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BRIGANDAGE IN THE BESKIDY MOUNTAINS IN THE LATE 16th AND EARLY 17th CENTURIES

The question of brigandage, which existed in the mountains and foot-hills of southern Poland in the 16th and 17th centuries, has been almost completely ignored in the researches on crime in the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Highland brigandage differed from highway robbery on the plains¹. Although the main, if not the only, aim of both was to grab money and valuable objects, there were enormous territorial, organisational and social differences between them. Highland brigandage developed only in the foot-hills and, to a smaller extent, in the mountainous regions of southern Poland, that is, mainly in the whole range of the Beskidy mountains, the Czech territories bordering on Poland (Slovakia, Moravia), the Hungarian lands on the frontier with Poland, and in Spisz (Zips) which belonged to Poland at that time. Highland brigandage was sometimes called the ruffians' movement in the Sanok district. It had a specific organisation: the brigands usually met to carry out a previously planned assault, and the gangs set up for this purpose, called companies or fraternities, were sometimes very numerous, consisting of several score men. The majority of them were highlanders who lived a normal life in their homes, being engaged in ordinary rural or small-town occupations. It can be assumed that few of them

¹ For an extensive article on this subject see M. Kamler, *Zbójnictwo i rozbój w Beskidach w 2. połowie XVI–1. połowie XVII wieku (Highland Brigandage and Banditry in the Beskidy Mountains in the Late 16th and Early 17th Centuries)*, in: *Spoleczeństwo staropolskie. Seria nowa*, vol. II, ed. A. Karpiński, Warszawa (forthcoming). About robberies see M. Kamler, *Robbery in the Polish Lands during the Second Half of the Sixteenth and the First Half of the Seventeenth Century*, "Acta Poloniae Historica", 1993, vol. 68, pp. 59–77.

treated brigandage as the main way of life. Contrary to robbery on the plains, which was the domain of professional criminals and was generally condemned and resisted socially, highland brigandage found considerable support in rural highland communities, sometimes in villages quite distant from each other but linked by many family, friendly and neighbourly ties. Highland brigands were helped by many persons who did not actively participate in brigandage. They were active only in late spring, summer and early autumn, that is in seasons when it was easier to find food and a place to sleep at night in the mountains.

The opinions formulated from the middle of the 19th century on the basis of old highlanders' legends attributed brigandage to the highlanders' free, untamable nature; the brigands were presented as defenders of people oppressed by the lords, as persons who robbed lords of unjustly gathered riches to give them to the poor². In the 1930s it began to be stressed that the mass development of highland brigandage was due to social and economic conditions in the old days, to the growing burdens of serfdom, the exploitation of highlanders by starosts and economists, the unjust regulation of work, tributes and tax exemptions, the growing impoverishment of the peasants and consequently, the spread of discontent in villages. Polish researcher Stanisław Szczotka attributed brigandage to the growing misery of peasants in the Beskidy mountains and their oppression by the landowners³. After World War II his opinions were developed in

² This has been discussed by S. Goszczyński, *Dziennik podróży do Tatrów (Diary of a Journey to the Tatra Mountains)*, Petersburg 1853, pp. 264ff, and then by L. Kubala, *Kostka-Napierski*, in: *Szkice historyczne*, seria 1, Lwów 1880, p. 315ff, who was the first to draw attention to the impact of excessive feudal burdens and the oppression of peasants by starosts. Such opinions were later also expressed by researchers into highlanders' folklore: J. Kleczyński, *Melodye zakopiańskie i podhalskie (Zakopane and Podhale Melodies)*, "Pamiętnik Towarzystwa Tatrzańskiego", 1888, p. 41, and J. Kantor, *Pieśni i muzyka ludowa Orawy, Podhala i Spisza (The Folk Song and Music of Orava, Podhale and Zips)*, Kraków 1920, p. 18.

³ J. Krzyżanowski, *Proces Janosika (Janosik's Trial)*, Warszawa 1936, pp. 4ff, 36ff; J. Rafałcz, *Dzieje i ustrój Podhala nowotarskiego za czasów dawnej Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (The History and Political System of Podhale during the Times of the Old Polish Commonwealth)*, Warszawa 1935, pp. 79-92, 152-155; S. Szczotka, *O zbójnikach żywieckich na Śląsku (Highland Brigands from Żywiec in Silesia)*, "Zaranie Śląskie", 1938, pp. 210ff. He had earlier published short articles on this subject: *Z dziejów zbójnictwa w Beskidzie Zachodnim (From the History of Brigandage in the Western Beskidy Mountains)*, "Głos Narodu", 1935, № 120, and *Legendarny zbójnik śląski Klimczok w świetle źródeł historycznych (Klimczok, the Legendary Silesian Brigand in the Light of Historical Sources)*, "Zara-

the spirit of pseudo-Marxist ideology by Władysław Ochmański, who regarded brigandage as a manifestation of the highlanders' rebellion against the socio-economic order of those days, as a typical class struggle against oppression and exploitation. He presented the attacks on manor houses and manorial farms as acts of revenge carried out by the oppressed and exploited, the main aim of which was to kill the hated lord or official. Ochmański could not ignore the fact that among the victims were many peasants, for this was confirmed by brigands in courts (though, contrary to facts, he asserted that only rich peasants were attacked); but in his opinion these attacks were understandable for the rich peasants owed their wealth to the exploitation of hired labourers⁴. Not a single study on highland brigandage has appeared in the Polish language since that time.

My research is based on the criminals' books of Żywiec from the years 1589–1625 and 1642–1649, Wiśnicz, from 1629–1632, 1643 and 1653–1658, Muszyna, from 1647–1657, Sanok from 1561–1615 and 1638, Przemyśl, where I found only one interesting case from 1649, a case on the margin of brigandage, and on three trials recorded for unknown reasons in the books of Cracow and of the neighbourly Kazimierz in the years 1600 (the text concerns two cases tried in Kres muszyński), 1611 and 1628 (trials for highland brigandage and banditry in the Beskidy mountains were an exception in Cracow criminal books for cases concerning that region were not as rule tried in Cracow courts)⁵.

nie Śląskie", 1936, № 4, pp. 261–263. The source publication S. Szczotka, *Materiały do dziejów zbrojnicstwa góralskiego (Materials to the History of Highland Brigandage)*, Lublin 1952, is also important.

⁴ W. Ochmański, *Zbrojnicstwo góralskie. Z dziejów walki klasowej na wsi góralskiej (Highland Brigandage. From the History of Class Struggle in Highlanders' Villages)*, Warszawa 1950; idem, *Zwalczanie zbrojnicstwa góralskiego przez szlachtę w XVII i XVIII w. (The Nobility's Fight against Highland Brigandage in the 17th and 18th Centuries)*, "Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne", 1951.

⁵ Documents concerning cases of criminals from the town of Żywiec 1589–1782, Jagiellonian Library, MS 1106 (microfilm in the National Library in Warsaw) — henceforward referred to as *Żywiec; Acta malefactorum Wisniciae. Księga złoczyńców Sądu Kryminalnego w Wiśniczu, 1629–1665 (Book of Criminals Tried by the Criminal Court at Wiśnicz, 1629–1665)*, ed. A. Uruszczak in association with I. Dwornicka, Kraków 2003, henceforward referred to as *Wiśnicz; Akta sądu kryminalnego Kresu muszyńskiego 1647–1765 (Acta of the Criminal Court in Kres muszyński 1647–1765)*, in: *Starodawne prawa polskiego pomniki (Old Monuments of Polish Law)*, vol. 9, ed. F. Piekosiński, Kraków 1889, pp. 321–395, henceforward referred to as *Muszyna; Regestr złoczyńców grodu sanockiego 1554–1638 (Register of Criminals of the Town of Sanok 1554–1638)*, ed. O. Balzer, Lwów 1891, henceforward referred to as *Sanok; State Archives in Przemyśl, Criminalia*,

The materials which I examined contain depositions made in the course of 130 trials which can be regarded as brigandage trials: Żywiec and Sanok are each represented by 53 cases, Kres muszyński by 12, Wiśnicz by 8, three cases are from Cracow, and one is from Przemyśl. The names of more than 1,500 offenders are recorded in the books, but few of them were brought to trial, most were mentioned in depositions. Among them were only 18 women, the brigands' helpers and friends. It is not possible to precisely determine the number of people engaged in highland brigandage or collaborating with brigands because the depositions are frequently ambiguous. The brigands and their collaborators are said to have come from 470 villages and small towns, some 285 of these places have been identified.

