

THE NATIONAL MINORITIES IN POLAND IN 1918 - 1939

The problem of national minorities is one of the most difficult for research, it calls for the overcoming of many strata of emotional bias and of many stereotypes. This is why Polish historians after 1945 were, on the whole, reluctant to take up this problem, with the exception of the history of the German minority. The latter subject was, as it were, imposed upon them by some German historians whose theses led to the assertion that the tragic situation of minorities in Poland in the period between the two World Wars had created grounds for interventions and vindications which ended in the tragedy of September 1939.

THE NATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION OF THE POLISH POPULATION, ITS OCCUPATIONAL AND CLASS ASPECTS

Like all countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Poland of the period had a high percentage of national minorities. This was, above all, the heritage of the many centuries of German settlement policy in the northern and western territories, and of the rule of the Polish Crown over Ukrainian, Byelorussian and Lithuanian territories. In the pre-partition era and in the period of the 19th-century capitalist industrialization, Poland also absorbed large masses of Jewish population.

According to the 1921 census, based on the subjective criterion of self-declared nationality, the national minorities accounted for 31.4% of the total population of the 2nd Republic. Such voivodships as Volhynia, Polesie, Stanislawov, Tarnopol, Novogradok, had an absolute majority of Ukrainian and Byelorussian population which constituted there aboriginal ethnic groups.¹

According to the census of 1931, based on the criterion of self-declared mother-tongue, the total population of the 2nd Republic was made up of the following groups: Poles — 68.9%, Ukrainians — 13.9%, Jews — 8.6%, Byelorussians — 3.1%, Germans — 2.3%, Russians — 0.4%, and other nationalities —

¹ *Polska w liczbach [Poland in Figures]*, Warszawa 1924, p. 9, Table 8.

2.8% (these included a good many Byelorussians and Ukrainians of Polesie, with poorly developed sense of nationality).¹

In the research done so far, attention has been drawn to the inadequacy of the census data which, as a rule, lowered the numerical force of national minorities; this is why information on the religious denominational composition was adopted as the basis for verification; with the exception of certain borderland regions, it coincided with the national composition.¹ The overwhelming majority of Poles were Roman-Catholic, the Ukrainians were Greek-Catholic and Orthodox, the Byelorussians were Orthodox, the Jews — of Jewish faith, the Germans — Protestants.

In the years 1921 - 1931, the total increase of the population of the 2nd Republic amounted to 18.1%. The Roman-Catholic population increased by 19.9%, the Greek-Catholics — by 10.8%, the Orthodox — by 33.0%, the Jews by 10.2%. The number of Protestants in 1931 was lower by 16.1% as compared with the 1921 figure.⁴ These changes in the denominational composition resulted, above all, from the great migrations that had taken place in the early period of Poland's second independence, and from natural demographic processes.

The repatriation programme in the years 1919 - 1924 covered 1,265 thousand people, including 492 thousand Byelorussians, 470 thousand Poles, 124 thousand Ukrainians, 122 thousand Russians, 33 thousand Jews.⁵ Within the period from 1 December 1920 to 3 June 1921, 720.7 thousand people emigrated of their own free will from Wielkopolska (Great-Poland) and Pomerania; those were for the overwhelming part Germans, an immigratory group there. An intensive emigration of Germans from Poland lasted — in connection with the right of option — until 1 August 1925.⁶

The occupational and social composition of the main denominational groups in the 2nd Polish Republic showed considerable differences (see Table).

In the Poland of the inter-war period, there existed three patterns of occupational and social structure.

The first pattern, typical of the civilization of mature capitalism, was represented above all by the German minority group, a part of the Jewish population and the Poles in the industrialized regions. This pattern was characterized by a high percentage of those employed in industry, trade, transportation and in non-productive professions, and by a high percentage of physical and white-collar wage-earners. In Poland, like in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia or Rumania, the numerically strongest nationality group did not represent a relatively modern

¹ "Mały Rocznik Statystyczny" [Concise Statistical Yearbook, hereafter cited as MRS], GUS Warszawa 1939, p. 23, table 17.

⁴ J. Tomaszewski, *The National Structure of the Working Class in the South-eastern Part of Poland 1918 - 1939*, "Acta Poloniae Historica," vol. XIX, 1969.

⁴ MRS, p. 26, table 26.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 52, table 18.

⁶ S. Potocki, *Położenie mniejszości niemieckiej w Polsce 1918 - 1938* [The Situation of the German Minority in Poland 1918 - 1939], Gdańsk 1969, p. 24.

Table. The Population of Poland in 1931 by Religious Denomination, Source of Income and Social Status (in %)

Source: "Maly Rocznik Statystyczny," 1939, p. 31-32, table 27.

	Total	Roman Cath.	Greek Cath.	Orthod.	Protestants	Jewish
			Source of Income			
Agriculture	60.6	58.8	88.1	92.4	59.2	4.0
Industry	19.3	20.9	5.8	3.4	23.7	42.2
Trade	6.1	3.4	0.7	0.6	4.8	36.6
Transportation	3.6	4.6	1.0	0.7	1.6	4.5
Education and Culture	1.0	1.1	0.4	0.2	1.2	2.3
Domestic Service	1.5	1.7	1.1	0.6	1.5	0.7
Others	7.9	9.6	2.9	2.1	8.0	9.7
			Social Status			
Independent, employing hired labour	3.4	5.8	4.6	3.1	14.7	7.5
Independent, not employing hired labour	63.7	48.3	76.0	87.3	43.6	59.8
White-collar workers	4.3	5.0	1.2	1.1	6.4	6.6
Workers and cottage-workers	28.6	35.7	16.4	7.3	28.8	21.2

occupational and social structure. Hence, it appeared in a double role: as the object of economic exploitation by minority groups representing wealth and economic power, and as the subject of oppression, in connection with the character of the functioning of the public institutions and, above all, of the State apparatus.

The mass of Poles from the central, southern and eastern voivodships, the greatest part of the Jewish population and a small part of the Slav minorities, represented the second pattern, the essential features of which were: the domination of agriculture or non-productive branches, a high percentage of petty bourgeoisie, and an insignificant percentage of wage-earners. This model is typical of countries that have not gone through intensive capitalist industrialization and still retain the social and economic structure inherited from the feudal period.

The third pattern was represented by a considerable part of the Byelorussian, Ukrainian and partly Polish population in the so-called Eastern Borderlands. In connection with the greatly limited scope of market economy, an essential role in this pattern was played by natural economy. Appearing distinctly in Polesie and in the region of Novogrudok were social divisions of a class character, typical of Poland's territories back in the first half of the 19th century.

THE LEGAL SITUATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES AND THE ATTITUDE OF
THE GOVERNMENT AND OF THE MAIN POLITICAL MOVEMENTS TOWARDS
THEM

The national minorities in Poland enjoyed the basic democratic liberties guaranteed by the Constitution of March 1921 and by other laws and decrees.

