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Sources about the Voloshyn Regime's Concentration Camp at Dumen Hill in 1938–1939

Abstract. This paper is a study and few primary sources about the concentration camp near Rakhiv at Dumen hill, run by the Voloshyn-regime. Beyond the general information and summary, it contains several original documents, primary sources from the middle of December, 1938 written by the Czechoslovak gendarmerie about the camp.

Keywords: Carpathian Ruthenia, Voloshyn, Carpathian Sich, Dumen hill, concentration camp, internment

Резюме. У публікації розглянуто джерела, присвячені концентраційному табору «Думен», зведеному режимом А.Волошина поблизу Рахова. Крім загальних відомостей, детальніше презентовано кілька документів чехословацької жандармерії, датованих серединою грудня 1938 року.

Це рідкісні автентичні джерела, що містять відомості про концентраційний табір. *Ключові слова:* Закарпаття, А.Волошин, Карпатська Січ, гора Думен, концентраційний табір, інтернування

Rezümé. Ez a tanulmány és forrásközlés a Volosin-rezsim által a Rahó melletti Dömény-havason felállított koncentrációs táborral foglalkozik. Az általános ismertetőn és összefoglalón túl leközlésre kerül néhány 1938 decemberének közepén keletkezett csehszlovák csendőrségi dokumentum, melyek ritka, fennmaradt elsődleges források a koncentrációs táborral kapcsolatban.

Kulcsszavak: Kárpátalja, Volosin, Kárpáti Szics, Dömény-havas, koncentrációs tábor, internálás

Introduction

Not much is known internationally about the history, even about the existence of the concentration camp of Avgustyn Voloshyn's regime at Dumen hill which was run from November, 1938 until March, 1939.

A short summary was written about it by Professor Paul Robert Magocsi: „... *detention camp was set up as early as 20 November 1938 on orders from Voloshyn at place called Dumen near the town of Rakhiv. Operated by the Carpathian Sich, Dumen included refugees from Galicia and also local Russophile activists who refused to accept the Ukrainian orientation of Voloshyn's regime.*”¹

Beyond that, the English language reader finds no information about this camp at all and very limited info available about it in other languages as well. Albeit the sources are very limited, few Czechoslovak gendarmerie documents remained about the Dumen camp. These are from the middle of December,

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¹ MAGOCSI, PAUL ROBERT: *With Their Backs to the Mountains. A History of Carpathian Rus' and Carpatho-Rusyns* Budapest, CEU Press, 2015. p. 276.

1938 and available at the State Archives of Transcarpathian Oblast (DAZO) in Beregovo.²

Because of the very limited available information on this subject, I decided to translate and publish these documents to make them easily accessible to anyone and to draw more attention to this topic.

About the concentration camp

Voloshyn's regime with the newly formed Carpathian Sich were actively persecuting anyone who opposed the new autonomous government and did not like the intensive Ukrainization. They had very limited capacities in detention facilities in Carpathian Ruthenia, and building new prisons required lot of money and time they didn't have. Building and maintaining a concentration camp was much quicker, easier and cheaper than building and maintaining a new prison. Voloshyn started to persecute his political opponents immediately. That's why he ordered to create this concentration camp on 20 November, 1938. It was less than one month after 26 October, 1938 when he was appointed the head of the government of Subcarpathian Autonomous Region by the president of Czechoslovakia Emil Hácha.

The political opponents of Voloshyn were arrested by members of the paramilitary Carpathian Sich, which was also formed in November, 1938. The original guards (security personnel) of the concentration camp were members of the Czechoslovak gendarmerie (their commander was Master Sergeant Jakub Syrovátka) and the supplies were provided partly by units of the Czechoslovak armed forces. Later the Carpathian Sich was also involved in the security of the camp. It is possible that in early 1939, Carpathian Sich entirely took over the security issues of the camp.

According to the remained sources, it was actually a dual camp: partly in Rakhiv, in the valley of the river Tisa and partly north of it and well above it, in the 1395 meter high Dumen hill (definitely the latter was the harsher one because of the mountain weather conditions).