Polish highland brigandage developed in the whole of the Beskidy range, from what was known as the Żywiec region in the west to the Sanok region in the east. The majority of the brigands were inhabitants of villages lying in the mountains or in their immediate neighbourhood. This rule applies to all materials examined by me. The fact that several score men from places south of Poland's border were summoned shows that the border did not prevent the Slovaks (especially the Oravians, Liptovians, Zipsmen) and Hungarians (as the inhabitants of the Hungarian state were called) from taking part in Polish brigandage companies and from organising their own attacks. Many Polish highlanders participated in Hungarian and Slovak brigandage (in Zips, Orava and Liptov), as well as in Czech (Moravian) and Silesian brigandage. The brigandage companies developed their activity mainly in the areas in which the brigands lived. There were not many departures from this rule and references to activities outside the area of the brigands' origin are few. It was exceptional for highlanders belonging to a Żywiec company to come from the Tatra region or to rob there, and brigands mentioned in the trials at Muszyna or Wiśnicz rarely ventured into the Żywiec or Sanok regions. Information on robberies tried in Sanok but committed in the eastern part of what was called Kres muszyński is scant⁶.

call number 79–82, henceforward referred to as *Przemyśl*; State Archives in Cracow, Acts of the City of Cracow, call number 865 (f. 168–171) and 1101 (f. 600–602) and Acts of the Town of Kazimierz, *ibidem*, call number K 267 (f. 283–294), henceforward referred to as *AMKr.* and *AMKaz.*

⁶ Kres muszyński, also called the bishop's edge of the state and district of Muszyna, denotes Muszyna and the adjacent villages, a property of the bishopric of Cracow.

This does not apply to brigands who belonged to large gangs which for a long time committed robberies in Silesia, in the depth of Bohemia, Moravia or in the Hungarian state. The fact that so many brigands and villages from which they came are mentioned in sources means that brigandage was rife in Poland's mountainous and sub-mountainous border regions. The figures presented here show only a part of the phenomenon, a part which is difficult to estimate. It is almost certain that the number of brigands and of villages engaged in brigandage was much higher, for surely not all brigandage companies, perhaps not even a majority, were brought to trial. We are faced with the dark number law, present in all researches on crime, with facts which cannot be correctly estimated. Let us also remember that materials from the courts in Biecz, Krosno, Nowy Sącz and Zator in the west have not been used. It will therefore not be wrong to suppose that a certain part of the inhabitants in most villages in this area was engaged in brigandage, either taking part in robberies, or cooperating with brigands or, in case of family ties, playing host to them, feeding them or offering them shelter in winter.

Highland brigands, usually called robbers or ruffians in the Sanok region, never acted single-handed but in groups or gangs called companies⁷. The brigands' companies would meet to conduct a long expedition (which sometimes lasted from spring to autumn) or to carry out one or several attacks. The number of their members varied, but they usually consisted of several men. In the Żywiec region where the existence of at least 60–70 companies is testified to in the depositions I have examined, most of them (70%) consisted of 4 to 9 persons, rarely (20%) of 10–19 persons, and only a few (10%) had 20 or more brigands⁸. The companies numbering about a dozen brigands, and especially those having more than twenty, met when the leaders who planned an attack expected a strong, determined resistance or were planning an expedition into a more distant area, e.g. into Silesia, Moravia or Hungary. "In the spring there were twenty–six of us but the better ones were killed or executed, so now as before, we were engaged in brigandage rather in Moravia than in Poland",

⁷ Muszyńska, p. 339. A. Prochaska, *Samorząd województwa ruskiego w walce z opryszkami (Local Government of the Ruthenian Voivodship in the Fight against Ruffians)*, Kraków 1907, p. 14; W. Ochmański, *Zbójnictwo (Highland Brigandage)*, pp. 70ff.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 80.

testified Sebastian Twarozik in Wiśnicz in 1632⁹. It was such large groups that robbed Jews at Bilowice in 1594, the manor house of Witkowska, an ensign's wife, in 1618, the house of the village administrator at Bielany, the house of the village administrator or chief officer at Łokce in the Oravian region, a peasant's house at Dankowice, a manorial farm at Mikuszowice, Jews and the chief officer at Brzeźnica, and an unidentified manor house at Streczyn in 1624; in 1628 they attacked first the manor house of Tobiasz Jakliński (not localized), and then chief officer Stanisław Wessel in Spytkowice¹⁰. Companies of similar strength were mentioned during the trials held at Wiśnicz in 1632, a company consisting of 23–26 brigands was engaged in robberies in Moravia and then robbed a castle in Gorzec near Zator and a priest in Stara Wieś. In the same year a group of twenty brigands attacked Zieleński's manor house at Barcice near Nowy Sącz¹¹. In the materials from Muszyna one can distinguish over 30 companies, of which nearly three quarters had 4–9 brigands, and a quarter consisted of 10–19 men. The only larger company consisting of 21 persons attacked and robbed the house of a certain Mr. Banicki in 1648¹².

The dominant forms of activity in the Sanok region were not so much acts of brigandage, which were characteristic of areas lying farther to the west, as robberies and thefts committed mostly by groups consisting of several persons. The court book of Sanok mentions hundreds of thefts and attacks committed by groups of no more than 2–4 persons, while companies consisting of 10–19 men are mentioned only a few times. But there were also large gangs numbering more than 20 persons which attacked noblemen's manor houses and even entire villages near Sanok. In 1563 more than 20 brigands attacked Stanisław Stan's manor house in Nowotaniec, in 1595 a group of 24 men stormed Tomasz Ramult's manor at Końskie, in 1607 a gang of 30 persons attacked Stanisław Rosiński's manor at Teleśnica, a group of 15 or 20 persons assaulted Baltazar Stanisławski's manor at Płonna in 1608, and a company numbering 29 persons seized the manor house of Stanisław Przerembski in 1610. In 1614 a gang of

⁹ *Wiśnicz*, p. 26.

¹⁰ *Żywiec*, f. 7–7v, 28v–29, 30v–31, 48–50, 50v–52v, *AMKaz.*, K 267, f. 283–294.

¹¹ *Wiśnicz*, pp. 26–29 and 36–41.

¹² *Muszyna*, p. 339.

allegedly 98 persons attacked and robbed the village of Smerek which lay next to the frontier with the Hungarian state¹³. It seems that no gangs conducted regular activities in that area between spring and autumn. The attackers were rather groups which met casually to carry out a concrete attack. It can be assumed that they were not real brigands' companies, like those active in the sub-mountainous and Żywiec regions, but rather groups of bandits closer in character to the bands active on the plains.

The members of brigands' companies can be divided into two groups. The first group consisted of persons whose main, if not the only, occupation was brigandage. They left their winter quarters in late spring and met their old friends in a fixed place at a previously established time in order to carry out attacks throughout summer and early autumn. Brigands brought to trial at Muszyna said: "they are to meet in spring at the brook on St. Iury's day" (St. George's day, 23rd April), and "there are still four brigands in the Magura forest — They will continue their work until St. Dimitri" (28th October)¹⁴. On the whole, such people did not do anything else and can be described as professional brigands. When cold weather set in they dispersed, frequently to previously appointed winter quarters, usually taking advantage of the help extended by their families or friends¹⁵. Some of them found a winter job, worked as carters or went into service with a nobleman for a short time¹⁶.

The second group, much more numerous, consisted of persons who lived and worked on their own or their families' farms and occasionally, when summoned, joined a brigands' company to carry out an attack on a manor house, a prosperous farm or travelling merchants, in accordance with the plan worked out by the leader of their company. After carrying out one or several

¹³ *Sanok*, pp. 72, 117, 161–167, 174–176, 178–181, 186, 206–209.

¹⁴ *Muszyna*, pp. 352 and 337.