In spite of numerous reservations, the Constituent Sejm, in the teeth of rightist extremists, ratified on 31 July 1919 the so-called Little Treaty of Versailles which guaranteed equal rights to all national minorities.⁷ On the following day, 1 August, the Sejm passed a law under which the central organs of the Republic were taking over authority over the territories of the former Prussian partition. Article 3 of the above-cited Law proclaimed: "All laws and special decrees issued in disfavour of any nationality or creed are hereby abolished".⁸ The equality of rights for national minorities was formulated clearly in the March Constitution:

"The Polish Republic — Art. 95 of the Constitution proclaims — secures within its territory full protection of life, freedom and property to all, irrespective of origin, nationality, tongue, race or religion".⁹

Art. 109 of the Constitution safeguarded each citizen's right to maintain his nationality, to cultivate his mother tongue and national peculiarities. The above-mentioned article announced that special State laws would secure for the minorities "the full and free development of their national characteristics by means of autonomous minority unions recognized under public law, within the framework of general self-government unions".¹⁰ The State reserved for itself the right to control their activities and to eke out their financial means if need be.

Under Article 110 of the Constitution, the national, religious and language minorities were guaranteed the right "to establish, supervise and run at their own charge, charitable, religious and social institutions, schools and other educational institutions, and to use freely their language and practice the rules of their religion in those institutions".¹¹

The republican and democratic institutions and the rights granted by the March Constitution were a substantial achievement, not only for the Polish people but for all citizens of Poland, irrespective of their origin, creed or nationality. These institutions were reaffirmed on 18 March 1921 by the Treaty of Riga under

⁷ Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej [Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland, hereafter cited as DzURP], 1920, No. 1, item 10.

⁸ K. Grzybowski, *Rola prawa w likwidacji podziałów zaborczych oraz integracji państwa polskiego* [The Role of Law in the Elimination of the Partition Divisions and in the Integration of the Polish State], in: *Droga przez półwiecze. O Polsce lat 1918-1968* [The Road through a Half-century. On the Poland of the Years 1918-1968], Warszawa 1969, p. 66.

⁹ S. Starzyński, *Konstytucja państwa polskiego* [The Constitution of the Polish State], Lwów 1921, p. 7.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 75.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

which the Polish State and the Soviet State undertook mutual obligations concerning the protection of rights of minorities.

Art. 7 of the Treaty of Riga proclaimed: "Persons of Polish nationality residing in Russia, Ukraine and Byelorussia have, within the framework of internal legislation, the right to cultivate their mother tongue, to organize and promote their own school systems, to develop their culture and, to this end, to form associations and unions. The same rights, within the framework of internal legislation, shall be enjoyed by persons of Russian, Ukrainian and Byelorussian nationality residing in Poland".¹²

Acting in the spirit of the March Constitution and of the Little Treaty of Versailles, the governments of Poland and Germany signed on 15 May 1922 for a period of 15 years the Geneva Convention on Upper Silesia¹³ which, in principle, petrified the existing social structure in the Polish part of Upper Silesia, maintaining the privileged position of the German minority in that part of the country. Of a different character was the Law of 26 September 1922 on the territorial autonomy of Eastern-Galician voivodships; this law implemented Art. 109 of the March Constitution. The law, inspired by the Piłsudski camp and pushed through in the teeth of the National Democrats, was intended for "export": it was aimed at influencing the final decision of the Council of Ambassadors on the attachment of Eastern Galicia to the Polish State. The Right and the Centre precluded the implementation of the law. After the May 1926 coup, the Piłsudski camp did not return to this law fearing that it might strengthen the separatist tendencies of the Ukrainians. The Law of 31 July 1924 on the school system for non-Polish nationals was incompatible with the spirit of Article 110 of the Constitution and in contravention of the Declaration reaffirming that article; it abridged considerably the heretofore normal development of minority schools. The law placed the entire school system throughout the territory of the 2nd Republic under central government administration. It introduced mixed schools, which in many instances became instruments of Polonization.¹⁴ Besides, by introducing obligatory school plebiscite under the supervision of the school superintendent's offices, it rendered possible various administrative harassments which in practice broke the principles of the Constitution. Hence, it provoked passionate protests on the part of all national minorities, the communist movement and the legal democratic Left led by the Polish Socialist Party (PPS).

After the coup d'état effectuated by J. Piłsudski in May 1926, the acting Minister of Religious Cults and Education, Kazimierz Bartel, representing the liberal wing of the victorious political camp, sent to the school superintendent's offices in the north-eastern voivodships a circular letter stating what follows: "Any brutal imposition of outward attributes of Polishness, any attempts at disregarding what a child receives from its home and, above all, the language used in the

¹² "Natio," 1927, No. 3/4, p. 18

¹³ DzURP, 1921, No. 44, item 371,

¹⁴ P. Łysia k, *Szkolnictwo powszechne narodowości niepolkich w Polsce [The Elementary School System of Non-Polish Nationalities in Poland]*, "Natio," 1927, No. 3/4, p. 14.

child's home, anything that may bear the features of national oppression — always has the most fatal effect on the souls of the young generation, gives rise to feelings of hatred, as a result brings about the absence of loyalty towards the State and, within a short time, generates hostile feelings towards it. The history of our own liberation struggles as well as of those of other nations, bears witness to all this infallibly".¹⁵

Striving to win the good will of the Jewish minority, the Left of the ruling camp inspired the proclamation on 13 March 1931 of a law on the expiration of validity of the special regulations relative to origin, nationality, tongue, race or religion¹⁶ which had been in force in the former Russian partition.

The formation in May 1926 of an authoritarian government which gradually abolished or abridged democratic liberties, brought about a clear deterioration of the legal situation of national minorities. The anti-democratic electoral laws introduced in the Sejm and Senate elections of the 3rd, 4th and 5th term (in 1930, 1935 and 1938, respectively) and in the territorial self-government elections, reduced considerably the representation of the Ukrainian and Byelorussian population above all.

The new Constitution adopted in April 1935, while reaffirming the equality of all citizens before the law, brought to the fore the principle of loyalty towards the State, and thus created a loop-hole allowing the abridgment of equality in practice. The April Constitution did not tolerate any minority organization the activity of which would in any way jeopardize, even to the smallest degree, the good of the State as a whole. The Constitution excluded any decentralizing tendencies on the part of national minority groups.¹⁷ Before the adoption of the new Constitution, the Foreign Minister Józef Beck declared at the League of Nations Assembly on 13 September 1934 that pending the entrance into force of a universal and uniform system of protection of minorities, the Polish Government would not cooperate with international organs in controlling the application by Poland of the system of protection of minorities which was sufficiently secured by the internal legislation of the Polish State.¹⁸

After the expiration of the Geneva Convention, the rights of the German minority were additionally safeguarded by the joint Polish-German declaration of 5 November 1937 in which both sides solemnly stated that they would refrain from a policy of forcible assimilation, ensure the free use of language and the development of cultural and economic associations, make it possible to establish minority schools.¹⁹ While the Polish Government was on the whole meeting these

¹⁵ "Sprawy Narodowościowe," 1927, No. 1, p. 45.

