesses.⁴⁹

An equally important element in the process of military settlement was the activity of the Union of Military Settlers, whose Provisional General Board was constituted on March 28, 1946 (Gen. Waclaw Szokalski became its chairman, and Lt. Col. Bronislaw Belczewski its vice-chairman). The union assisted military and civilian institutions in the development of military settlements, and settlers in matters of livelihood, and represented their interests before state authorities. It also worked to extend the rights of military settlers to all demobilized soldiers settled throughout the so-called Recovered Territories. In the difficult post-war period, the Union managed to achieve considerable successes, as only by July 1, 1947, it had additionally provided the military settlers with more than 8,000 horses from the army, a large number of wagons and harnesses for horses, 24 cars from the army demobilization, 800 cows, and 50 cartons of powdered milk to feed the children of the military settlers. Furthermore, it actively supported the settlers in agricultural work (sowing

48 CAW WBH, Biuro Pełnomocnika ds. Osadnictwa Wojskowego, sygn. IV,500.7.2, k. 49, Rozkaz MON nr 147 z 19 VII 1948 r.

49 Z. Wojdalski, op. cit., pp. 472–473.

and harvesting action). The Union grew rapidly in terms of organization, for after less than a year and a half of activity, it had almost 100,000 members organized in 7 districts, 107 branches and 1,324 clubs. Thanks to this, with the help of the Union, military settlers organized nearly 300 cooperatives of various types (agriculture and commerce, dairy and egg production, transportation, fishing, horticulture or bee-keeping) in the so-called Recovered Territories, as well as more than 40 hotels, inns and canteens designed to furnish military settlers on the move with accommodation and cheap food. No less important was the Union's cultural and educational activities, which included the establishment of more than a thousand community centers, although it should be added that they also carried out a kind of indoctrination of the settlers to ensure their "proper politicization" and the "consolidation of the ideology of Polish democracy."⁵⁰

However, the reality of the daily life of the military settlers often differed from the official propaganda, numerous expressions of which can be found in the documents of the Union of Military Settlers. For example, in one of the petitions of settlers residing in the *powiat* of Lębork written on June 1, 1947 and sent to Gen. W. Szokalski, they complained about poor treatment from local civilian offices, excessive taxes and fees for the livestock and post-German furniture they had received, while asking for more financial and material aid.⁵¹ The Union's reports contain information about these irregularities, such as the report for November 1946, which notes, among other things:

The distribution of horses from the Polish Army demobilization was completed as ordered. This action encountered great difficulties at first, as Unit Commanders preferred to sell horses to civilian settlers, without the intermediation of the union, at a higher price than was stipulated by the order of the D.O.W. 2. It often happened that the horses were incapacitated, blind or lame and died a few days after purchase, as a result of which settlers were exposed to losses.⁵²

⁵⁰ AAN, MZO, sygn. 196.967, k. 28–34, Sprawozdanie z działalności Tymczasowego Zarządu Głównego za czas od powstania Związku Osadników Wojskowych do 1 VII 1947 r.

⁵¹ Ibidem, k. 39, Pismo osadników wojskowych z powiatu lęborskiego do gen. W. Szokalskiego z 1 VI 1947 r.

⁵² "Rozdział koni pochodzących z demobilu WP został ukończony zgodnie z rozkazem. Akcja ta napotkała z początku na duże trudności, ponieważ Dowódcy Jednostek woleli sprzedawać konie osadnikom cywilnym, bez pośrednictwa związku, za cenę wyższą, niż była przewidziana rozkazem D.O.W. 2. Często zdarzało się, że konie były niezdolne do pracy, ślepe lub kulawe i kilka dni po kupnie zdychały, wskutek czego osadnicy narażeni byli na straty." Ibidem, k. 175, Sprawozdanie Związku Osadników Wojskowych za czas od 5 listopada do 5 grudnia z 8 XII 1946 r.

Other such reports stressed that the settlers pointed out a number of additional problems, such as the civilian settlers' taking over the better-quality farm and residential buildings as well as large numbers of post-German livestock, the settlers' treatment of work in the so-called Recovered Territories only as temporary work to enrich themselves, the widespread phenomenon of looting, robbery and theft, and inadequate medical care. These problems were finally resolved only at the end of the military settlement campaign.

Conclusion

It is not easy to summarize the scale of military settlement in 1945–1948 due to incomplete and often divergent data on the subject. According to the findings of A. Ogrodowczyk, in 1945–1948 about 534,000 people with the status of military settlers settled in the so-called Recovered Territories (including demobilized soldiers, as well as members of their families and the families of fallen servicemen). Of these, the largest number settled in Lower Silesia – about 250,000 people (or as many as 47% of the total number of military settlers). In second place was Western Pomerania, where about 160,000 military settlers settled (about 30%); in Lubuskie Land it was about 90,000 (about 17%), and in Warmia and Mazury only 33,000 (about 6% of all military settlers). These proportions are not surprising and stem from the fact that all of Lower Silesia and Western Pomerania had belonged to the German state until 1945, constituting the main areas of all Polish settlements after the war. In addition, the area of these two regions far exceeded the rest of the so-called Recovered Territories in size, i.e., the Lubuskie Land and the part of former East Prussia granted to Poland. Another key factor was that, according to the initial assumptions, military settlers were to be directed mainly to the aforementioned 12 designated border *powiats* lying along the Oder and Lusatian Neisse rivers. Over time, however, they began to settle in other districts as well, sometimes far from the Polish-German border. The smallest number of military settlers in the *powiats* of former East Prussia and parts of the *powiats* of Białystok province was essentially due to the fact that the military settlement campaign was extended to these areas at a later time. Of the approximately 534,000 people with the status of military settlers, fewer than a third of them (180,000) were settled in the *powiats* designated in June 1945 exclusively for military settlement, while the vast majority (354,000) resided outside these *powiats*. However, the settlement of 180,000 people in the border *powiats* can still be considered a great success.⁵³