¹⁵ According to a deposition made in 1622 Grzegorz Szydło "was preparing for winter quarters in Morawka" (*Żywiec*, f. 48). In his deposition made in 1624 Kuba Cyganik said that "in the autumn he took Szatława to the winter quarters of his brother, Tomek Cyganik, on Kocafi. On coming there Szatława asked my brother when he could come to spend winter there. My brother said. I don't promise you anything for the manor is not far away. Szatława then said. For a week or two. Tomek said: For a week or two, what I eat you will get too. My brother Wojtek and Hanka knew Szatława from their visits to Sole and they knew he was a brigand" (*ibidem*, f. 51v).

¹⁶ *Żywiec*, f. 55. *Muszyna*, p. 347.

attacks, large companies frequently divided into smaller groups and dispersed in order to rob in other areas¹⁷. The texts of their depositions tell us that brigands' companies and smaller groups frequently consisted of relatives: fathers and their sons, brothers, kinsmen. We know for certain that brigandage was in practice an hereditary occupation for lots of families in the Beskidy mountains, many of their members being engaged in it¹⁸. A large brigandage company was usually led by a *hetman*, who was also called chief, commander, sometimes the elder, rarely ringleader. A *hetman* held supreme power over his company but his competence is not quite clear. It can be assumed that the *hetmans* were experienced brigands who enjoyed respect in their circle¹⁹. The post of *hetman* was held by Sebastian Bury from Rajcza, a member of brigands' gangs, mentioned several times in the book of Żywiec in 1624 and 1625, later leader of the gang which was routed by Krzysztof Czarnecki in 1630. He was executed in Żywiec²⁰. Most probably the man who initiated an attack or a predatory raid and assembled participants became a *hetman*. He frequently performed this function only during one raid or attack, as is testified to by the following expressions: "Lanko of Tereściana — — from behind the Bieszczady mountains, was *hetman* [during the attack] on that miller" [near Rymanów in 1648], "This Iachna [from Kurów] was *hetman* [in the attack] on Chowacz" (at Snaków in 1653); during the attack on Tobiasz Jakliński's manor house in 1628 "Blacksmith's son from Gronkowo was leader"²¹. But large permanent brigands' companies were also led by *hetmans* who performed this function for a longer time, planning attacks and robberies for a whole season. This is testified to by a 1628 text from Kazimierz: "this brigand [Kasper Szarek] was overtly engaged in brigandage with them, he mur-

¹⁷ AMKaz., K 267, f. 291ff. *Wiśnicz*, pp. 27, 30. *Muszyna*, p. 338. *Sanok*, p. 153.

¹⁸ *Żywiec*, f. 9v–10, 12, 12v, 27, 42, 44, 46, 56, 60; *Wiśnicz* p. 29 and many others.

¹⁹ *Żywiec*, f. 18v, 23, 44v, 51v; *Wiśnicz*, pp. 19, 25, 26, 28, 38ff; *Muszyna*, pp. 335, 338–340, 352; AMKaz. K 267, f. 286, 293a; *Sanok*, pp. 115, 150, 168; Marko Hatała on trial in Sanok in 1593 „was the leader and *hetman* of all thieves and brigands in various places”, *Sanok*, p. 108, he is also mentioned in *Kronika mieszczańska krakowskiego z lat 1575–1595 (The Chronicle of a Cracow Townsman from 1575–1595)*, ed. Henryk Barycz, Kraków 1930, in "Biblioteka Krakowska", p. 140.

²⁰ A. Komonieczki, *Chronografia albo Dziejopis Żywiecki ... (A Chronography or A History of Żywiec ...)*, ed. S. Grodziski and I. Dwornicka, Żywiec 1987, p. 159.

²¹ *Muszyna*, pp. 341, 348, 352; AMKaz., K 267, f. 289.

dered, tormented, grilled and robbed noblemen and other people, — — he was their *hetman*, he led them”, or by a brigand brought to trial in Wiśnicz in 1628: “only the elder knows where to go, he orders them to follow”²². Sebastian Bury and Marko Hatala, mentioned above, were such *hetmans*.

In the Beskidy mountains an important role in brigandage was played by houses (farms) and inns in which brigands could safely meet, hide and keep their spoils. These places would now be called thieves' dens. The texts I have examined contain many, usually brief, references to innkeepers and inns in which brigands met, ate and drank, but it is not easy to distinguish those which played the role of thieves' dens. The fact that brigands used to meet, eat and drink in an inn and even planned robberies there, taking advantage of the innkeeper's advice, is not enough to declare that the inn was a thieves' den. Sometimes we can see that an innkeeper was friendly towards the brigands or even collaborated with them, but this is not enough to call him a receiver. We know much more about innkeepers without a liquor licence who collaborated with brigands. We can learn from Żywiec materials that “brigands are hiding in village administrator Churka's house” ((1599), that a store of stolen objects is in the house of the Marciniacs, probably at Skawa (1606), that brigands “always found refuge” in Janosz Słowiak's house at Stracanka, “they ate and slept there and he always warned them [of impending danger]” (1622) and “they held meetings and kept a store of all possible things” in the house of Piotr Szczotkowy” (1624)²³. We know from depositions made in Wiśnicz in 1632 that “the elders had a store in Twarozik's house — — they drank and hid dresses there”, and in Szczyrzyc near Gruszów on the Kwapinka “thieves had a large store at Burdeli's”; in Ochotnica “even twenty brigands would meet at Piotr Jakubcik's — — when they were crossing the Dunajec they usually stayed at Zabrzieski's — — the boatmen at Tylmanowa on the Dunajec river, Brodka and Pełka, used to hide [stolen goods] at Jakub Brodka's and later took them from him” (1632). In 1653 Roman from Krzyżówka stated: “They had a store at Tkacz's on Krzyżówka and they drank, rolicked, shot and fried pork fat and sheep there, and whatever they gained. He stated that Zaczycha from Krzyżówka

²² *AMKaz.*, K 267, f. 293a. *Wiśnicz*, p. 197.

²³ *Żywiec*, f. 13v, 17v, 40v, 51-51v.

had bathed him and by magic made him invulnerable — — She would bathe each of them”²⁴. Similar information can be found in the texts from Muszyna and Sanok²⁵. It seems that the brigands had a well developed background.

To what extent were the brigands helped by the local population? What is indisputable is that the family, or at least some of its members, were their helpers or even cooperated with them. The comrades of the brigands on trial and various helpers who took part in the robberies were frequently denoted by the name of their father or of their family; we can see that sometimes several men from the same village bore the same name; this shows how often family members (father, son, brothers, brother-in-law etc.) participated in brigandage. Moreover, the depositions from each court district examined by me contain dozens of references to various kinds of help which the brigands received from people who were not directly engaged in brigandage. The most welcome form of help was to warn a brigands' company of an impending danger or provide it with information on money or valuables that can be stolen. In 1622 a certain Bartosz Rurka told brigands in the Żywiec district: “My godfather Mikot told me that this official from Wieprzki [Mikołaj Wojnarowski from Wieprzki, a manorial farm near Żywiec] has money; he said that we should meet and go there”; the same Mikot said to another brigand on trial at that time: “if you let that thief go with the money, it would be like throwing a stone into water”²⁶. Matus Szczotka from Radeczka, on trial in Żywiec in 1624, said that Majcher, the blacksmith's son, warned them “when recruits were going against them”, and when his company (eight brigands) wanted to rob a group of Slovaks returning from the Bielsko fair, and when “waiting for those Slovaks we lay in osier-bed behind the Swinna manorial farm, Boruczkow, my brother-in-law from Swinna kept bringing us food; he bound up his arm, pretending he was going to a barber-surgeon in town, but in fact he came to us, even three times a day, telling us everything that was going on in the town and spying on the Slovaks on their way from Bielsko”; he also said that “in Kamesznice practically everybody is ready to give

²⁴ *Wiśnicz*, pp. 29, 33, 37ff, 154, what is interesting here is the reference to the „magical powers” of Zaczycha.

²⁵ *Muszyna*, pp. 344, 353. Sanok, p. 78.