¹⁶ DzURP, 1926, No. 31, item 214.

¹⁷ L. Ehrlich, *Obywatelstwo a narodowość* [Citizenship and Nationality], "Sprawy Narodowościowe," 1939, No. 1/2, p. 13.

¹⁸ W. Kuśki, M. Potuicki, edited and commented by, *Współczesna Europa polityczna. Zbiór umów międzynarodowych 1919-1939* [Present-day Political Europe. A Collection of International Treaties 1919-1939], Warszawa-Kraków 1939, p. 282.

¹⁹ "Sprawy Narodowościowe," 1937, No. 4/5, p. 456.

obligations loyally until May 1939, for the Polish minority in Germany the declaration became an empty form after a short period of gestures.

It is worthwhile at this point to consider the functioning of legal norms with regard to the main minority groups. Treating the matter generally, one may assume the following hypotheses. As far as the legal situation and the practical functioning of the legal norms are concerned, there appeared in the years between the two World Wars, a relatively privileged position of the German minority which enjoyed the benefits of the so-called Little Treaty of Versailles, the Geneva Convention and the Declaration of September 1937. This minority, availing itself of the help of the German Government as well as of the British and Italian Governments and of a part of the French public opinion, was able to exact its rights through the League of Nations, the Tribunal of The Hague and the Mixed Commission for Upper Silesia. The Polish-German rapprochement of 1933 - 1938 was taken advantage of by this minority to improve their living conditions and the possibilities of cultural expansion.

The Jewish minority had a much more difficult legal situation and more frequently suffered infringements upon the legal order committed by the administrative authorities and, above all, by the anti-Semitic Right. The governments of the Centre and Right in the '20s carried on a policy of economic and social discrimination of the Jewish population, especially in the labour market, in the school system and in the apportionment of means from the State and local-government budget. After the coup of 1926, a number of restrictions affecting the Jewish population were abolished. In the years 1936 - 1939, however, the ideological evolution undergone by a considerable part of Pilsudski's followers, and the declarations made by the Government and by the National Unification Camp (OZN), resulted in a deterioration of the situation of Polish Jews attacked by the extremist Right in the so-called national movement and by the conservative Roman-Catholic and Orthodox clergy. The most difficult political and legal situation in the 2nd Republic was that of the Slav minorities in the so-called Borderlands. In those territories, the arbitrariness of the State, local and school administration was breaking in practice legal norms. In the years 1924/25, 1930 and 1938, on the inspiration of the judiciary and repressive apparatus controlled by the National Democracy, reactionary Army officers managed to organize brutal pacificatory operations meant as retaliation for the losses and victims caused by the activities of nationalistic Ukrainian terrorists. Announcements that Eastern Galicia would be granted territorial autonomy, were treated only as a tactical manoeuvre.

In the Polish public opinion, there appeared four major tendencies regarding the national minorities. The first tendency was represented by the so-called national movement and the organizations allied with it. Irrespective of internal differentiations, the national movement under the leadership of Roman Dmowski pronounced for a rapid Polonization of the Western and Eastern Borderlands. The national movement was particularly sensitive to the expansion of the German and Jewish minorities. It proclaimed a programme of economic, cultural and social anti-Semitism. The extremists of this movement, connected with the so-called youth

group of the National Party and with such secessionist organizations as the National Radical Camp (ONR), the Falanga and the Union of Young Nationalists (ZMN), were the inspirers of brutal anti-Semitic actions.

After Piłsudski's death (in 1935), the program of active Polonization of the borderlands (with the exception of the Jewish population) was adopted by the Camp of National Unification.

The second tendency, connected with federalistic concepts, was represented by the movement of Piłsudski's followers who propagated the principle of the State integration of national minorities through certain concessions for the so-called loyal elements. In spite of tremendous internal differentiation, the Piłsudski camp showed, on the whole, greater understanding for the postulates of minorities, especially of the German and Jewish group.

The left wing of the Piłsudski camp, the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), the Polish Peasant Party "Liberation" (PSL "Wyzwolenie"), the Peasant Party (also, with some reluctance, the Polish Peasant Party "Piast" and the National Workers' Party — NPR), as well as all the democratic parties of the national minorities, propagated ideas of tolerance, cooperation, interpenetration of cultures and respect for universal norms of humanism. The parties named above were fighting with particular force the anti-Semitism of the Right and showed understanding for the idea of territorial autonomy.

The revolutionary Left, represented by the Polish Communist Party (KPP), the Polish Socialist Party-Left (PPS-"Lewica") and by all legal transmissions of the above-mentioned parties, insisted with particular strength on the rights of minorities and criticized the discriminatory policy of the Government. Guided by the superiority of the class principle over the national principle — with regard to the German minority until 1934, to the Slav minorities and to Lithuanians — the revolutionary Left proclaimed the programme of self-determination up to and including severance and incorporation of Silesia, Pomerania and Gdańsk to revolutionary Germany, and of the Eastern Borderlands to Soviet Ukraine and Byelorussia. The policy of Communists with regard to nationalities, uncompromising and adhering to principles, led in accordance with the directives of the Comintern, made this movement particularly attractive to national minorities, since it presented a chance of solving the dramatic nationality problems of Poland in the period between 1918 - 1939.

THE INTERNATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM OF NATIONAL MINORITIES.

In all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the percentage of national minorities in the period between the two World Wars was very high. It amounted to 24.5 in Czechoslovakia (1921), to 10.4 in Hungary (1920), to 28.1 in Rumania (1930), to 17.2 in Yugoslavia (1921), to 11.0 in Lithuania (1923), to 26.6 in Latvia (1923), to 12.0 in Estonia (1923). The German and Jewish minorities in

the above-named countries showed a more modern social structure than the other nationality groups, and often appeared as pioneers of capitalist industrialization. Apart from a strong position in industry and handicraft, they managed to achieve a considerable degree of control in trade, credit, finance and professions. This fact brought about a very complex character of nationality conflicts, interrelated closely with social conflicts. It was no accident that these conflicts grew more acute in the period of depression when great tensions arose in the labour market. The high percentage of the above-named minorities in the urban population (with the exception of Bohemia and Moravia) gave rise to conflicts connected with difficulties in the influx of peasant population to the cities.

In the face of revolutionary social movements, most of the rightist parties in the countries mentioned above opposed to the idea of transformations of the social structure, to the idea of revolution — the idea of nationality regulation and ideas of the emigration of national minorities. It was in such a solution that all fascist and ultra-rightist currents saw the possibility of pacifying the public feelings.

