

AGATA ŻABIEREK*
KRZYSZTOF ŻABIEREK*

ROMANIAN OCCUPATION OF POKUTTYA IN 1919

On the night of 31st October and 1st November 1918 street fighting for Lviv began between Poles and Ukrainians. Thanks to the great sacrifice the Polish side managed to defend the city. The battles started to spread throughout the whole of Eastern Lesser Poland and lasted until July 1919¹. During the rebirth of the Republic of Poland, the first diplomatic contacts began to develop, which lasted throughout the peaceful period of existence of the Polish state.

During the Polish-Ukrainian battles, brutal acts of war crimes took place², which were a precursor of the tragedy of these lands during the Second World War (genocide committed on the Polish population by UPA³). During the May 1919 offensive by Polish troops⁴, Romanian troops entered the Pokuttya area and began implementing the May announcements of Prime Minister Ion Brătianu, with Romanian military circles on readiness to take part in the action against the Ukrainians. It was supposed to bring a common border with Poland and the conclusion of a political and military alliance⁵.

In this period, the Polish press was the main source of information for Poles about the political and military situation on numerous battle fronts. The pressmen were watching the situation in Eastern Lesser Poland with interest. The two most widely published newspapers were “Gazeta Lwowska” and “Goniec Krakowski”. During the Austrian Partition, the “Gazeta Lwowska” was the press body of the authorities during the Second Polish Republic. It was an official journal of local significance⁶. Whereas

* Drd., University “Kazimir the Great”, Bydgoszcz, Poland.

¹ W. Sienkiewicz, *Niepokonani. Wojna polsko-bolszewicka 1920 r.* [The Polish-Bolshevik War of 1920], Warszawa 2011, p. 118.

² K. Żabierek, *Zbrodnie ukraińskie w czasie walk w Galicji Wschodniej 1918–1919 w świetle “Kurjera Warszawskiego”* [Ukrainian Crimes during the Fighting in Eastern Galicia 1918–1919 in the light of “Kurier Warszawski”], in “Kresowe Stanice”, no. 2 (2017), p. 25–43.

³ S. Żurek, *Ludobójstwo nacjonalistów ukraińskich dokonane na Polakach w Polsce południowo-wschodniej w latach 1939–1948* [Genocide by Ukrainian Nationalists made on Poles in South-Eastern Poland in the Years 1939–1948], Wrocław, 2013; Z. Okoń, *Kresowi sąsiedzi: w szponach trzech ludobójczych hord* [Borderland Neighbors: In the Claws of Three Genocidal Hordes], Rzeszów, 2005; E. Prus, *Stepan Bandera (1909–1959): symbol zbrodni i okrucieństwa* [Stepan Bandera (1909–1959): Symbol of Crime and Cruelty], Wrocław, 2004.

⁴ A. Garlicki, *Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej początki* [The Second Republic of Poland], Wrocław, 1996, p. 110.

⁵ R. Galuba, *Niech nas rozsądzi miecz i krew, Konflikt polsko-ukraiński o Galicję Wschodnią w latach 1918–1919* [Let the Sword and Blood Judge Us, Polish-Ukrainian conflict for Eastern Galicia in 1918–1919], Poznań, 2004, p. 178.

⁶ <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/Gazeta-Lwowska;3904407.html> (updated 27.11.2017).

“Goniec Krakowski” was a Polish daily published in Cracow from 1918 to 1926, ideologically connected with the political camp of the Czech Republic.

Romanian troops entered the Pokuttya on 24 May 1919 during the Polish offensive under General Józef Haller. It was a 10,000-strong Romanian corps under the command of General Iacob Zadic. The reason for the steps taken was the decision to secure the front against the communist Hungarian forces from the north⁷.