²⁶ *Żywiec*, f. 45–46.

a warning, the brigands are all right there". Jakub Laberda, who was relating the same happening, said that the owner of his farm Matys Marszałek "ordered him to keep going to the brigands — — and he went to them regularly to tell them everything that was going on in the town. He said that his own wife, Marszałek's servant Marusza, his daughter, kept bringing food to the brigands who were beyond Swinna"²⁷. Kasper Szarak, a member of a large gang carrying out robberies in the Nowy Targ region, said during his trial in Kazimierz in 1628 that after a series of attacks and robberies "We went from Krepak into the Tatra mountains, for shepherds had warned us that foot soldiers were after us, so we went into the mountains"²⁸. Many items of similar information can be found in the texts from Muszyna, Wiśnicz and Sanok. All these examples show that brigands' companies met with the goodwill and support of a part, perhaps even a considerable part, of the local population. Some depositions show that brigands were sometimes linked by various ties with the services destined to pursue them. In 1649 Michał Drabiak described how one of his comrades, together with armed anti-brigandage servants, had stolen a heifer, and in 1653, Andrzej Stachurzyk, on trial in Wiśnicz, said: "When we caught the brigands — — we turned them over either to the ensign's wife or to the captain, but they would let them go, so they used to come and cause trouble again"²⁹. It is difficult to say whether what he said was true, he may have meant the officials of the persons he mentioned.

Food supplies were a great problem, especially for companies which were active, without dispersing, for a long time in an area. Help from friendly people was sporadic and could not secure existence, for some bands were numerous. Since the brigands were separated from their homes in those periods, robbery was the only way out. If they had seized food by force in villages, and even more so in small towns, this would have led to the inhabitants' defensive reactions, to the loss of their help or even of their neutral goodwill; the inhabitants could even organise a chase and extend help to armed servants. An exceptional deposition can be found in the materials from Wiśnicz: "Whenever we came to a village, we would take food and eat it climbing the moun-

²⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 48v–50, 53–53v.

²⁸ *AMKaz.*, K 267, f. 290–291.

²⁹ *Muszyna*, p. 345; *Wiśnicz*, p. 161.

tains³⁰. Most frequently brigands' companies active in the mountains secured the food they needed by taking it from shepherds' sheds. Brigands brought to trial made countless depositions in which they described how they roamed from one shed to another, stealing sheep, cheese and the whey of ewe's milk³¹. Mutton and cheese seem to have been the principal food of the brigands who lived in mountains and in sub-mountainous regions from spring to late autumn. The book of Sanok does not mention the robbing of shepherds' sheds, which confirms that there were no permanent brigands' gangs during the "season" in that region. The brigands who robbed sheds either ate the food there, on the spot, or took it away with them. In most cases we know nothing about the reaction of the flock-masters, who were quite helpless when faced with armed brigands. Information is on the whole laconic: e.g. "They took two cheeses in the shed, and there were nine there — — They were in Górski's shed but only ate. They were at Raszkowski's and ate their fill. At Słaboń's they only ate. At Pawlaszek's they also only ate for there was yet nothing there to take. At Martynek's shed — — they killed a sheep" (1607) or "he was at Pilsko in an Oravian shed, there were four of them there — — they took twelve cheeses" (1622)³². In between the attacks the brigands' companies hid in the mountains; so they did not have to go far or down the valley to a village when they robbed a shed. It was an easy, safe job for brigands, for armed anti-brigandage units probably rarely ventured into the mountains.

We do not have much information about mutual relations between brigands. In large companies, especially those active for longer periods of time, the *hetman* and probably a few respected elders were clearly separated from the other members of the gang. The beginners and brigands who joined in when an occasion arose were treated scornfully and did not take part in decision making³³. Bloody clashes and even murders were not something

³⁰ Wiśnicz, p. 196.

³¹ The whey of ewe's milk, obtained in the production of cheese, was an important element of shepherds' diet.

³² Other similar depositions: "We took the food that was in the shed — — they had to give it to us" (1632), "they were frequently in sheds, so they ate cheese, drank the whey of ewe's milk and sometimes killed a sheep" (1658) — *Żywieć*, f. 19–19v, 23v–24, 40, 47. *Wiśnicz*, pp. 29, 153, 196. *Muszyna*, p. 353.

³³ "The elders did not want to tell us anything — they wanted to stun us, the young ones", deposition made in 1632, *Wiśnicz*, p. 28.

unheard-of among brigands; it did happen that a brigand robbed his comrade or took his money³⁴. An attack on the house and person of a brigand who did not belong to the attacking company was described by the attackers' *hetman*, Piotr Ponczak alias Hudak, in 1648: "Nosal led [us] to another brigand at Komarnik, we came there in the evening, we ate, but he was not at home. Next morning four of us went to him, others were already grilling him, having stretched him first, and took nine thalers, I myself added more straw to the fire, then shot him with my pistol, we took his clothes and other things"³⁵. But we also come across manifestations of solidarity and mutual help. This is what Fedor Sieńczak said in his deposition at Muszyna in 1654: "When I was shot behind Krasny Bród my comrades brought me on a horse, Safka took the horse from his friend and took me to the forest and then Safka bought an ointment for two Hungarian zlotys at Bardejov, and this is how I was cured"³⁶. Although Fedor and Sawka were clearly on friendly terms, it seems that it was distrust, if not downright hostility, that prevailed in contacts between brigands.

The spoils seized during an expedition were, on the whole, divided into equal parts, especially if the company had no clear permanent leadership, if it was not too numerous and the brigands had assembled to carry out a concrete attack³⁷. When the robbery was carried out by a large, permanently active company with a relatively strong *hetman* and a group of elder brigands, the leaders decided how the spoils should be divided³⁸. There are only a few references in the depositions to a part of the stolen money being taken on the sly by some members³⁹.

The activities of brigands from the Beskidy mountains differed only partly from the activities of highwaymen active on

³⁴ *Żywiec*, f. 15–15v (1602), 30v (1618), 56 and 57v (1625); *Muszyna*, p. 352 (1654).

³⁵ *Muszyna*, p. 338.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 353.

³⁷ Many brigands said: „each got 30 zlotys”, „all these were there [in the night attack on the house] and took an equal share”, „and they divided the money equally” — see, *AMKr.*, 1101, f. 600. *AMKaz.*, K 267, f. 292a. *Żywiec*, f. 39, 45. *Muszyna*, p. 352. *Sanok*, p. 108. And similar ones: *Żywiec*, f. 26, 32v, 37, 47. *Muszyna*, p. 338, 344, 352. *Sanok*, p. 85.

³⁸ *Wiśnicz*, p. 26, 27. *Sanok*, p. 181. *AMKaz.*, K 267, f. 286. *Wiśnicz*, p. 21.

³⁹ For instance, *AMKaz.*, K 267, f. 286.

Polish plains, but the difference was essential. In addition to assaults on merchants' carts, travellers or lone wayfarers, typical of lowland banditry, attacks on noblemen's manor houses, farm buildings, prosperous houses in villages as well as in small towns or in their immediate vicinity, e.g. in Pcim, Sucha, Tymbark, Grybów, Rymanowa, Sieniawa and Rychwałd, were common in the Beskidy mountains. The main targets of attacks were village administrators, village officers, millers, shoemakers, blacksmiths and also more prosperous ordinary peasants, priests, Orthodox popes, Catholic and Orthodox churches. Attacks on and robberies of manors and other houses were extremely rare in lowland Poland, such cases cannot be found in the materials of criminal courts from large towns for such attacks endangered not only peasants and townspeople but also prosperous noblemen; so this is why they attracted the interest of law courts.

All the materials examined by me contain information on 173 assaults and robberies of noblemen's manors, various houses and farms (including 41 assaults on manors and 6 on manorial farms) and also Catholic and Orthodox churches⁴⁰. The judges were particularly interested in the circumstances in which the attacks were carried out; this is why the depositions concerning these events are so detailed. Our most explicit information on the activities preceding an attack concerns companies which met as the occasion arose, in order to carry out a concrete attack; in gangs active in the mountains the decision on the attack was taken by the *hetman* together with the elders and the mechanisms of action are not known to us. In companies which met occasionally, the robbery was usually initiated by one of the brigands who led the members of the group to a given manor or house⁴¹. He had information about the resources of the manor or farm, also about the persons present there, especially whether the host was at home and whether he had many farm hands capable of putting up resistance. The leaders were usually brigands who had taken part in many earlier attacks and were well known to the comrades⁴². In the Sanok region this role was sometimes played by Orthodox priests, familiar with thieving and brigandage, a sub-

⁴⁰ There were 62 attacks in Żywiec, 10 in Cracow, 17 in Wiśnicz, 40 in Muszyna, 43 in Sanok and one in Przemysł.