The international aspect of the minority problem, apart from structural questions, is also connected with the policy of the capitalist powers. This problem was used as an instrument in the foreign policy of the big powers as well as of the medium-sized and smaller European states.

In the foreign policy of the Weimar Republic and of the Third Reich, the German minority in Central and Eastern Europe, and particularly in Poland and Czechoslovakia, as well as other minorities in that geographical zone, were to serve as instruments for undermining the Treaty of Versailles, for implanting the idea of its provisional character, and of the seasonal character of the new-established states. Inspired by the German Government, the leaders of the German minority set forth the idea of an integration of Europe's national minorities under their direction. It was in this spirit that the first congress of minorities was organized in Geneva in October 1925, and the subsequent congresses at which, until 1933, the voice of the German minority was predominating.²⁰ The pronouncements of the German minority in Poland were subordinated to the foreign policy of Germany. It was so especially in the League of Nations, in the Mixed Commission for Upper Silesia and, later on, also in the Sejm of the Polish Republic and in the Silesian Sejm.

Up to 1924, the German government and the main German parties did not have a uniform concept of how to utilize the German minority in the interest of the State's policy. One who did have a clear concept in this matter was Stresemann for whom Locarno and Germany's entry into the concert of European powers opened up the road to expansion. Stresemann demanded for the German minority in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe cultural autonomy after the example of institutions guaranteed in the Estonian law. In one of his political letters to the Kronprinz, dated 7 September 1925, he wrote:

"In Geneva we will be the spokesmen for the entire German cultural com-

²⁰ *Ibidem*, 1927, No. 1, p. 57.

munity because all Germany will see in us her defender and protective shield... Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Rumania which pledged in international treaties to care for their minorities, i.e. for German minorities in particular, will not be able to neglect their obligations with impunity once they know that the Reich may bring all infringements before the League of Nations".²¹

The Stresemann era in the policy with regard to nationalities lasted until 1933. In that period, petitions from the German minority often came to the League of Nations through the so-called Committee of Three. In the years 1920-1931 alone, 155 complaints on the activities of Polish administrative authorities and organizations were submitted. They referred, among other things, to such problems as the status of settlers, the land reform, the difficulties in acquiring civil rights, difficulties in the development of schools, the activities of the Union of Veterans of the Silesian Risings and of the Society for the Defence of the Western Borderlands.

The victory of Nazism brought about changes in the policy with regard to nationalities. The struggle against cultural autonomy was considered insufficient. One advanced the postulate to draw the German minority into the direct defence of the Nazi State and the implementation of its expansionist plans. In Czechoslovakia and later-on in Poland, too, the process of integration of the German minority was making rapid advances on the basis of Nazi ideology and programme. The German minority was widely recruited for intelligence work, defection of conscripts was organized, secret lists of the German population were compiled and extensive propaganda for a neutralization of the Pomeranian corridor was carried on. Thanks to secret credits from Nazi banking and credit institutions, German banks and cooperatives in Poland were competing effectively with Polish institutions of this kind. After the signing of the Munich Agreement, one proceeded to train sabotage groups which took an active part in the September campaign on the side of the aggressor. The activeness of Germany's minority policy which, until 1933 in particular, enjoyed the sympathy of British and American circles, and of a part of the French Left as well, aroused apprehensions of the French Government which saw in it an instrument of disintegration of the system of Versailles. These apprehensions were clearly presented by Briand at the 9th General Assembly of the League of Nations in September 1928: "The problem of minorities should not become a lever designed to unsettle governments and to disturb peace, it should not be a threat hanging over us. It ought to be regulated in an objective and serious way [...] but certain mass manifestations should not, under the veil of most respectable feelings, reveal tendencies to bring about profound changes that may create causes of new dangers".²²

In the Soviet policy, there was interest in the situation of the Ukrainian and Byelorussian population. In Poland, the national liberation movement of the ethnic population of the Eastern Borderlands, was treated as a potential ally of the revolutionary movement. The economic and cultural development of the

²¹ *Ibidem*, 1933, No. 6, p. 719.

²² *Ibidem*, 1928, No. 5, p. 611.

Soviet Byelorussia and Ukraine exerted a vital stimulating influence on the national movement of the Slav minorities in Poland. In the '30s, this influence was reduced.

The activity of the Soviet nationality policy, subordinated in the first stage to the strategy of a European revolution and, later on, to the defence of the system of Versailles, met on the part of the Polish policy with severe reprisals against the revolutionary movement in the so-called Eastern Borderlands, with financial and political support lent to anti-Soviet unions of the emigrés, with attempts at organizing the so-called Promethean movement aimed at breaking up the unity of Soviet nations and at wooing rightist Ukrainian and Byelorussian anti-Soviet organizations that declared their allegiance to the Polish State.

Poland's withdrawal from the international system of control over the functioning of the so-called Little Treaty of Versailles, was connected above all with the accession of the Soviet Union to the League of Nations. The Government feared that the Soviet diplomacy might utilize that Treaty in the international arena in the interest of the Ukrainian and Byelorussian minorities.²¹ One might note on the side that the above-named Treaty curtailed considerably Poland's sovereignty. Under the guise of protection of minorities, it provided the possibility of interference in the internal situation of the country. Moreover, the Treaty was a unilateral international obligation imposed on the newly-formed states by the Congress of Paris. The tendency to render those obligations universal, represented by Czechoslovakia, Poland and Rumania, met with a favourable response on the part of the democratic opinion in Europe.

SITUATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

The Ukrainian population was among the best organized Slav minorities in the Poland of the inter-war period. Census statistics showed numbers of Ukrainians in Poland lower than the actual figures. On the other hand, rightist Ukrainian organizations tendentiously heightened those figures. According to the estimates of Ukrainian political leaders, about 7 million Ukrainians lived in the 20s within the boundaries of the 2nd Republic; they were concentrated in Eastern Galicia, Volhynia and southern Polesie, an area totalling 137 thousand sq.km. (53 thous. sq.mi.). The census based on the subjective criterion of national consciousness showed 4,319 thousand Ukrainians, the 1931 census based on the criterion of language — 4,442 thousand; in September 1939, the number of Ukrainians in Poland, according to estimates, exceeded 5 million.²⁴ In 1931, Ukrainians accounted for 68.4% of the total population in the voivodship of Volhynia, for 68.9% in the

²¹ Cf. W. Michowicz, *Walka dyplomacji polskiej przeciwko traktatowi mniejszościowemu w Lidze Narodów w r. 1934* [*The Struggle of the Polish Diplomacy against the Minority Treaty in the League of Nations in 1934*], Łódź 1963.