The mostly Rusyn and Hungarian internees were held in inhuman conditions, exposed to cold, illness, sometimes hunger and physical mistreatment by the Carpathian Sich. The internees suffered especially badly during the harshest winter months in January and February, 1939 in the overcrowded camp without heating.³

It is important to note that despite Voloshyn being a Greek Catholic priest, a number of Greek Catholic priests were also interned to the Dumen camp. To name a few, one of them was the Greek Catholic priest of Dilove, which is situ-

² The author wishes to express his gratitude to researcher Gyula Kosztyó for drawing my attention to this source and Kinga Novotná for the help in translating the original Czech language documents.

³ Fischer Zsolt: Avgusztin Volosin haláltábora. Kárpátalja. 2011. március 11. <https://karpataljalap.net/2011/03/11/avgusztin-volosin-halaltabora> (Accessed: 20 September 2019).

ated approximately 15 km south from Rakhiv, Jenő (Jevhen) Paszulyka. (Later Jenő Paszulyka was also arrested by the Soviet state security authorities and was interned to different Gulag camps from 1948 until 1956).⁴

Prebend Tivadar (Fedor) Kohutics, priest of Domanintsi was imprisoned in the jail of Velikiy Berezniiy from 18 November until 10 December, 1938, then he was interned to the Dumen camp until 22 December, 1938. He told that his daughter, Julianna personally went to Khust to beg Voloshyn to release his father. However, Voloshyn did not want to listen to her, but ran her out of his reception room and instructed the guards to never let her in again. (In 1949, Tivadar Kohutics was also arrested by the Soviet state security authorities and was interned to the Gulag until his death in 1955).⁵

János (Ivan) Minya, priest of Patskanovo (to the east of Uzhhorod) was arrested on 13 November, 1938 and was sent to the prison of Velikiy Berezniiy. He was under arrest until 13 March, 1939, effectively until the collapse of the Voloshyn regime. One source states that similarly to Kohutics he was kept not just in the prison of Velikiy Berezniiy, but in the Dumen concentration camp as well. (During the Soviet reprisals against the Greek Catholic clergy, Minya was also arrested by Soviet state security authorities and was interned to the Gulag from 1946 until 1955).⁶

Albeit sooner or later, most of the arrested priests were released by the Voloshyn regime, the tension between the Rusyn priests and Ukranophile leaders remained. The Greek Catholic clergy of Carpathian Ruthenia was threatened by local authorities in January 1939 to use the Ukrainian language or they will face punishment, which was definitely meant the deportation to the Dumen camp. The dean of Svaliava, Eumen Duliskovics said on 26 January 1939 in the name of 200 Greek Catholic priests that they will never accept to take away their native (Rusyn) language and follow a foreign nation's customs and culture. If they are forced to use the Ukrainian language and books in their liturgy, they will rather leave their families and parishes and they will go voluntarily to a concentration camp (which definitely meant the Dumen camp).⁷

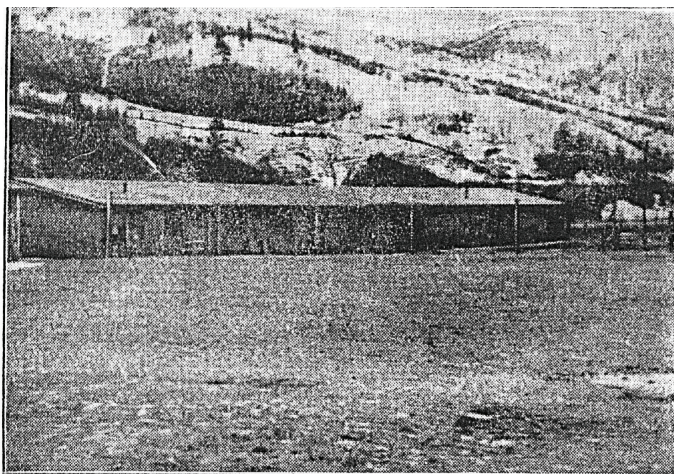
⁴ BENDÁSZ ISTVÁN – BENDÁSZ DÁNIEL: *Helytállás és tanúságtétel. A munkácsi görög katolikus egyházmegye hitvalló és meghurcolt papjai*. Budapest, Kairosz Kiadó, 2014. pp. 305–309.