⁴¹ *Żywiec*, f. 22–24, 28v–29, 35v, 41v, 44v, 45–46v, 48, 49, 49v, 50v–51. *AMKaz.*, K 267, f. 292b, *Wiśnicz*, pp. 20ff, 26. *Muszyna*, pp. 335ff, 338, 352, 354ff. *Sanok*, pp. 78, 80, 108–110, 120, 152, 156, 176, 181, 186.

ject which will be discussed later. When an attack on a manor house or a manorial farm was planned, it was important to secure the help of a servant who knew all about the resources of the house and the actual situation⁴³. Very significant are the words said at Muszyna in 1649 by Andrzej Koczka, a brigand: "He said that brigands had never attacked, and would never attack, a house in which there were no traitors"⁴⁴. Information on hidden money sometimes came from a former servant: "Łazor Kowalow led [the group] to Czayacek, for Illasz Kułakow told him that Czayacek had money in a pile under the bench, he knew for he had been his servant" (1647); "He was at Wysokie when they were tormenting a peasant — — one of them had been a servant there — — Gołocz had led them [saying] that he had a kettle with money" (1649)⁴⁵. Sometimes peasants, subjects of the attacked nobleman, helped in the assault, as for instance in the attack on Zieliński's manor at Barcice in about 1630⁴⁶. Jacko Rączka from Teleśnica gave a detailed description of how a group was preparing to rob Stanisław Rosiński's manor at Teleśnica in 1607: "It so happened that he [Jacko Rączka] came into an inn, then the pope from Jasień [Jurko] came up to him and took him out into the court, asking him: Do you know, Jacko, where Mr Jurek Rosiński now keeps his money? — — So as to take it — — and two Sundays later this pope sent to me his neighbour from Jasień, the Jew Fejtek, who asked if I would be willing to lead [a group] to Mr Rosiński, for it would be worth while to gather rascals — — The Jew came the third time and also asked when to come with the people whom he had gathered in the meantime"⁴⁷. The depositions contain many other detailed descriptions of attacks on noblemen's manors and houses. In 1595 Jacek Żebaczek from Końskie who took part in the attack on Tomasz Ramuł's manor, witnessed in Sanok "that there were twenty-four of them when they killed Mr. Ramuł — — they gathered in the forest — — they all ate supper at Choma's — — Iwan, Choma's son from Końskie, stood at the window when Ramuł, the deceased, was eating his

⁴² For instance *Żywiec*, f. 43v. *Sanok*, pp. 78ff, 109, 151, 153, 158ff, 161–165, 169–170, 206–209.

⁴³ For instance *AMKr.*, 865, f. 168. *Żywiec*, f. 18, 41v, 32, 44. *Sanok*, p. 79.

⁴⁴ *Muszyna*, p. 343.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 333, 344.

⁴⁶ *Wiśnicz*, p. 39.

⁴⁷ *Sanok*, p. 161

supper, when they came up to the deceased, he was standing on guard in the hallway with a spear"⁴⁸. Zieliński's manor at Barcice was robbed in about 1630: "These brigands used peasants from Szlachtowa as guards when they were robbing the manor at Barcice. And the peasants also took a lot of things there, and they were farm hands — — there were eighteen of us there"⁴⁹. The attack on Stanisław Rosiński's manor at Teleśnica is described in detail in several depositions⁵⁰. This is what Jacko Rączka said: "The Jew told me that there were thirty of them and they had 20 pistols and 50 charges each — — Going to them at night, they found three men on guard on a log — and then, when the second one cried out, they all gathered and sat down round him, greeting him and waiting for the others — — They said, all right, we are thirty already — — And I led them towards the village. When we were in a stream, not far from the manor, they gave a signal by whistling — — and moving towards the manor they stopped and asked me if there was a guard there and whether I knew anybody there — — When they entered the manor Mr Stanisław Rosiński shot at them; Krogulecki was in the room when Rosiński shot, Krogulecki went out with a candle and asked who was shooting, and they killed him in Mr. Rosiński's manor". In 1622 Łukasz Łoparz from Cięcina witnessing in the case of attacks on Suski's manor at Rychwald and Strzalina's manor at Dąbrówka said⁵¹: "Six of us went to Bieniek Krawcowy at Żabnica — — From there we came to Nowy Rychwald, Mrs. Suska was eating supper — — we entered the manor — — Bieniek bound Mrs. Suska hand and foot and threw her on the fire". After this attack the same company went to Strzalina's manor at Dąbrówka, not far away: "we were seven — — we entered when Mrs. Strzalina was eating supper — — Hubczyk tied Mrs. Strzalina with a leather band. When she was tied up we carried her around with candles so that she should show us where the money was". The attacks on manors and other buildings had sometimes graver consequences than a mere loss of money and material goods. When the attacked put up resistance, they were killed. The materials examined by

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 116–117.

⁴⁹ *Wiśnicz*, p. 39v.

⁵⁰ *Sanok*, pp. 161–164, 167ff, 169ff, 174–176.

⁵¹ *Żywiec*, f. 44–45. see also other depositions about these attacks, *ibidem*, f. 41–42v, 47–47v. The plundering of Suski's manor and the manorial farms in Węgierska Górka and Wieprzki is also described in *Chronografia*, p. 137.

me tell us about the murder of Tomasz Ramułt at Końskie (1595), Pobiedziński probably at Brunary Wyżne (1600), Krogulecki at Teleśnica (1607) and Tułkowski at Barcice (1632), but noblemen were seldom killed. It seems that brigands avoided attacking manors when men were inside and resistance could be expected. Persons of lower social strata were frequently killed during attacks on houses. In 1628 Kasper Szarek gave evidence in Kazimierz about the attack on Tymbark: "In four houses in Tymbark we killed three persons at night when they were putting up resistance, we tormented three persons and took a thousand złotys and three dresses. Maciek Szarek and Cycoń rushed into the room and Szarek at once killed two persons"⁵². When brigands attacked a manor or a house, they as a rule grilled the master of the house to learn where money and valuables were kept; the materials we have examined contain over 50 pieces of information confirming this practice. The only exceptions are depositions concerning robberies of farms, which say nothing about people being grilled or tortured⁵³. In one case we know that a part of a manor was burned down, in another we learn that a barn was set on fire⁵⁴.

More numerous brigands' companies sometimes attacked several houses or huts and even whole hamlets. A deposition made in Żywiec in 1594 says: "having gathered in the village of Bilowicze, at night, as is usual, they attacked Jews who lived there after fleeing from pestilence in Cracow, they forcibly took their robes, furs, some silverware and forty złotys"⁵⁵. Sometimes the attacks were bloody and very cruel. In a deposition made at Żywiec in 1624 Matus Szczotka from Radeckza, a participant in many attacks and murders, said: "he was in Rzeki with a company [25 persons] that he knew, they burned down Rzeki, they

⁵² AMKaz., K 267, f. 292a. See also *Sanok*, p. 124.

⁵³ This is usually a laconic note: "we robbed a peasant there. Krawcik grilled him"; "he robbed Tatusiek in Florinka — Sawka and Wahan grilled him"; "Ciupa and Kornuta grilled the village administrator at Kraynia Stropkowska, they took 100 złotys there"; "we covered Kliszka with straw and were to grill her if she did not tell us about the money of her own good will"; "Koziel and Midorczyk tormented a woman there, grilling her soles" — see *Wiśnicz*, pp. 21, 29, 49v, 104. AMKaz., K 267, f. 292a. *Muszyna*, pp. 337, 341, 353. *Żywiec*, f. 18v. 32v-33. *Sanok*, p. 158.

⁵⁴ In 1562 a barn on Stanisław San's farm at Nowotaniec near Sanok was burnt down, and in 1628 a part of Tadeusz Jakliński's manor house, probably in Nowy Targ district — *Sanok*, p. 64 and AMKaz., K 267, f. 284 and 289.