²⁴ Cf. A. Krysiński, *Liczba i rozmieszczenie Ukraińców w Polsce* [*The Number and Disposition of Ukrainians in Poland*], "Sprawy Narodowościowe," 1928, No. 12; D. Lewicki, *Obecne położenie polityczne i dążenia narodu ukraińskiego* [*The Present Political Situation of the Ukrainian People*], Warszawa 1931.

voivodship of Stanislawov, for 45.5% in the voivodship of Tarnopol, for 34.1% in the voivodship of Lvov.²⁵ The Ukrainians did not constitute a majority of the urban population in the area of their habitation. Predominating in the towns of Eastern Galicia, Volhynia and southern Polesie, was the Jewish population and, less numerous than it, the Polish population.

The social structure of the urban Ukrainian population was dominated by the proletariat employed in the processing and oil industries and by lower classes of white-collar workers (the Greek-Catholic and Orthodox clergy, teachers from private schools, functionaries of the Ukrainian cooperative organizations and banks). There existed also a small group of Ukrainian landed proprietors and of bigger peasant landowners that have grown into the capitalist market. Dominating in the Ukrainian countryside were small holders and owners of medium-size farms; they felt the domination of the Polish — less frequently Ukrainian — manor, the burden of State and local-government taxes, and the competition of the Polish settlers' farms. The Ukrainian countryside, affected especially hard by war devastation,²¹ constituted a huge reservoir of free manpower that was unable to move off to industry, handicraft and trade. In spite of the difficulties of emigration, in the years 1927 - 1938 alone, about 150 thousand Ukrainians emigrated from Poland, mainly to Canada, Argentine and France. In the same period, about 40 thousand Ukrainians went to Germany and Latvia for seasonal work.²⁷

As regards the trend of evolution of the agrarian structure in the Ukrainian countryside, the research done by Mieczysław Mieszczankowski²⁸ showed that the process of deconcentration of land ownership had gained clear prevalence there. As a result of agrarian overpopulation, the number of semi-proletarian farms (0 to 2 ha. or 0 to 5 acres) and of petty farms (2 to 5 ha. or 5 to 12 acres) was growing with particular rapidity. These farms were dominating in the agrarian structure.

The Ukrainian countryside in Poland had a relatively well developed cooperative movement which in the inter-war period was the economic basis of the Ukrainian political, cultural and educational life. The number of cooperatives increased from 537 in 1912 to about 4 thousand in 1939. By 1936, nearly 550 thousand Ukrainian peasants belonged to cooperatives of various types. The number of Ukrainian workers and white-collar workers, members of cooperatives, exceeded

tion and the Aspirations of the Ukrainian People], "Natio," 1927, No. 1/2; L. Wasilewski, *Istotna liczba Ukraińców w Polsce* [*The Actual Number of Ukrainians in Poland*], "Sprawy Narodowościowe," 1927, No. 3.

²⁵ MRS, 1939, p. 23, table 17.

²¹ The number of buildings destroyed in the course of World War One amounted to 196.5 thousand in the voivodship of Volhynia, 231.5 thousand in the voiv. of Tarnopol, 128.8 thousand in the voiv. of Stanislawov, 147.5 thousand in the voiv. of Lvov. *Polska w liczbach* [*Poland in Figures*]..., p. 17.

²⁷ MRS, 1939, p. 53, table 20.

²⁸ Cf. M. Mieszczankowski, *Struktura agrarna Polski międzywojennej* [*The Agrarian Structure of Poland in the Inter-war Period*], Warszawa 1960. pp. 157 - 189.

at that time 21 thousand.²¹ Watching over the development of Ukrainian education were more than 3,000 agencies of the "Prosvita" cultural and educational association. The Polish State did not fully abide in relation to Ukrainians by the obligations it had undertaken by signing the Little Treaty of Versailles, the obligations fixed in the articles of the Constitution, the Law on the autonomy of Eastern Galicia, or even the School Law of 1924. This was illustrated by the situation in the Ukrainian school system.²⁰ Only a small percentage of Ukrainian children could attend Ukrainian schools. Those schools were gradually abolished in spite of dramatic children's strikes and of the results of school plebiscite. Teachers of Ukrainian nationality were being removed from school inspectorates. In the obligatory school textbooks, a biased interpretation of the history of the Ukrainian people and of Polish-Ukrainian conflicts was maintained. In the school year 1938/1939, there were in Poland only 461 elementary schools with instruction in Ukrainian. In 1910/1911 there had been 2,496 such schools, and in 1924/1925 — 917. Of mixed schools there were 3,064 in 1937/1938, and they were attended by 473.4 thousand pupils.²¹ Ukrainian students accounted for about 5% of the total number of students in the inter-war Poland. In view of the difficulties in establishing a Ukrainian university in Lvov, an underground university existed in that city while a part of the Ukrainian youth studied at the universities of Prague, Vienna, Berlin and Paris. In the Poland of the period between the two World Wars, Ukrainians had no public secondary schools receiving State or local-government grants. Private Ukrainian secondary schools supported themselves on grants from cooperatives and on private contributions.

The complete Polonization of State and local-government administration in the south-eastern voivodships constituted a flagrant violation of the legal order.

The animation of political life brought about the development of the Ukrainian press. In 1937, 125 Ukrainian periodicals were appearing, including 60 of general informative character, 19 religious ones, 17 scientific and 11 economic.²²

After 1930, four main currents of the Ukrainian political movement crystallized definitely in Poland. The current of bourgeois nationalism had the strongest influence. Its legal representation was the Ukrainian National Democratic Union (UNDO), established in July 1926. The forerunner of this organization was the Ukrainian National Labour Party which, after the declaration of the Council of Ambassadors concerning Eastern Galicia, passed from negating Polish stateshood and supporting the emigré Pietrusiewicz government, to advocating political realism and national unification on the principles of social solidarism. The UNDO fought against the Ukrainian revolutionary movement, propagated anti-communism and anti-Sovietism. In their criticism of Poland's policy, the UNDO laid particular stress on the institution of government commissioners appointed to rural communes, the School Law of 1924, and the discriminatory credit and finance prac-

²¹ MRS, 1938, p. 109, table 21.

²⁰ Cf. P. Łysia k, op. cit.

²¹ MRS, 1939, p. 329, table 15.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 345, table 9.

tices against Ukrainian economic institutions.³³ The UNDO did not boycott the Sejm and Senate elections. In spite of the internal dissension and constant secessions, the UNDO went for a limited cooperation with the left liberal wing of the Piłsudski camp, especially at the turn of 1934/1935. In September 1939, in spite of the pressure by nationalistic extremists, inspired and financed by the Nazi government, the UNDO supported Poland's defensive efforts. The Ukrainian Union of Volhynia, a member of the Non-Party Block for Cooperation with the Government (BBWR), was an organization more loyalistic than the UNDO.