⁵ Bendász – Bendász 2014. pp. 207–209.

⁶ Bendász – Bendász 2014. pp. 266–268.; Fischer 2011

⁷ Bendász – Bendász 2014. p. 122.

Picture 1. The only picture known by me, which shows the barracks at the Dumen concentration camp. It was published in the March 28, 1939 issue of the *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap*, on page 8. The original Hungarian caption says: *The internment camp at Rakhiv, where hundreds of Rusyns and Hungarians were tormented by the Ukrainian Sich guardsmen*



A ráhói internálótábor, ahol a magyarok és ruszinok százait gyötörték az ukrán Szics-gárdisták

Source: Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap

The documents

The following documents are the remained original ones, which give some information about the conditions and necessities of the camp in the middle of December, 1938.⁸

*„Regional gendarmerie headquarters Khust. Khust, December 12, 1938.
Čís. jedn. 1552 duv./38*

Re: Concentration camp - status

Ministry of Interior

Attachments: 1.

KHUST

I am attaching the report of the Rakhiv concentration camp commander, dated December 10, 1938, čís. jedn. 55/ duv./38 and I am reporting that I have paid

⁸ These documents are available at the State Archives of Transcarpathian Oblast (DAZO) in Beregovo in fond 56 opis 1 delo 2.

the amount of 15 000,- Kč⁹ on December 12, 1938 to Master Sergeant (vrchní strážmistr)¹⁰ Jakub Syrovátka.

Furthermore, I am reporting that 1 log barracks would cost approximately 35 000 Kč and it would be necessary to build 3 barracks in total.

Regional gendarmerie Commander:
Lieutenant Colonel acting cdr...¹¹

HANDWRITTEN NOTES¹²

Concentration camp Rakhiv.
Čís. Jedn.55 duv/38

Rakhiv, December 10, 1938

RE: Concentration camp, status

Headquarters of the concentration camp

Khust.

I am reporting that in order to meet the expectations listed in the regulations and organization arrangements, the concentration camp will have to be located in brick or wooden barracks having enough rooms, both for interned people and security personnel. Such houses and their surroundings will have to be provided with regular fence and auxiliaries, as mentioned above. Probably an object of this kind could be found in the ownership of the forest management.

In case that the concentration camp is kept at the current location, it seems that the following equipment is inevitable:

⁹ Czechoslovak koruna.

¹⁰ The non-commissioned officer rank equivalents are just approximate in the translation.

¹¹ The rank is readable, but the name of the officer is not readable by us. It was signed not by the commander, but by his deputy as acting commander. Since November, 1938 the Czechoslovak gendarmerie commander of Khust was Lieutenant Colonel Vladimír Waka. He was appointed to this position upon the request of Voloshyn himself, since Waka had an Ukrainian orientated Rusyn wife, that's why he was close to Voloshyn who trusted him. The author wishes to express his gratitude to PhDr. Július Baláž, Csc., director of the Military Archives of the Czech Republic, who gave the additional info on Waka.

¹² The lower part of the document contains several sentences of handwritten notes by the same Lieutenant Colonel, but these are not readable by us, therefore we did not try to translate them.

250 bowls and spoons for eating, 400 summer or 200 winter covers, 100 pairs of boots, 100 shirts, 100 underpants, 50 covers, 200 pairs of foot rags, 6 pieces cast iron stoves/cookers/with pipes of three meters height, 1 big stove or at least a frame with plates for cooking for approximately 250 persons, with water heater and oven. To the framework, 450 bricks, lime, chimney, bricklayer tools, one boiler for scalding out clothes, pots, baking pans, etc. Furthermore, 7 lighting fixtures with light bulbs are needed, 10 packs of saturated felt paper, 7 simple tables, 14 desks 2 m long, 4 closets, 2 forged chests for valuables of interned, of-fice supplies, etc.