When the Romanian side launched activities, the press from the Lesser Poland region drew attention to the opinions of the neighboring countries about the situation. The “Gazeta Lwowska” reported that the Berlin press described the combination of Polish and Romanian troops in an excited tone. Despite the fact that it lowered the significance of this event, they admitted that this fact would have significant effects on further fights in Eastern Lesser Poland. Relying on “Morgenpost”, “Gazeta Lwowska” cited information about the opinion of this newspaper regarding the Ukrainian army as completely incapable⁸. A similarly negative opinion on the Polish-Romanian plans was presented by the Czechoslovakian press. “Narodni Listy” was concerned that Poles through the Romanian corridor going through Mukachevo were to be connected to Romania. The newspaper expressed hope that the Czechoslovakian government would take appropriate measures and lead to the destruction of the Polish plans⁹.

The picture of the situation through the eyes of the Ukrainian side was published by “Gazeta Lwowska” in issue 129. Relaying on Czechoslovak press office, “Gazeta Lwowska” informed that the Ukrainian side believed that rumors about the agreement between Poland and Romania go back to November 1918. However, they were put into practice only: “[...] when the Ukrainians found themselves in a march against the Bolsheviks in the east and released the Romanian front on the Dniester, the Poles and Romanians joined to carry out their plan”¹⁰. In its message, the Ukrainian side reported that the Romanians had issued an ultimatum to prevent their resistance. The Ukrainian side decided not to make it real, “and not only the old men but also the women” appealed to the general mobilizations called for the weapons¹¹.

Information on the progress of the Romanian army during the offensive often went to the headlines. In the article 169 of the “Goniec Krakowski”, in the article *Tlumach under the rule of the Ukrainian countryside*, the situation prevailed in the city during the Romanian offensive. According to the witness of these events, three airplanes appeared over the city on May 24; one with bombs, and two escorts. It appeared to be Romanian airplanes. For Ruthenians, this became the slogan of retreat, the more so from the side of Horodenka, long races of retreating Ukrainian trains began at dawn¹².

However, in the following days, readers received information that the city was occupied by the Polish army, and the information provided by the Vienna correspondence office was false. It was drawn from the fact of a Romanian officer being in the city, which served as a liaison between the Polish and Romanian army¹³.

⁷ M. Kozłowski, *Zapomniana wojna* [Forgetful War], Bydgoszcz, 1999, p. 305.

⁸ *Połączenie polsko-rumuńskie* [Polish-Romanian Connection], in “Gazeta Lwowska”, no. 124 (1919), p. 5.

⁹ *Cześć o porozumieniu polsko-rumuńskim* [Czechs on the Polish-Romanian Agreement], “Goniec Krakowski”, no. 138 (1919), p. 1; *Korytarz do Rumunii* [Corridor to Romania], in “Gazeta Lwowska”, no. 120 (1919), p. 5.

¹⁰ *Morawska Ostrawa*, in “Gazeta Lwowska”, no. 125 (1919), p. 5.

¹¹ *Ultimatum rumuńskie do Ukraińców*, in “Goniec Krakowski”, no. 145 (1919), p. 6–7.

¹² *Tlumacz pod rządami dziczy ukraińskiej* [Tlumach under the Rule of the Ukrainian Countryside], in “Goniec Krakowski”, no. 169 (1919), p. 2.

¹³ *W Stanisławowie* [In Ivano-Frankivsk], in “Kurjer Warszawski”, no. 161 (1919), p. 10; *Wojsko polskie wkroczyły do Stanisławowa!* [The Polish Army entered Ivano-Frankivsk!], in “Goniec Krakowski”, no. 143 (1919), p. 1.

“Goniec Krakowski” kept track of the situation in Eastern Lesser Poland. In the issue number 148, they quoted excerpts from the letter of Tadeusz Cieński, who on 28 May flew from Lviv to Chernivtsi by plane. In his letter, he cited the situation that the Romanians were found in Pokuttya after entering this area. According to the accounts: Romanian troops entered via Sniatyn, Kolomyia, Nadvirna, Otynia, Horodenka, and Tlumach, but everywhere they found the towns already occupied by Poles, whose military organizations released them on the 23, 24 and 25 May from the Ukrainian invasion. In the letter the author pointed out the need for the Warsaw government to quickly organise the offices, while maintaining friendly relations with Romanians¹⁴.