The illegal movement of nationalistic extremism, with a clear fascist character and an anti-Polish and anti-Soviet orientation, was represented by the Ukrainian Military Organization (UWO) and the Ukrainian Nationalists' Organization (UON). The extremist Ukrainian movement was carrying on a broad action of terrorism and sabotage, making use of school fighting-squads in Gdańsk, in Berlin and other German cities.³⁴ A limited support was being lent to the above-named movement by the governments of Czechoslovakia and Lithuania.

This is what the bourgeois Ukrainian press had to say about the aims of the UWO's action in 1930: "The purpose of such partial performance is to spread in an organized manner unrest in the country and panic amidst the Polish population, to break the spirit of expansion of the Polish element, to sow among the Poles disbelief in the effectiveness of the protection that State authorities may offer against attacks of the Ukrainian element both at present and in the future, and to exert a psychological influence on the masses of Ukrainian population [...]"³⁵

In the period of intensified revisionist action of the German government in 1930, the Ukrainian terrorists organized 2,220 acts of sabotage by setting fire to estates and farms and destroying the system of communications and transportation. The Polish authorities responded to this action by a brutal pacification of Eastern Galicia in the course of which 1,739 people were arrested. Out of that number, 1,143 were brought before the courts, charged — among other things — with illegal possession of a large quantity of arms. Predominating among those arrested were students and secondary school pupils, farmers, artisans, priests and employees of Ukrainian cooperatives. In connection with the pacification, the UON launched a broad action of submitting petitions to the League of Nations and to many European governments.³⁶ The pacification action was resumed on a broader scale in 1938; it was led by Gen. Gustaw Paszkiewicz. The effects of this operation included the destruction, with the help of combat engineers, of 120 Ukrainian churches and chapels; this was done within the framework of revindicating post-Uniate property.³⁷

³³ "Sprawy Narodowościowe," 1928, No. 6, p. 724.

³⁴ A. Torzecki, *Kwestia ukraińska w polityce III Rzeszy 1933 - 1945* [*The Ukrainian Question in the Policy of the Third Reich 1933 - 1945*], typescript, Warszawa 1969.

³⁵ "Ukraina," No. 19, 17 October 1930.

³⁶ "Sprawy Narodowościowe," 1931, No. 1, pp. 93 - 96.

³⁷ W. Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski* [*Recent Political History of Poland*], London 1967, pp. 821 - 828.

The expansion of Polish nationalism in that period found expression in the policy of small ethnic groups promoting regional separatism among the Hutsuli and the Lemki, and in forming circles and nests of "yeomen" which numbered 530 thousand people in the beginning of 1939.

The third current, of the democratic Left, with relatively small influence, was represented by the Ukrainian Social-Democratic Party and by the Ukrainian Social-Radical Party. The left wings of these parties went for cooperation with the communists. These parties supported cooperation with the PPS, with the Polish class-oriented trade-union movement; they advocated a programme of land reform without compensation, and of struggle on two fronts: against Polish nationalism and against the nationalism of Ukrainian extremists. In September 1939, these parties stood up for the defence of the attacked Polish statehood.

The fourth current was connected with the activity of the Communist Party of Eastern Galicia, later transformed into the Communist Party of Western Ukraine. The main legal transmission of the party was the Ukrainian Peasants' and Workers' Socialist Union (Sel-Rob), active in the years 1927-1928. The communists proclaimed a programme of internationalist cooperation with the Soviet Union and with Polish and Jewish revolutionary masses, they struggled for the right to self-determination and unification of all Ukrainian territories with the Soviet Ukraine.

The Polish administrative and repressive apparatus fought against all manifestations of the Ukrainian revolutionary movement which it treated as subversive and detrimental to the State.

With the Byelorussian population, the sense of national separateness was much less developed than that of the Ukrainian population. This resulted, among other things, from a social structure full of class relics. The national movement among the Byelorussians was developing under the influence of the Polish democratic and socialist thought and of the Russian revolution. According to the census of 1921 and the corrections to it, the number of Byelorussians in Poland amounted to 1,480 thousand; the census of 1931 showed only 1,500 thousand Byelorussians, including the so-called local inhabitants. The area of Byelorussian majority consisted of two parts: one was situated to the North of Volhynia and comprised 12 districts with a total area of 42 thousand sq.km. (16 thous. sq.mi.), the other part comprised the districts of Dżisna, Dunilowicze and Wilejka, with a total area of 12.4 thousand sq.km. (4.8 thous. sq.mi.). More than 90% of the Byelorussian were Orthodox.¹⁸ An insignificant percentage of workers and petty bourgeoisie, almost total absence of intelligentsia and landed gentry, predominance of the peasants to an extent unknown in other nationality groups — these were the features of the social structure of the Byelorussians.

Characterizing that social structure, A. Sujkowski wrote: "This element is an even more uniform mass without social differentiation than the Ukrainians. The Byelorussian population even in the towns engages in agriculture, artisans are

¹⁸ A. Sujkowski, *Polska niepodległa [Independent Poland]*. Warszawa 1926, p. 27.

scarce and Byelorussian small trade hardly exists. Prior to the war, Byelorussian intelligentsia... did not exist at all. A Catholic Byelorussian, when leaving the peasant class, became a Pole, an Orthodox became a Russian.”³⁹ As a consequence of the extensive character of farming, prevailing in the agrarian structure of the Byelorussian countryside were small and medium-sized farms feebly rooted in the capitalist market;⁴⁰ they were cultivating natural forms of exchange, typical to pre-capitalist systems. It was a symptomatic fact that in the eastern voivodships, where Byelorussians constituted a large percentage of the population, barely every fourth farm of the 15 - 50 ha. (37 - 124 acres) size employed permanently hired labour. The fact that Poles predominated among the big landowners gave to nationality conflicts a distinct class colouring. In the big estates of Polesie and the regions of Novogrudok and Vilna, extensive methods of farming were used; they consisted in maintaining the traditional structure of land (a relatively low percentage of arable land) and in spare use of agricultural machines.

The weakness of the Byelorussian national-liberation movement was reflected in the extent of its organization. Byelorussian cooperatives and banking were so weak that they were not taken into consideration in statistics at all. Of a broader character was the Byelorussian movement — both organized and spontaneous — in favour of a land reform. There was not one Byelorussian party or organization that would not advance the demand of land reform.

Since the process of Polonization was making relatively fast progress — especially with regard to the young generation — through the intermediary of the Roman-Catholic church, the school and the military service, as well as through pressures exerted by the State and local-government administration, the organized Byelorussian movement attached particular attention to the maintaining of the Byelorussian school. The Byelorussian school system was developing dynamically in the years 1919 - 1921. Two hundred Byelorussian schools were registered in 1921 with the Department of Education of so-called Central Lithuania. After the School Law of 31 July 1924 was introduced, it was permitted to maintain only 27 schools with instruction in Polish and with Byelorussian as a part of the curriculum, and 15 bilingual Polish and Byelorussian schools. The Polish authorities turned down most applications for the opening of Byelorussian schools on the ground that the proposed teachers did not have the required qualifications.⁴¹ Fighting, especially in the field of local government, against the veiled and open forms of discrimination of the Byelorussian language in schools, was the Byelorussian School Association. The effects of this struggle were meagre. By 1938, the Byelorussian schools were practically abolished. There existed, however, in the same year 44 elementary schools with Byelorussian as one of the subjects. Only 8,200 children attended

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

⁴⁰ Cf. M. Mieszczankowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 182 - 185.