In the end, a first-aid kit with relevant first aid medicaments is needed. To build double walls of the barracks, roof and walls in the barracks, approximately 14 m³ of 27 mm battens would be needed. In order to state the fix price including delivery of the needed slats and nails, a call for proposals should be announced, as the local company did not provide a price for timber of different types and quality. All should be done at the fastest pace.

What concerns the covers, linen, cutlery and shoes, etc., it would be needed to ensure their availability in the amounts listed above, as it is only an estimate for the current needs.

It is also very important to cover the costs of boarding for armed forces authorities, as well as the bills for suppliers, so that they can provide for credit in the future, and as a next step, to ensure regular payments minimum once a month.

In order to fix this, it is important to issue promised immediate 15 000 Kč payment to cover current debts and in this way to ensure further purchase for credit. Besides this, ensuring that the economic department of the concentration camp would have a certain amount at their disposal for general purchase, is needed. It is often worth bargain compared to the contracted supplies. All the financial means can be exactly settled, and receipts kept.

In the case that these minimum requirements are not fulfilled, it will be impossible to implement anything according to the arrangements in the organization order of the concentration camp.

*Commander of the security personnel:
Master Sergeant Syrovátka*

Regional gendarmerie headquarters Uzhhorod Uzhhorod, December 14, 1938

Čís. Jedn. 22/38 concentration camp

RE: Protocol about the concentration camp field control, submission

To Ministry of Interior of Carpathian Ruthenia

Reply to ref. no.

Khust.

Attachments: 3

Attached, I am enclosing a protocol on observation of the concentration camp, alongside with a sketch and calculation regarding building of a new wooden barracks for interned persons and for security personnel.

*Regional gendarmerie commander*¹³

*HANDWRITTEN NOTES*¹⁴

Concentration camp headquarters

Field visit protocol

Of the "concentration camp Rakhiv" and "Dumen" carried out on December 12 and 13, 1938 by Colonel Jaroslav Wít¹⁵ and Captain Josef Janovský.¹⁶

Status: Security personnel: 2 Master Sergeants, 11 Staff Sergeants and Sergeants, 20 soldiers

Internees: 1. in camp "Rakhiv" 44 men and

2. in camp "Dumen" 40 men, totaling 84 men

Health status: Security personnel: good

Internees: this time satisfactory. Out of it in Rakhiv camp, 6 persons are having cold and, in the camp Dumen, 1 person is having cold

¹³ The name of this officer is not readable by us.

¹⁴ The lower part of the document contains several sentences of handwritten notes by the Lieutenant Colonel from Khust, mentioned at footnote Nr. 11, but these notes are not readable by us, therefore we did not try to translate them.

¹⁵ Colonel Jaroslav Wít (1887–1961) was a regional gendarmerie commander.

¹⁶ Captain Josef Janovský was a gendarme officer who was directly involved in another infamous concentration camp a bit later. In 1940, he was appointed commander of the Lety concentration camp on the Czech territory, which was disciplinary labor camp first, then from 1942 it was a camp for Gypsy people. For the Lety concentration camp, see https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koncentra%C4%8Dn%C3%AD_t%C3%A1bor_Lety (Accessed: 20 September 2019)

too. All the ailing people are under regular medical supervision. There have not been more serious cases of illness, yet.

On the other hand, all the inmates in the Dumen camp are having lice. Also, some of the inmates in Rachnov camp are having lice.

This lousiness was so far caused by:

a./ not having enough clothing

b./ insufficient hygiene measures, such as bathing and washing in warm water; washing with soap, washing clothes, cutting hair; etc.

c./ insufficient preventive measures while entering the concentration camp /: delousing, etc. :/

Suffering from lousiness can cause an outburst of Typhus exanthematicus that can equally harm the security personnel and the internees of the camp. Existence of similar contagious disease can cause unfavorable criticism in local and foreign press.