According to the Romanian message of June 3, 1919, the Romanian army after the occupation of Kolomyia, Nadvirna, and the Tlumach was directed towards the Bohorodchany. At that time, Romanian patrols were already reaching Tysmenytsia¹⁵.

The cooperation between the Poles and Romanians at the time of entering the latter on the Pokuttya was not always arranged, due to small negligence on both sides. According to information provided in the Polish press on 27 May, when the Romanian troops Kolomyia, the Poles mistook them for Ukrainians, opening fire for them, upon which the Romanian army responded with the fire of machine guns and grenades. It was only the Polish side who discovered their real opponent in this battle, and stopped the fight. The Romanians then ordered the Poles to lay down their arms. In the “Falcon” organisation building itself, the Romanian army collected 22 machine guns, two 15 cm calibre, and three 8 cm calibre¹⁶.

Romanians have remembered this event for a long time. In mid-July, as reported by “Goniec Krakowski”, they allowed military exercises to be carried out by the Polish Military Organization (P.O.W.) in Kolomyia, but without rifles, because, as the author claimed: “Romanians regard arms in Polish hands as dangerous to themselves”¹⁷. After the Romanian occupation of the city, the Romanian commander, General Zadik, issued a proclamation in three languages: Polish, Romanian and Ruthenian. In the first period of occupation, the administrative authority was exercised by officials according to former national laws, under the supervision of Romanian troops¹⁸.

Despite these unfortunate events, relationships in the city can be considered as correct. According to the information provided in the pages of “Gazeta Lwowska” in Kolomyia, at the top of the clock tower of the town hall “fluttering the poland-amaranth flag, below the tricolor Romanian flag. This commonality of both flags will be repeated on all buildings occupied by the Romanian authorities. The Poles, returning the formal recognition of Polish authority for this, wear Romanian national colours next to Polish colours as well”¹⁹.

¹⁴ *Poludniowo-wschodnia Galicya uwolniona z pod tyranii hajdamaków* [Southeastern Galicia freed from the Hashidan Tyranny], in “Goniec Krakowski”, no. 148 (1919), p. 4; *Rumunja a Polska* [Romania and Poland], in “Kurier Warszawski”, no. 152 (1919), p. 6.

¹⁵ *Komunikat rumuński* [Romanian Communiqué], in “Postęp”, no. 131 (1919), p. 2; *Komunikaty rumuńskie* [Romanian Messages], in “Gazeta Lwowska”, no. 131 (1919), p. 5; *Pochód Rumunów na Bohorodczany i Tyśmienice* [Procession of Romanians at Bohorodchany and Tysmenytsia], in “Goniec Krakowski”, no. 151 (1919), p. 7.

¹⁶ *Starcie rumuńsko-polskie w Kołomyi* [Romanian-Polish Clash in Kolomyia], “Kurier Warszawski”, no. 153 (1919), p. 8; *Starcie rumuńsko-polskie w Kołomyi* [The Romanian-Polish Clash in Kolomyia], “Goniec Częstochowski”, no. 119 (1919), p. 3; *Zajęcie Kołomyi przez Rumunów* [Occupation of Kolomyia by Romanians], in “Goniec Krakowski”, no. 149 (1919), p. 5.

¹⁷ *Zabawa Rusinów w państwo. Dwie republiki ruskie na Pokuciu* [A toy of Ruthenians in the State. Two Ruthenian Republics in Pokuttva], in “Goniec Krakowski”, no. 186 (1919), p. 3–4.

¹⁸ *Co słyhać w Kołomyi* [How are you in Kolomyia], in “Goniec Krakowski”, no. 157 (1919), p. 3.

¹⁹ *Z Pokucia pod rumuńską okupacją* [From Pokuttya under the Romanian Occupation], in “Gazeta Lwowska”, no. 138 (1919), p. 1.