⁵³ A. Ogrodowczyk, *Osadnictwo wojskowe...*, pp. 240–242; idem, “Osadnictwo wojskowe na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945–1948,” *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny* 1971, R. XVI, no. 3, pp. 78–79; idem, *Nad Odrą i Bałtykiem...*, p. 164, 170, 216–217;

TABLE 2. Summary of the results of military settlements in 1945–1948

Military District	Region	Total number of military settlers	Total number of military settlers' families	Including the number of people in <i>powiats</i> designated for military settlements	Including the number of families in <i>powiats</i> designated for military settlement
OW I	Warmia and Mazury	30,000	10,000	.	.
	Białystok	3,000	1,000	.	.
	total	33,000	11,000	.	.
OW II	Western Pomerania	142,390	44,130	.	.
	Gdańsk Pomerania	18,000	6,000	.	.
	total	160,000	50,000	63,303	21,101
OW III	Lubuskie Land	90,000	30,000	39,000	13,000
OW IV	Lower Silesia	222,864	74,288	.	.
	Opole Silesia	28,500	9,550	.	.
	total	251,000	84,000	77,889	25,963
total		534,000	175,000	180,192	60,064

Source: A. Ogródowczyk, "Osadnictwo wojskowe," [in:] *Ludowe Wojsko Polskie w walce, służbie i pracy na ziemiach zachodnich i północnych 1945–1950*, ed. S. Gać, Poznań 1983, pp. 240–242.

Military settlers played an important role in the process of settling the so-called Recovered Territories, as they accounted for almost 12% of all settlers. Of course, their share in the settlement of individual areas varied: in the Lubuskie Land they accounted for as many as 22.2% of all settlers, in Western Pomerania – 14.6%, in Lower Silesia – 12.3%, while in the other areas covered by the settlement action

D. Mierzejewski, S. Sadowski, *Zarys historii Pomorskiego Okręgu Wojskowego 1919–1994*, Bydgoszcz 1994, p. 143; S. Chojnecki, *Wkład Wojska Polskiego...*, pp. 185–186. The literature provides slightly different data on this subject. See: H. Dominiczak, *W walce o Polskę Ludową. Udział Wojska Polskiego w przeobrażeniach ustrojowo-społecznych i gospodarczych 1944–1948*, Warszawa 1980, p. 201; Z. Wojdalski, op. cit., p. 472; L. Grot, op. cit., p. 74.

their percentage share was considerably lower (in Warmia and Mazury – 6.7%, in Opole region – 5.8%, in Białystok region – 5.0% and in Gdańsk Pomerania – 3.9%).⁵⁴

Since the vast majority of demobilized soldiers came from the countryside, it is not surprising that they settled primarily in rural areas with their families. Of the total number of almost 175,000 families of military settlers, as many as about 130,000 settled in the countryside and became farmers and livestock breeders, and – if they had previous experience – rural craftsmen (e.g., blacksmiths). The remainder (about 45,000 families, or nearly 25%) settled in cities and took up various types of non-agricultural work. Among the demobilized soldiers were also teachers, clerks, craftsmen, manual workers and representatives of free professions, who, because of their qualifications, obviously chose to settle in cities, where they found employment in industry, local administration, private trade and crafts, or ran horticultural farms, among others.⁵⁵

In conclusion, military settlements were an important part of the process of settlement and re-Polonization of the so-called Recovered Territories, which in post-war Poland constituted almost 1/3 of the country's territory (103,000 km²). One could say that military settlers pioneered the development of *powiats* along the Polish western border, which took place under extremely difficult conditions. Gradually, the nationwide settlement campaign gained momentum (especially in 1946–1947), thanks to which, at the beginning of 1948, there were already more than 5.2 million Poles living in the so-called Recovered Territories, of whom almost 4.2 million (or as many as 80%) had already settled on these lands after the war. After the formal termination of military settlement in the summer of 1948, the Polish population in the area in question rose to more than 5.6 million people, of whom 1.9 million lived in Lower Silesia, 1.3 million in Opole Silesia, almost one million in Western Pomerania, almost 550,000 in Warmia and Mazury, more than 450,000 in Gdańsk Pomerania, and just over 400,000 in the Lubuskie Land. Of the aforementioned 5.6 million people – 4.6 million were repatriates, re-emigrants and displaced persons (including almost 1.6 million Poles from the former Eastern Borderlands). In this mass of the Polish population, which in 1945–1948 settled the so-called Recovered Territories, military settlements constituted a relatively small part of the nationwide settlement action, but they were extremely important in the process of managing these lands and their subsequent economic and social development.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ AAN, WBBH, sygn. 47, W.L. Ząbek, *Warszawski Okręg Wojskowy...*, p. 461; Z. Wojdalski, op. cit., p. 472.

⁵⁵ A. Ogrodowczyk, *Nad Odrą i Bałtykiem...*, pp. 152, 170–171.

⁵⁶ CAW WBH, Gabinet Ministra Obrony Narodowej, sygn. IV.500.1/A.14, n. pag., *Sprawozdanie z działalności Ministerstwa Ziemi Odzyskanych za lata 1945–1949*; A. Ogrodowczyk, *Nad Odrą i Bałtykiem...*, pp. 215–217.

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