In order to avoid all inconveniences and to prevent lousiness of the entire concentration camp and the security personnel too, I suggest:

1./ Immediately to purchase enough underwear from the armed forces authorities /: app. 200 sets:/

2./ Getting the needed warm clothing either from the armed forces authorities or from the penitentiary authorities

3./ Establishment of decent bathrooms with warm water where all the inmates could wash their underwear and clean their clothes

4./ Establishment of quarantine station for new incomers, especially for those where we suspect the existence of lice or are having contagious diseases

5./ Immediate construction of decent barracks that would meet all the safety and health requirements

Accommodation: Current accommodation of the internees is unsuitable from the point of safety and health requirements too. Keeping the internees in current barracks is causing health risks for both security personnel and the inmates of the concentration camp. Also, keeping the barracks in the present condition would cause increase in the costs of heating and ensuring security of the barracks. The state of the barracks has been already described in the notes that were presented to the respective office /: headquarters :/

In order to face all these inconveniences and not to cause spending for repairs of the current barracks, I suggest constructing one log barracks for 100 people according to the attached sketch and budget and one half-sized barracks for the security personnel.

The costs of the construction of the both barracks would sum up according to current estimates, 35 000 Kč and 70 000 Kč.

This price can be lowered by different manipulations, our own expenses and using our workforce. E.g., costs for ground preparation and construction work support by workers would be dropped, etc.

Construction of proper barracks would ease all the inconveniences that have been noted and proper and safe accommodation would be secured both for internees and security personnel. This suggestion is also supported by the fact that in the current situation there is no chance of dissolving the concentration camp in the upcoming period.

Boarding: Is being carried out at own expenses and it is satisfactory. Payment for purchased goods is being done. Despite this, I suggest that those inmates who are carrying out heavy physical work would be provided with bigger ration of bread. Furthermore, I suggest giving a small vehicle at disposal for goods and other things transportation, as well as for occasional transportation of interned people too. Directions for driving this car would be the same as the ones used by gendarmerie units.

Employment: Up till now, the employment of the interned people is not satisfactory. So far, it is impossible to change the work program and set definite work routines as there is no proper accommodation, nor working environment.

So far, the inmates of the concentration camps are employed at the camps and doing wood removal above the camp Dumen.

As soon as the snow falls down, it will be needed to reconsider new ways of employment for these people.

Surveillance: This is being carried out by appointed gendarmerie with the assistance of appointed soldiers. Surveillance over the interned persons is being done by the commander of the concentration camp and what concerns the armed forces security personnel surveillance, it is being done by respective armed forces positions.

The number of soldiers should be increased immediately as the change in work program would be applied in smaller groups.

Requests and complaints: The inmates of the concentration camp did not word any specifically relevant requests or complaints. They only requested lending underwear, warm clothing and shoes and preservatives. They only complained about insufficient accommodation and not being informed why they are being kept in the concentration camps. All the requests and complaints were addressed directly on the spot.

Note: For the security personnel, it is necessary: one light machine gun with necessary [box magazines and] ammunition, 10 pistols with ammunition and respective number of hand grenades. Furthermore, rubber stamps are needed for the headquarters of the concentration camp.

Next, two tables are needed, two cupboards and chairs. Buckets for water, bigger tubes, etc. are needed to be delivered for the needs of the interned people.

Finally, exact directions for release of the interned from the concentration camps should be defined:

a./ who issues the confirmation of release

b./ who should be informed on the release of a person

c./ what should happen with the foreigners

d./ what should happen with the interned person when the time of the internment in the concentration camp has passed.

2 attachments¹⁷

Khust, December 14, 1938

Regional gendarmerie commander¹⁸

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¹⁷ The original attachments are missing.

¹⁸ It was signed by the same officer mentioned at footnote Nr. 13.