

# Siberian Exile and the 1863 Polish Insurrectionists According to Russian Sources

ANDREW A. GENTES

*Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 51(2):197-217.

## Abstract

A description of the deportation to Siberia of Poles and others involved in the 1863 Polish Uprising, and of their conditions and activities there.

## Keywords

Siberia; exile; Poland; penal labour; Russia; deportation

**Note:** The complete full text of this article will be made available once copyright clearance has been obtained.

## Introduction

The 1863 Polish Uprising began in January and soon spread to disaffected elements throughout the so-called Western *gubernii*, a region roughly equivalent to modern day Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. Although insurrectionists included small numbers of Jews, Lithuanians, and those prototypically identifying themselves as Ukrainians or Belorussians, the majority of insurrectionists were ethnic Poles.<sup>1</sup> Most came from the urban nobility and *meshchane*, though a significant number were bourgeois, wealthy estate owners, or peasants. This heterogeneity lent the uprising some semblance of a popular rebellion and largely explains Alexander II's harsh repression of it. For nearly a year forces under the command of General Mikhail Nikolaevich Murav'ev fought a full-scale war to reassert Russian dominance over the region. Murav'ev's pacification methods earned him renown as "The Hang-man." Yet if the regime did summarily execute many insurrectionists, it deported many more. According to historian Ninel' Petrovna Mitina, "[the overall number of persons exiled from the Kingdom of Poland, Lithuania, Belorussia, and Ukraine for participation in the uprising of 1863-1864 reached 36 459."<sup>2</sup> Between 1863 and 1868 these exiles were assigned to locations throughout the empire, with between 18 000 to 24 000 going to Siberia.<sup>3</sup>

---

## Notes:

- 1 On the ethnic composition of Congress Poland and the Western *gubernii* see THEODORE R. WEEKS *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1914*. DeKalb 1996; *Polish Encyclopaedia*. Vol. 2. New York 1972, tables XVII, XX, pp. 146, 152.
- 2 N. P. MITINA *Vo glubine sibirskikh rud: K stoletiiu vosstaniia pol'skikh ssyl'nykh na Krugobaikalskom trakte*. Moskva 1966, p. 10.
- 3 Exact figures are elusive. See those in S. V. MAKSIMOV *Sibir' i katorga*. 3e izdanie. S.-Peterburg 1900, p. 358; L. P. ROSHCHEVSKAIA *Istoriia politicheskoi ssylki v Zapadnoi Sibiri vo vtoroi polovine XIX v. (60-kh-80-kh godov)*. Tiumen' 1976, table 3, p. 43. Concerning those Poles assigned to locations other than Siberia, several hundreds are listed in a document entitled *Alfavitnyi spisok litsam, prichastnym v delakh po miatezhu, prednaznachennym voennymi sudami k administrativnym vzyskaniiam i otravlennym na zhitel'stvo v otdalennia gubernii, imushchestvo koikh podlezhit sekvestru. Po 1 fevralia 1865 g.* [handwritten on cover page: "s 15 maia 1863 goda"]. This is clearly an official document, but it contains no indication as to where it originated or for whom it was intended. It is filed under MK XII A.6.a/4 in the Muzei knigi, Russian State Library (Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia biblioteka), Moscow.