⁵⁵ *Żywiec*, f. 7.

beat up a lot of people, Targosz threw the largest number of people into fire, Bartosz Pokusa, Chudy's son from Cięcina killed three persons with a single shot, I shot one person and threw two children into fire"⁵⁶. The Sanok book from 1614 contains a complaint by Wojciech Romer, owner of the village of Smerek: "these scoundrels and their companions, ninety-eight of them — — attacked the village of Smerek at night, as is their custom, they plundered it, killed several persons, grilled a woman and seized many things"⁵⁷.

Catholic churches, Orthodox churches, synagogues and clergymen were seldom robbed. In the whole material examined by me, 13 depositions confirm such attacks: a text from Wiśnicz about a robbery of the house of a priest from Stara Wieś (1632) where "they did not take any church things, only what belonged to the priest"⁵⁸; the texts from Muszyna which have information on three robberies: of the church at Malcova (Slovakia, 1647), at Serwiz (1649) and of the house of the pope of Orłów (1653)⁵⁹. The depositions recorded in the Sanok book tell us about robberies, rather burglaries: into the Orthodox church at Nowosielce (1557), into the church at Nowotaniec (1564), the Orthodox church at Smolnik (twice, probably in 1575 and 1577), the Orthodox church at Międzyłaborce (1577), the synagogue at Rymanowa (1593), and the Orthodox church at Kalince (1618). There is also a very interesting detailed description of an attack on the priest and church at Poraż (1605), where "violence was done to the church, they plundered the house of Maciej Umastowski, a noble priest who was vicar there, took the priest's things, chalices, velvets — — and many other things and acting at night, like traitors, they took by force things belonging to the presbytery; they dragged the beaten, grilled priest into the open air and wanted to behead him but as they did not think he would survive, they just left him for dead and went away"⁶⁰. This attack was made by the Hungarian foot soldiers of the starost of Przemyśl, who had earlier (1574) been suspected of planning to set on fire and rob the small towns of Dubiecko. The Przemyśl book contains extensive depositions

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 49v–50

⁵⁷ *Sanok*, pp. 206–209.

⁵⁸ *Wiśnicz*, pp. 26ff.

⁵⁹ *Muszyna*, pp. 337, 344, 348.

⁶⁰ *Sanok*, pp. 53, 79, 99–100, 108, 153–156, 210.

concerning the robbery, or rather burglary into the Orthodox church in Przemyśl in 1649, where silverware, a chalice, a crucifix, censers, money and "small things used in God's service" were stolen⁶¹.

Highway robberies were much more frequent than attacks on manor houses and farms. The most profitable were attacks on merchants' carts. A particularly desirable target was a lone cart going to or from a fair, which was easy to rob for a brigands' group numbering several or even over a dozen persons. Itinerant hucksters were frequently attacked, this also did not involve danger but the spoils were as a rule small. In addition to merchants and hucksters, brigands also robbed casual travellers, even armed Hungarian foot soldiers, also pedestrians, even poor wayfarers. Attacks on merchants' and hucksters' carts were organised in specific places, mainly on roads leading south, to Slovakia and to the Hungarian state, and also near towns in which fairs were held. In the Żywiec region these were mountainous roads west of Żywiec in the direction of Ostrava, especially the Jabłonkowska Pass. Merchants from the territories further to the east, from Podhale went to Orava and especially to Zips and to Hungary (Bardejov, Presov, Košice) through a pass near Muszyna, through the passes in the Lower Beskidy mountains and the Bieszczady mountains. Brigands usually staged their attacks near fords and bridges, in narrow mountain passes and in places where it was easy to lay an ambush. Depositions about attacks near the Jabłonkowska pass and on the Sola river, probably near the ford or the bridge, are recorded several times in the Żywiec book⁶². Many attacks were organised on merchants and hucksters travelling from the fair in Żywiec to Kęty or from Bielsko. A group numbering some 20 brigands who robbed manor houses and farms in the Podhale region, also carried out attacks on highways. Kasper Szarek, brought to trial in 1628, said: "in Krepak we attacked Mrs Karpińska, wife of the burgrave of Lubovle. We took everything that was in the cart — dresses, money, gold chains

⁶¹ *Przemyśl*, f. 1–10, 14–21.

⁶² *Żywiec*, f. 13v, 16, 26v, 50, 51v, 54v–50. The name Jabłonkowskie mountains seems to have been in general use; it denoted the immediate surroundings of the Jabłonkowska Pass and Jablonkovo itself in Slovakia. Similarly Morawskie mountains probably signified the neighbouring hills in Moravia. The name Košice mountains is repeated several times in the depositions made in Sanok; it meant the mountains near Košice which, according to contemporaries, were controlled by brigands.

— — Out of this I received 100 zlotys". The gang then went into the Tatra mountains "where we attacked five carts of merchants who were going to the fair at Presov. We killed three, and from the carts we took about 3 thousand zlotys — — and several harquebuses — — rolls of satin and velvet"⁶³. The brigands brought to trial in Muszyna and Wiśnicz, and especially in Sanok, had been robbing travellers and carts going to Hungary and had also carried out attacks in the Hungarian state. In 1648 Piotr Ponczak admitted that "behind Bardejov — — they had robbed two Hungarian merchants, took 400 Hungarian florins"; in the same year Iwan Malik witnessed: "behind Moldava they attacked four Hungarians, took from them four zlotys, two loaves of bread and a cloak", and further on "when in harvest time Košice hucksters were going from Iasovo, in two carts, they attacked them and took two peasant overcoats, one hundred Polish zlotys, and two pistols". And in 1658 Ferens Sobczak said in Wiśnicz: "They went half a mile beyond Košice and there at once attacked two Hungarians on horseback and took their money"⁶⁴.

The depositions of brigands interrogated in Sanok frequently contain information on robberies carried out in the Hungarian state, in the neighbourhood of Mukaczewo and Bardejov, in the direction of Košice, in the Košice mountains⁶⁵. It was not only merchants, hucksters and rich travellers that were robbed. Many depositions speak about the robbing of poor peasants, for instance in Żywiec in 1599 "he was — — with Kempysz on the Sola river, four of them, they robbed a peasant, they took four coppers and a sabre from him" and then "they robbed two young men". A deposition made in Wiśnicz in 1632 says: "he was robbing beggars on the highways, stealing their food and money", another one made in Muszyna in 1648 reads: "we were going in the direction of the Porębski forest and stopped carters, we stole some of their bread, for there was nothing else". This is a deposition made in Sanok in 1651: "he has comrades with whom he stole on pathways, robbing good people", another made in 1563 — "they killed a man from Głoszyce — — when he was coming from Dukla and all they got was two cents", and in 1569 "with the above-mentioned comrades he robbed a woman in the wood —

⁶³ AMKaz., K 267, f. 29–291.

⁶⁴ Muszyna, pp. 339, 341. Wiśnicz, p. 195.

⁶⁵ Sanok, pp. 73, 84–85, 95, 109, 110, 122, 149, 150, 156, 214.

— a woman from Wisłok and took her dress — — they robbed her when she was coming from the fair in Sanok to Wisłok⁶⁶. These were robberies of poor travellers, more similar to robberies in other areas of Poland than to the acts of brigandage carried out in the regions of Żywiec and Podhale, though attacks on highways and field paths were known there too.

The spoils seized in manors and houses were of various kind, from large sums of money and jewellery to small valueless things. In addition to money, silver, gold and costly garments, brigands also stole weapons and textiles as well as shoddy clothes, kerchiefs, underwear and frequently food: pork fat, butter, meat, cheese, grain, sometimes honey which they themselves took from hives⁶⁷. They took everything that was of some value and could be easily carried away. The depositions seldom mention all details. The stolen sums can be guessed if one knows the share received by the witnessing brigand and the size of the gang. Brigands' shares varied, from an insignificant few pennies to hundreds of zlotys. The companies active in the Podhale region, each consisting of twenty-odd men, robbed two manorial farms in Wysoka taking "a jugful of money, not very big, containing red zlotys, thalers, coppers, a sack which was up in the attic and contained some 800 red zlotys, when the money was divided I got 24 thalers, 38 red zlotys and a hundred and fifty gold coins — — in the lower manor we took 2 sacks with money in the attic" and shortly afterwards "we took 3 thousand zlotys" from the blacksmith at Sucha⁶⁸. After the robbery of the manor house of Witkowska, the ensign's wife, carried out in 1617 by a gang of twenty persons, Wojtek from Rajcza said that he had got 200 zlotys as his share, which means that at least 4,000 had been stolen⁶⁹. But these spoils were exceptionally large. More often several score or several hundred zlotys were stolen. What is surprising is the many items referring to considerable sums of money taken from peasants. The brigands on trial in Wiśnicz in

⁶⁶ *Żywiec*, f. 13v. *Wiśnicz*, pp. 32, 33. *Muszyna*, p. 338. *Sanok*, pp 62, 69, 85, 97.