On 22nd June 1919 the “Gazeta Lwowska” published a report on the course of the occupation by the Romanians. It presented the situation in which the Poles were in. As the author of the text noted, Romanian troops occupied only six districts: Kolomyia, Horodenka, Sniatyn, Pechenizhyn, and Kosiv together with the majority of the county to Otynia. In counties where Poles managed to organize their own governments, Romanians left it unchanged, while in two they approved the authorities of Ruthenians, there Poles must also endure adversities²⁰. The “Goniec Krakowski” expressed a more savage opinion on relations under Romanian management. In his report, referring to the news from “Gazeta Wieczorna”, he explained that the arrival of Romanians in Kolomyia saved the Polish population from the planned carnage, which was carried out by armed gangs of Ruthenian peasants previously instructed by the Ukrainian authorities. The author of the text, however, notes that Romanian attempts to bring peace to the occupied territory are often poorly prepared. An example is the admission of local military police and gendarmes to local police and gendarmerie, such as gendarm Masło from Chortkiv²¹.

However, entering the area of Pokuttya Romanian branches did not save all Poles from the tragedy associated with life under the Ukrainian yoke. As reported by “Goniec Krakowski”, when information about the occupation of Horodenka by the Romanian army reached Poles living in Zaliszchyky (a distance of 25 km), they took up arms and took over the city. The joy, however, did not last long, because the Romanian army did not move in the direction of Zaliszchyky, however, in the city appeared withdrawn broken Ukrainian troops, which retook control of the city by slaughtering Polish citizens²².

Occupation of Pokuttya was met with joy by Poles living in this area and the area under direct Romanian management. An example of a positive response from the Polish side in relation to Romanian activities was at least a ball at the Polish House held in Chernivtsi on 12th June 1919 in honor of General Żeligowski’s division in Bukovina, where numerous Romanian military representatives were present. The ceremony was enriched by dances that lasted “until the very morning – and the relations of friendship, which were crossed on this ball will probably remain permanent [...] more than one Żeligowczyk left his heart there”²³.

However, only three weeks after the publication of this article in the pages of the “Goniec Krakowski” (14th July 1919), a disturbing article about lawlessness appeared, which the Polish side was to experience in the territory occupied by the Romanians. According to the author of the text, who received information about the situation in occupied Kolomyia from a Polish delegation going to Warsaw, Polish newspapers are forbidden in the city and for their distribution you can be found in the military court.

The army forces the city’s inhabitants to welcome Romanian troops when they enter the city. Negatively, the author referred to the behavior of local Jews who, like Dr. Lach, thanked Romanians for the liberation of these lands from the Polish yoke. Moreover, when the Ukrainians organised a service for the fallen, the local Jews sympathised with them and closed their stores. The author, citing reports from “Gazeta

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ *Jak rządzą Rumuni na okupowanym Pokuciu?* [How do Romanians Rule the Occupied Pokuttya?], “Goniec Krakowski”, no. 179 (1919), p. 3–4.

²² *Rzeź Polaków w Zaleszczykach* [Slaughter of Poles in Zaliszchyky], in “Goniec Krakowski”, no. 154 (1919), p. 2.

²³ *Z Czerniowiec i Bukowiny* [From Chernivtsi and Bukovina], in “Gazeta Lwowska”, no. 143 (1919), p. 2–3.

Poranna”, reported that on 11 July, Romanians closed the Polish-Romanian border and forced all Polish officers to leave Kolomyia²⁴.

Another disturbing situation, and at the same time causing great indignation among the Catholic inhabitants of Kolomyia, were numerous searches “in the presbytery buildings, the parish church of the Ruthenians, Ursulines and Jesuits in Kolomyia”²⁵.

The delegation demanded from the Polish government to take decisive steps to regulate the matter of Eastern Lesser Poland and that until the end of the fighting military governments in Lesser Poland were to be established and liaison officers to be sent to the Romanian staff²⁶. In June 1919, Skarżyński intervened, among others with the King of Romania Ferdinand I. As a result of the talks, he was able to obtain the consent of appointing a Polish civilian commissioner to the staff of General Zadik together with assurances about the recognition of the Polish law for Pokuttya²⁷.