⁴¹ W. Świechowski, *Obecny stan szkolnictwa białoruskiego na ziemiach wschodnich* [*The Present Condition of the Byelorussian School System in the Eastern Territories*], “Sprawy Narodowościowe,” 1927, No. 1, pp. 15 - 16.

those schools. Besides, there existed one Byelorussian secondary school and one high school for several hundred children.⁴²

The nationalistic Byelorussian movement in Poland in the inter-war period was a continuation of the activity of the Byelorussian National Committee and of the Council of the Byelorussian People's Republic.⁴³ Recurring to the above-mentioned traditions was the Byelorussian National Council established in 1924. It manifested on the one side anti-communism, on the other side Polonophily. Its social program called for a land reform in the interest of the Byelorussian peasantry, for the opening of 420 Byelorussian schools, for the establishment of a chair of Byelorussian history and culture at the Stefan Batory University in Vilna. In May 1927, the Byelorussian National Party was formed. It advanced a much more radical programme with the main demand of independence for the unified territories of the Byelorussian people. After the abolition of the Byelorussian National Party, the Polonophile current was represented by the Byelorussian Radical Peasant Party, advocating the principle of land reform without compensation. In 1928, this latter party went into self-liquidation.

Alliance to the Polish State was professed by the Byelorussian Peasant Party, formed in 1922 under the name of Peasant Union. It advanced the demands of a State land reform in the interest of Byelorussians, the industrialization of the country, the development of education, and the unification of an "Independent Byelorussia".

In 1924, the Byelorussian Christian Democracy was formed. It was an organization of denominational (Catholic) character, with greater influence. It fought, above all, against the policy of Polonization led by the Archbishop-metropolitan of Vilna, Jałbrzykowski. The party called for land reform without compensation, to include Roman-Catholic and Orthodox church estates as well. In its struggle for an independent people's republic, the Christian Democracy considered the Ukrainian and Lithuanian population as its natural allies.

In October 1927, the Orthodox Byelorussian Democratic Union was formed. It called for the separation of the Orthodox church from the State in order to render easier the implementation of the principle of national self-determination. The programme of the new party also emphasized the right to private property, the land reform, free education with instruction in the mother tongue, the introduction of juries, the shortening of military service and the extension of self-government.⁴⁴

After the disintegration of the Byelorussian Christian Democracy in the 30s, the Byelorussian National Committee became the champion of its social programme, in a more radical version, though. The Committee was drawing the attention of

⁴² MRS, 1939, p. 319, table 6.

⁴³ Cf. F. Jeremicz, *Białorusini, ich obecne położenie polityczne i ich dążenia* [The Byelorussians, Their Present Political Situation and Their Aspirations], "Natio," 1927, No. 1/2.

⁴⁴ P. Trejdenski, *Białoruskie stronnictwa polityczne w Polsce i ich ideologia* [The Byelorussian Political Parties in Poland and Their Ideology], "Sprawy Narodowościowe," 1936, No. 5/6, pp. 513 - 543.

the public opinion to the dangers resulting from preferences shown to Polish military colonization. It opposed vigorously the Polonization of the young generation of Byelorussians, carried out especially by the school, the Catholic church and the local self-government in which Polish settlers and landowners predominated.⁴⁵ A considerable part of the leaders of the Byelorussian National Committee boycotted the anti-democratic Sejm elections of 1935 and 1938.

The revolutionary Left, represented by the illegal Communist Party of Western Byelorussia and in the years 1925 - 1928 by the Byelorussian Peasants' and Workers' Union "Hromada," had a very strong influence among the poor Byelorussian peasants. Prior to its abolition by the administration, the "Hromada" has a membership of 87 thousand.

The revolutionary movement emphasized that it was the spokesman of the peasants' class interests and of the Byelorussian popular culture. It carried on a struggle for land reform without compensation, for the liquidation of the Polish colonization and military settlement, for free popular education, for a broad self-government and for the nationalization of industry. The declaration issued by the Sejm deputies of the Byelorussian Peasants' and Workers' Parliamentary Club proclaimed: "The only way to satisfy our demands is to withdraw from our territories the Polish police, administration and military troops, to give the Byelorussian people the possibility to pronounce on their own fate in accordance with the principle of national self-determination".⁴⁶ The above-mentioned Club took part in the International Peasant Congress organized by communists, it cooperated with the PPS-Left, with the Peasant Self-Aid and the Sel-Rob.

The Polish administration was gradually dissolving all the organizations and transmissions of the Byelorussian revolutionary Left under the pretext that they were preparing an armed rising.

The Lithuanian population which, according to the 1921 census, numbered 76 thousand people, inhabited the border territories of the voivodships of Vilna, Novogrudok and Białystok.⁴⁷ This was a predominantly peasant population, with a small percentage of intelligentsia. Subordinating themselves to the Lithuanian government, these people largely boycotted the Polish statehood. They straddled the unlawful character of Gen. Żeligowski's "rebellion" and exposed the Polonization practices of the Meysztowicz administration in Vilna: the persecution of the Lithuanian intelligentsia and students, the curtailing of the Lithuanian popular school system, the difficulties in acquiring Polish citizenship and the forcing of Lithuanian teachers into emigration.

The 1920s saw a development of the Lithuanian cultural and educational movement in Poland. Four periodicals and one fortnightly review were published in Vilna. Three educational societies, two secondary schools and one teachers' college were also working there. A total of 100 Lithuanian elementary schools

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, 1933, No. 4, p. 395.

⁴⁶ "Sprawy Narodowościowe," 1930, No. 5/6, p. 535.

⁴⁷ E. Maliszewski, *Ludność litewska w państwie polskim [The Lithuanian Population in the Polish State]*, "Sprawy Narodowościowe," 1927, No. 1, p. 14.

existed in Poland in 1927. The Provisional Lithuanian Committee and the Lithuanian Farmers' Union, active in Vilna, were a substitute of national representation.⁴⁸ The persecutions of the Lithuanian population in Poland were exploited, by right of retortion, by the Lithuanian Government to justify the often drastic restrictions affecting the Polish minority in Lithuania.⁴⁹

The German minority is probably the one our historiography has examined most thoroughly.⁵⁰ According to the census of 1921, the number of Germans in Poland amounted to 1,059 thousand, in 1931 to 741,0 or 2.3% of Poland's total population. The percentage of Germans in the voivodship of Pomerania was 10.1, in Silesia — 7%, in the voivodship of Poznań — 7.4%, in the voivodship of Łódź — 4.9%.