⁶⁷ The stealing of honey was punished cruelly. Jakub Huba from Skawa, sentenced in Żywiec in 1605 for theft, robberies, bigamy and adultery "was to be disembowelled and led round a pillar, and then he was to be beheaded" — *Żywiec*, f. 17v. This case has been described by A. Komonicki in *Chronografia*, p. 113. We know that money was sometimes hidden in a beehive; this is what a peasant at Wilkowice did.

⁶⁸ *AMKaz.*, K 267, f. 288, 292a.

⁶⁹ *Żywiec*, f. 30–31v.

1632 said: "We went to Moravia. There we tormented a peasant and took some 200 zlotys. Then we went to another one, but he gave us 200 thalers so we left him in peace"⁷⁰. In 1622 "they took money at Wilkowice — — from a beehive — — they got 50 zlotys each, if not more"⁷¹. But most attacks on peasant holdings brought small spoils, several zlotys, and frequently weapons. Sometimes the spoils on manorial farms were not much better. "In the Lipowa farm they took three tubs of butter and cheese"⁷².

The spoils seized on highways varied too; sometimes they were insignificant, as has been pointed out above, but sometimes they amounted to several hundred and even several thousand zlotys, as was the case during the above-mentioned attack in the Tatra mountains on five merchant carts on their way to the fair at Presov, when the brigands captured ca 3,000 zlotys. But in most cases the spoils consisted of dozens or hundreds of zlotys, and various goods: textiles, furs, craftsmen's products, gold and silver valuables, very often silver spoons, clothes and weapons, very useful for brigands⁷³. Valuable objects and large sums of money were either stored with friendly peasants or hidden in a local place: "on top the Jablonkowska mountain in the clearing, in a sycamore tree — — there are three notches on it, it has a measure of cloth, 4 lengths of red silk, four lengths of black velvet"; "at Parszywka he has twenty zlotys hidden under a sloping sycamore tree near Solisk"⁷⁴. In the Wiśnicz book for 1632 there is an extensive deposition concerning a hiding place used by the *hetman* and elders of a large, permanently active brigandage company, a hiding place which, for understandable reasons, was unknown to other members of the group: "Our elders had a store and kept money there, but I can't know where it was for they were afraid of us — — When one goes on Obidowa towards Turbacz there is a shed where they hid money. But we could not find it. The money was in two places, and a lot of money was said

⁷⁰ *Wiśnicz*, p. 27.

⁷¹ *Żywiec*, f. 43

⁷² *Ibidem*, f. 39, 40, 42v.

⁷³ See, for instance, *Żywiec*, f. 6, 12v, 13v, 16, 16v, 23, 30, 32, 36, 37. *AMKr.*, 1101, f.601–602. *AMKaz.*, K 267, f. 286, 290 ("we took everything, money, chalices, five patens from the cart of the canons of the Podgrodzie chapter"), 292a. *Wiśnicz*, pp. 27, 196; *Muszyzna*, pp. 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 347, 352; *Sanok*, pp. 72, 73, 85, 96, 108, 109, 110, 113, 150, 195, 196, 209; *Przemysł*, 82, f. 15, 21.

⁷⁴ *Żywiec*, f. 16 and 49.

to be there and a golden belt near it. We looked for it but couldn't find all of it — — in another place there are other things which [they were unable] to find"⁷⁵. The deposition made in the same year by Bartosz Michalczyk reads: "They have a dungeon on the very top of Lubań. There is a sign there. A spruce tree in the rock towards the shed of Simonko. There are treasures there. Simonko said they are hiding places. Gold and silver, belts. Another dungeon is in Klucki. There is a sign there, where the spruce trees are"⁷⁶.

The attacks on noblemen's manors and other houses in villages and small towns of the Sanok region were as frequent as in other parts of the Beskidy region, and the attacks on highways in the whole of the Beskidy region were similar⁷⁷. But unlike the western parts of the Beskidy region, in the Sanok region there were no large brigands' groups permanently active in the mountains, only groups which gathered casually to carry out an attack. What attracts attention when one reads the depositions recorded in the Sanok court book is the constant references to the thefts of cattle and horses. There is hardly a trial without this subject being raised. This was a two-way traffic. The horses, oxen and cows stolen or, more rarely, carried away by force in the Sanok region were frequently taken to Hungary, the remaining animals were sold far away from Sanok or even in the depth of Poland, frequently at fairs. The animals stolen in Hungary were brought to Poland. As a rule the animal thieves were also engaged in highway robberies and attacks on manors and houses. In the western parts of the Beskidy region brigands seldom admitted to committing ordinary thefts. For instance, in 1561 Walek Grabosz witnessed that "Fil Durnyc from Markwice sold Mr. Sebastian Pobiedziński's horses in Vyrava in Hungary, having previously stolen them" and in the deposition made next year he said that "together with Jacek, the village administrator's son, he has stolen two horses and they sold them for 16 złotych at Bardejov". In 1563 Karlik Ichnat from Radvana in Hungary said that "to-

⁷⁵ *Wiśnicz*, pp. 28ff; so the brigands' *hetman* and the elders had every reason to hide their treasures.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

⁷⁷ The situation in the Ruthenian territories is not clear to me for there has been no Polish research on this subject. I think that robberies in the Ruthenian areas lying further to the east were more similar to robberies in the Sanok region than to those in the other areas of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

gether with Kość, Hryciow's son from Radoszyce, they stole horses in Hungary and took them to Poland. And this Kość stole horses in Poland and took them to the criminals in Hungary who sold them in Hungary"⁷⁸. In addition to driving stolen horses and cattle to and from Hungary, brigands carried out many attacks on routes to Zips and the Hugarian state, as has been mentioned above. What was characteristic of the Sanok region was that many subjects of Hungarian lords participated in the brigandage activities there while peasants living in Poland took part in robberies in Hungary⁷⁹. Hungarian subjects were in the dock in many trials and Hungarian lords frequently took part in them as plaintiffs or judges⁸⁰. The participation of Hungarian subjects in robberies in the Sanok region was incomparably greater than the participation of Slovaks or Oravians in robberies in the Żywiec or Podhale regions.

The rural population of this region was mostly Ruthenian of Orthodox or Greek Catholic faith (after 1596)⁸¹. The question arises whether this was the reason why there were so many attacks on Polish noblemen's manors. Orthodox clergy and probably also Greek Catholic priests played a special role in the thefts and robberies in this region. There is not a single trace of clergymen's cooperation with brigands in the materials from Żywiec, Wiśnicz, Muszyna and Cracow, but the books from Sanok contain many depositions to this effect. Popes and their sons not only inspired thefts, robberies and attacks on manor houses, not only received stolen goods and animals, but also actively sup-

⁷⁸ *Sanok*, pp. 63, 68, 71–72; see also pp. 73–74, 113, 157, 187ff.

⁷⁹ For instance in 1563 Hryć Kurylczę from Owsiany said "that he has many companions in Hungary but he either did not remember their names or did not want to tell them". *Sanok*, p. 71.

⁸⁰ For instance, *ibidem*, pp. 124, 171–180.