On July 25, “Goniec Krakowski” announced on its pages the presence of Counselor Jurysłowski, on the recommendation of the Polish government in Kolomyia, whose task would be to take over the board of political administration in counties occupied by Romanians²⁸.

In issue 175 of the “Gazeta Lwowska” on 31st July, readers were informed about the presence in Lviv of a Romanian delegation headed by General Zadik. Its task was to reach agreement on the issue of the Romanian army being removed from Pokuttya. The Lviv newspaper emphasised the cordial reception prepared at the railway station with the participation of an honorary company²⁹.

These talks brought the expected outcome as a result of which a contract was signed between Poland (the contract was signed by General Lemezán) and Romania (the contract was signed by General Zadik), which provided for the evacuation of Romanian troops from Pokuttya from 17th August³⁰.

Much joy was provided in the Polish Army following this decision: “All cities and towns, as well as many villages were clothed, and where the army passed, there were permanent triumphs. In all these places concerts, evenings and folk games were held under one name everywhere: ‘Polish Soldier’s Day’”³¹.

Accounts from the Occupation training by Romanian troops in the Polish newspapers (“Goniec Krakowski”, “Gazeta Lwowska”) bring us closer to the situation in which the rebirth of the alliance with the Kingdom of Romania was to be built in the rebirth of the Republic of Poland, which would not only survive the period of battles for

²⁴ *Gwałty i bezprawie władz w Galicji* [Rape and Lawlessness of the Authorities in Galicia], in “Goniec Krakowski”, no. 187 (1919), p. 1.

²⁵ *Z Pokucia pod rumuńska okupacją* [From Pokuttya under the Romanian Occupation], “Gazeta Lwowska”, no. 138 (1919), p. 1–2.

²⁶ *Delegacja polska z okupacji rumuńskiej w Warszawie* [Polish Delegation from the Romanian Occupation in Warsaw], in “Goniec Krakowski”, no. 170 (1919), p. 7; *Protest przeciw niesprawiedliwym rządóm Rumuńskim* [Protest against unjust Romanian rule], in “Goniec Częstochowski”, no. 136 (1919), p. 2.

²⁷ R. Galuba, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

²⁸ *Wprowadzenie administracji polskiej w okupacji rumuńskiej* [Introduction of the Polish Administration to the Romanian Occupation], in “Goniec Krakowski”, no. 198 (1919), p. 6.

²⁹ *Delegacja rumuńska we Lwowie* [Romanian Delegation in Lwów], in “Gazeta Lwowska”, no. 175 (1919), p. 5.

³⁰ *Rumuni ewakuują Pokucie* [Romanians evoke Pokuttya], in “Głos Polski”, no. 220 (1919), p. 2; *Ewakuacja Pokucia przez Rumunów* [Evacuation of Pokuttya by Romanians], in “Kurjer Warszawski”, no. 225 (1919), p. 7.

³¹ *Z inspekcyjnego objazdu Generalnego del. Rządu* [From the inspection tour of the General Government], in “Gazeta Lwowska”, no. 203 (1919), p. 1.

border and sovereignty but also peaceful interwar years (1921–1939). They also provided silent support for the Polish side's activities after the defeat of 1939, despite the internment of Polish soldiers by the Romanian side.

ROMANIAN OCCUPATION OF POKUTTYA IN 1919
(Summary)

Keywords: Pokuttya, Kolomyia, Lviv, occupation, the Romanian army.

The article pictures the activity of the Romanian troops in Pokuttya in 1919 in the light of the Polish press: "Gazeta Lwowska" and "Goniec Krakowski". Romanian troops occupied six districts: Kolomyia, Horodenka, Sniatyn, Pechenizhyn, and Kosiv together with the majority of the county to Otynia. In counties where Poles managed to organize their own governments, Romanians left it unchanged, while in two they approved the authorities of Ruthenians. The cooperation between the Poles and Romanians at the time of entering the latter on the Pokuttya was not always arranged, due to small negligence on both sides. Talks brought the expected outcome as a result of which a contract was signed between Poland and Romania, which provided for the evacuation of Romanian troops from Pokuttya from 17th August.