WIKIPEDIA

Suwałki Region

Suwałki Region (Polish: *Suwalszczyzna*, Lithuanian: *Suvalkų kraštas*, *Suvalkija*) is a small region around the city of Suwałki (known in Lithuanian as *Suvalkai*) in northeastern Poland near the border with Lithuania. The territory was disputed between Poland and Lithuania after World War I.[1] This dispute was the main cause of the brief Polish-Lithuanian War and the Sejny Uprising. The conflict was later overshadowed by a much larger and more serious Polish-Lithuanian dispute over the Vilnius Region. The Suwałki Region remains a major center of the Lithuanian minority in Poland.[2][3]

Contents

History

Originally the territory named Suwałki Region was inhabited by Yotvingian Prussian tribes.

After 1815 the Suwałki Region was part of Congress Poland, in turn a part of the Russian Empire. The Suwałki Governorate, which also included part of present-day Lithuania according to a Russian census conducted during the 1880s, was about 58% Lithuanian.[4]

In the wake of World War I, both countries were established as independent states, but their borders were contested. In 1918 the Suwałki Region was claimed by re-established independent Lithuania based on cultural heritage and later 1920 peace treaty with Soviet Russia, but Poland officially insisted on dividing the area along the ethnic lines. In the aftermath the Suwałki Region was left on the Polish side of the border, with a Lithuanian majority in the countryside around the Polish-dominated cities of Sejny (Lithuanian: Seinai)[5] and Puńsk (Lithuanian: Punskas)[6] in the northeastern part of the region.

Most of the area was briefly controlled by the Lithuanian forces in 1919, and again in 1920 during the Polish-Bolshevik War. In 1920, however, Marshal Ferdinand Foch proposed that the Suwałki Region be granted to Poland. The proposal was accepted by the Paris Peace Conference and after the Polish-Lithuanian War, the Lithuanian forces withdrew from the Suwałki Region and it became a part of Poland.

Despite the fact that a part of the disputed area was never under Lithuanian control, the Lithuanian authorities claimed that it consisted of three counties (see administrative divisions of Lithuania), that were illegally occupied by Poland. These included the *Augustavo Apskritis* based in the town of Augustów (Lithuanian: *Augustavas*), *Suvalkų Apskritis* formed around the city of Suwałki (Lithuanian: *Suvalkai*) and *Seinų Apskritis* centered on the town of Sejny (Lithuanian: *Seinai*). The aforementioned

units were roughly correspondent to the actual administrative division of the area into powiats of Augustów, Suwałki and Sejny of the Białystok Voivodeship of Poland, respectively. The region was the least economically developed part of Poland in the interwar period.[7]

The Suwałki Region was annexed by Nazi Germany in 1939 and adjoined East Prussia. After World War II the Suwałki Region was returned to Poland. Currently there are no territorial disputes over the region.

According to the Polish census of 2002 there were 5,846 Lithuanians living in Poland, with

Period	State
until 14th century	Yotvingians
14th century – 1795	Grand Duchy of Lithuania
1795–1807	Kingdom of Prussia
1807–1815	Duchy of Warsaw
1815–1915	Congress Poland
1915–1918	Ober Ost (German occupation)
1918–1920	Disputed between Poland and Lithuania
1920–1939	Poland
1939–1944	Nazi Germany
1944–present	Poland

a large part of them inhabiting Suwałki Region. There are Lithuanian schools and cultural societies present in the area and the Lithuanian language is spoken in the offices in the commune of Puńsk.

Countryside

The Suwałki Region has many lakes and forests, and is considered a relatively undeveloped region in Poland.
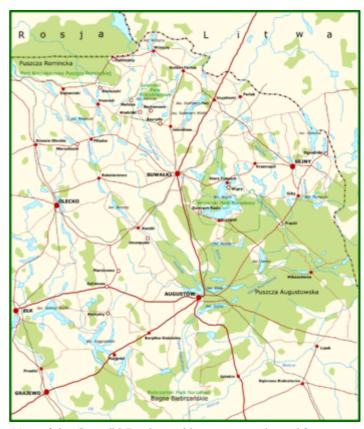
Major towns:

- Augustów
- Suwałki
- Sejny

Forests:

- Augustów Primeval Forest
- Romincka Forest

Lakes:

- Hańcza
- Wigry Lake
- Kojle

Parks:

- Biebrza National Park
- Romincka Forest Landscape Park
- Suwałki Landscape Park
- Wigry National Park

Map of the Suwałki Region, with towns, roads and forest areas

Footnotes

1. U.S. Department of State. Lithuania (https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5379.htm). Retrieved on 2008-04-22
2. Glanville, Price (1998). *Encyclopedia of the Languages of Europe* (https://books.google.com/books?id=CPX2xgmVe9IC&pg=PA304&dq=%22Suvalkai+Region%22). Blackwell Publishing. ISBN 0-631-22039-9.
3. "Zilvinas Norkunas "A Destiny Called Lithuania", Lithuania in the World (Interview with Valdas Adamkus)" (http://adamkus.president.lt/en/one.phtml?id=1247). President of the Republic of Lithuania. 1998-08-30. Retrieved 2008-04-23. "The stops on my way to Warsaw at Seinai and Suvalkai, where the majority of Poland's Lithuanians live, were also important."
4. Šenavičienė, Ieva (1999). "Tautos budimas ir blaivybės sąjūdis". *Istorija*. **40**: 3.
5. (in Lithuanian) Lankininkaitė, Rūta (2007-03-11). "Seinų lietuviai jaučiasi skriaudžiami" (https://www.delfi.lt/archive/article.php?id=12465897) (in Lithuanian). Retrieved 2008-04-02. "Lenkijos lietuvių bendruomenės vadovai sako, jog Seinų krašte viskas, kas susiję su lietuvių kultūros paveldo išsaugojimu, sunkiai skinasi kelią."
6. Lithuanian Embassy in Poland (http://www.lietuva.pl/index.php?language=pl&page=178) Najwięcej Litwinów zamieszkuje w gminie Puńsk, gdzie stanowią oni około 80 proc. mieszkańców.
7. Vitalija Stravinskienė. Lenkijos Lietuvių bandruomenė 1944-2000 metais. 2004, p.32

See also

- Demographics of Poland
- Polish-Lithuanian War
- Suwałki County
- Vilnius Region

References

- Simas Sužiedēlis, *Encyclopedia Lituanica*, J. Kapočius 1978
- Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*, Yale University Press 2003, page 33
- United States Congress Select Committee on Communist Aggression, *Baltic States: A Study of Their Origin and National Development*, WS Hein 1972, page 71

External links

- English language information site about Suwalszczyzna for visitors (http://www.suwalszczyzna.pl/indexe.htm)
- (in Polish) Dawna Suwalszczyzna (http://www.dawna-suwalszczyzna.com.pl/)