⁸¹ In view of the state of research on the population in the Polish–Ruthenian ethnic borderland it is not possible to formulate precise conclusions about the demographic and religious structure there in the 16th and 17th centuries. We know a little more about the situation there at the end of the 18th century. At that time, Ruthenians (Orthodox and Uniate believers) accounted for 60% of the population in the villages of the Przemysł and Sanok regions, and Poles (Catholics) less than 40%. See J. Półćwiartek, *Nacje i religie na pograniczu etnicznym polsko-ukraińskim w czasach nowożytnych. Próba bilansu (Nations and Religions in the Polish–Ukrainian Ethnic Borderland in Early Modern Times. A Tentative Balance Sheet)*, in: *Sąsiedztwo. Osadnictwo na pograniczu etnicznym polsko-ukraińskim w czasach nowożytnych*, ed. J. Półćwiartek, Rzeszów 1997, pp. 45ff. See also J. Motylewicz, *Miasta ziemi przemyskiej i sanockiej w drugiej połowie XVII i w XVIII wieku (Towns in the Przemysł and Sanok Regions in the Late 17th and the 18th Century)*, Przemysł–Rzeszów 1993, pp. 98ff.

ported thieving and robbing operations and even took part in them. They were indicted for their part and sentenced to death. A deposition from 1557 reads: "pope Roman with another pope — — robbed a Ruthenian Orthodox church at Nowosielce and carried the spoils to the prince — — in Hungary" and a deposition from 1569 says: "Pope Ivan from Wykrop also attacked Germans"⁸². It was the socio-legal status of the popes which seems to have been the decisive factor. According to the research carried out before the war by Przemysław Dąbkowski, popes were then included in the peasant estate and in sources they are treated on a par with yeomen and millers⁸³. They tilled the land they had received, paid small rents and tributes in kind, and had to obey the lord of the village. So in fact they were peasants who performed pastoral duties. They had their own families, so they were embedded in the rural environment through their relatives, kinsmen and kinswomen. The popes and their sons were linked to their Orthodox parishioners by social solidarity and family ties similar to those which connected brigands from the Żywiec and Podhale regions with local rural communities. Their ties with the Ruthenian population were certainly much closer than the Catholic parish priests' ties with peasant parishioners. These ties must have involved participation in the village daily life, also in acts of brigandage and thefts. The Polish, that is Catholic, character of noblemen's manors must have been an additional incentive for popes to participate in attacks.

There were three reasons why the situation in the Sanok region was different. First, the region had very close contacts with territories which at that time belonged to the Hungarian state and with Hungary proper, especially with the regions of Bardejov, Humenne, Košice, Munkacs, Presov and also with the district of Zips. The main (trade) route linking Poland with Hungary (through the passes of Dukla and Lupkov) ran through Zips, and

⁸² One could multiply these examples. For instance, in 1595 Stec Homża from Wisłok "confessed that the pope from Wisłok has stolen two horses from Horba"; in 1606 the pope from Tworylne, together with his sons, took part in planning the attack on Sienko Sawka's house in Tworylne; in 1607 pope Jurko from Jasień, together with his son, participated in the attack on Stanisław Rosiński's manor in Teleśnica — *Sanok*, pp. 53, 85, 87, 112, 118–120, 158ff, 161–165, 172.

⁸³ P. Dąbkowski, *Ziemia sanocka w XV stuleciu (Sanok Land in the 15th Century)*, part I, Lwów 1931, pp. 77–83. This research refers to the situation in the 15th century and a part of the 16th, but it also reflects the situation which existed a hundred years later.

in particular through Košice. On the Polish–Hungarian border the population of Polish and Hungarian villages maintained very close ties, as is proved by the mass participation of peasants from Hungarian (Slovak to be exact) villages in brigandage in the Sanok region. Secondly, the ethnic situation in the rural areas of the Sanok region was different from the situation in the Żywiec, Podhale, Gorce and the Beskid Sądecki regions for the Ruthenians and Poles were mixed there. While the manor houses were Polish, the majority of the rural population was Ruthenian (especially in the region's eastern part) and only its minority was Polish. Thirdly, the religious situation in the region was peculiar, the influence of Catholicism clashing with the influence of the Orthodox faith, and from the end of the 16th century (the union of Brest was concluded in 1596) also with Greek Catholicism. The social situation of popes in villages in which Ruthenian peasants predominated was completely different from the situation of Catholic priests in other territories. This seems to have exerted the decisive influence on the popes' attitude to the robberies in these territories.

* * *

What was striking in the Beskid region, compared with the situation in the depth of Poland, was the intensity of brigandage and highway robberies, which seem to have been a mass phenomenon there. Since so many brigands' companies were active on a relatively narrow strip of land, brigandage must have been a daily experience for the population. The main difference between highland brigandage and robberies in the plains was that attacks on noblemen's manors, other houses and farms, including manorial farms, were very frequent in the Beskid region while they were rare in the depth of Poland. Defence was extremely difficult, for the attacks were well organised, some domestic servants were involved in these actions and the brigands greatly outnumbered the defenders. Attacks on highways were similar to the robberies carried out in other parts of Poland, both there and in the Beskid region it was people who had something valuable on them — mostly merchants, hucksters and rich lone travellers — that were robbed. But in all parts of Poland poor persons were also attacked and robbed of a few coins they had on them and of their tawdry clothes. The persons who resisted were murdered everywhere, sometimes even those who did not defend themselves

(e.g. lone women). The ground conditions in the Beskidy mountains, especially the mountain passes to Slovakia, Orava, Zips and Hungary, offered good possibilities for robberies. Merchants and travellers had to use these passes and it was there that they were usually attacked. The resolutions adopted by noblemen in various districts on the recruitment of soldiers to fight against brigandage and on money for this purpose show that brigandage was a real menace⁸⁴. Without detailed research it would be difficult to compare the danger posed to merchants and travellers by brigands in the Beskidy mountains with the danger which existed in western Europe, especially in the Mediterranean countries, in the 16th and 17th centuries⁸⁵. I will not speak here about the rich literature that has been written on this subject in many languages, for the aim of my article is to show the specific traits of Polish highland brigandage. It seems, however, that the danger posed by the brigandage which existed in the mountainous regions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in those centuries can be compared to the danger in the Mediterranean countries.

We have previously recalled the old conviction that highland brigandage was a romantic occupation and W. O c h m a ń s k i's class interpretation of this phenomenon, but let us strongly emphasise that the depositions made by brigands in the dock are free of even the slightest protest against increased feudal burdens or the imposition of serfdom on the freedom-loving highlanders. Not a single defendant complained about the oppression and poverty of the rural population, which might have induced the

⁸⁴ The Przemyśl and Sanok districts decided at the dietines in Wiszna to recruit 100 cavalry men at their own cost to fight against robberies (1648), the decision to recruit another 50 cavalymen was taken in 1649, and later the dietines decided to recruit 30 foot soldiers and 50 more after a year (1654, 1655). In 1624 Queen Constance ordered that whenever the starost appealed, the population of the Żywiec demesne should assemble with arms in hand to fight highland brigands. In 1649 the Nowy Sąd region decided to spend 3,750 Polish zlotys to strengthen its defence potential. Similar decisions were taken at the dietines in Zator: in 1624 it was decided to make it the duty of the inhabitants of villages and small towns to take part in pursuing brigands, in 1642, 1643, 1647, 1655, 1658 and 1659 one or two collections of the land tax were spent for this purpose, in 1650 the receipts from the tax on the sale of liquor, in 1649 2,185 zlotys, and in 1662 3,000 zlotys. See A. Prochaska, *op. cit.*, pp. 14, 17-20, 41ff. J. Rafacz, *op. cit.*, p. 152. S. Szczotka, *Materiały do dziejów zbrojnictwa*, pp. 172-190.

⁸⁵ For general characteristics of this phenomenon in this territory see F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, Paris 1966, vol. I, pp. 44ff.

highlanders to engage in brigandage and robberies. Nor is there any trace in the depositions of any of the accused highlanders wanting to taste freedom, win fame or show their superiority. The highlanders' free, independent nature, known also in our times, was undoubtedly conducive to brigandage, which in the view of nineteenth century writers was inspired by the highlanders' ambition to win fame, enjoy freedom, deprive the excessively rich of their riches and support the poor. This is a beautiful legend but nearly all depositions show explicitly that the attacks on manors, houses and farms and robberies on highways were carried out almost exclusively for profit, as in other parts of Poland. Very significant are the words of Józef Bączek, a huckster trading in Skwica who, brought to trial in Dobczyce in 1732, said that brigands had persuaded him to engage in brigandage, saying: "you have been trading for such a long time and have nothing, come with us and you will have bread and money"⁸⁶.

(Translated by Janina Dorosz)

⁸⁶ Quoted after J. R a f a c z, *op. cit.*, p. 153.