As can be seen from Table 1, an important place in the social structure of the German minority in Poland was taken by the bourgeoisie. As late as 1936, 51% of the capital functioning in the industry of Upper Silesia was in German hands. The textile industry in Bielsko-Biała, Łódź, Pabianice, Zduńska Wola and Tomaszów was also dominated to a large extent by the German capital. In 1921, 36.2% of all larger farms in Wielkopolska (Great-Poland) and 43.7% in Gdańsk Pomerania were owned by the German minority. The agricultural processing industry existing there was in 70% in the hands of the German minority. In 1921, Germans owned there 90% of the bigger land property.

Beside industry and big land property, the excellently organized cooperative movement using credits from the German Government, was an important economic basis for the nationalistic German movement in Poland. In 1937, cooperatives had 57 thousand members, out of which 80% represented the peasant class while the remaining 20% were office workers, artisans, workers and tradesmen. The strong economic position of the German cooperative movement in the inter-war Poland made it an organization attractive also to Poles living in areas of its influence.⁵¹

⁴⁸ D. Osejko, *Przeszłość i teraźniejszość Litwinów w Wileńszczyźnie* [*The Past and the Present of Lithuanians in the Region of Vilna*], "Natio," 1927, No. 1/2.

⁴⁹ Cf. P. Łossowski, *Problem mniejszości narodowych na przykładzie państw bałtyckich 1919-1940* [*The Problem of National Minorities on the Example of the Baltic States 1919-1940*], unauthorized paper, Warszawa 1969, Library of the Historical Institute, Polish Academy of Sciences.

⁵⁰ Cf.: M. Cygański, *Mniejszość niemiecka w Polsce centralnej w latach 1918-1939* [*The German Minority in Central Poland in the Years 1918-1939*], Łódź 1962; T. Kowalak, *Spółdzielczość niemiecka na Pomorzu 1920-1933* [*The German Cooperative Movement in Pomerania 1920-1933*], Warszawa 1965; J. Krasuski, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie 1926-1938* [*Polish-German Relations 1926-1938*], Poznań 1964; S. Potocki, *Położenie mniejszości niemieckiej w Polsce 1918-1938* [*The Situation of the German Minority in Poland 1918-1938*], Gdańsk 1969; R. Stankiewicz, *Mniejszość niemiecka w województwie śląskim w latach 1922-1933* [*The German Minority in the Voivodship of Silesia in the Years 1922-1933*], Katowice 1965; A. Szefer, *Mniejszość niemiecka w Polsce i w Czechosłowacji w latach 1933-1938* [*The German Minority in Poland and in Czechoslovakia in the Years 1933-1938*], Katowice-Kraków 1967; M. Wojciechowski, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie 1933-1938* [*Polish-German Relations 1933-1938*], Poznań 1965.

⁵¹ MRS, 1938, p. 109, table 21.

A modern social structure, the relative stability of which was protected by the Little Treaty of Versailles and by the Geneva Convention, provided the German minority with a basis for organizing their own educational system.

In 1939, there were in Poland 394 German elementary schools and 203 schools with German and Polish as the languages of instruction. A total of 72.8 thousand pupils attended the above-mentioned types of schools. The privileged situation of the German children appeared clearly in secondary schools. "While German children of 13 yearly age-groups accounted for 2.8% of the total, the German minority had in the 20s: 5% of all secondary schools, 5.4% of the classes and 4.7% of the pupils."⁵²

The German minority in Poland had a well-developed system of press information in their native tongue. In 1932, there appeared in Poland 106 periodicals, including 45 of political character, 32 of religious character, and 17 of economic and professional character. In that year, there was one German paper for every 7 thousand Germans, one Hebrew or Yiddish paper for every 12 thousand Jews, and one Ukrainian paper for 56 thousand Ukrainians.⁵¹

The process of integration of Poland would have been impossible without restraining the economic and cultural influence of the Germans in Western Poland. These restrictions, particularly intensive in the years 1919 - 1922, 1924 - 1932 and 1938 - 1939, met with stout resistance. The Poles in Western Poland and partly in Central Poland appeared in a double role in the face of the German minority, immigratory in those territories. On the one hand, the Poles were the majority and constituted the subject of political power, on the other hand, however, independence notwithstanding, they were the object of exploitation and oppression on the part of the German capital and its functionaries. The petition action in the League of Nations, interventions in the Mixed Commission for Upper Silesia, and direct pressures of the German Government, hampered effectively the process of Polonization of the economic life in Silesia, Wielkopolska (Great-Poland) and Pomerania.

In the political life of the German minority in Poland, a role of the first rank was played by three centres of disposition subordinated to the Berlin Government: Bydgoszcz, Katowice and Łódź.

In Pomerania, the organization that integrated the German minority was the *Deutschtumsbund zur Wahrung der Minderheitsrechte* (DB), founded on 8 May 1921. This organization displayed a broad activity in the press, social, school, educational and cultural, welfare and settlement fields. In August 1923, the functions of the DB dissolved by the Polish authorities, were taken over by the organization *Deutsche Vereinigung im Seym und Senat für Posen, Netzegau und Pommerellen* (DV).

German social-democrats from Wielkopolska (Great-Poland) and Pomerania

⁵² S. Potocki, op. cit. ..., p. 229.

⁵³ K. Kaschnitz, *Prasa niemiecka w Polsce* [*The German Press in Poland*], "Sprawy Narodowościowe," 1938, No. 6, p. 622.

stayed outside of the DV in which they saw a coalition of rightist and nationalistic forces. They showed interest in the cooperation with the PPS.

In Upper Silesia, the political differentiation that had existed there until 1918, persisted in principle in the 20s. Competing for influence among the German population there were the *Deutsche Sozialistische Arbeitspartei* (DSAP), the *Deutsche Partei* (DP), the *Deutsche Katholische Volkspartei* (DKVP). The organization that integrated the German minority group in Upper Silesia was the *Volksbund* (VB) formed in Katowice on 8 November 1921.

The DKVP in Upper Silesia had considerable influence among the German workers, artisans and small shopkeepers but it was the *Deutsche Partei* that was the exponent of the *Volksbund's* political line. The most important statutory objective of the DP was to unite all Germans irrespective of their religion, social position and opinions, into one national community. The DP propagated extreme German nationalism and that is why it was easy for the Nazis to get control of its branches and through them to launch the offensive of National Socialism in the Polish Upper Silesia.

The German social-democrats whose influence in Poland was relatively small outside of the so-called Free Trade Unions, attacked together with the PPS the German bourgeois parties.

In the voivodships of Central Poland, the leading German organization was the *Deutscher Volksverband*, established in 1924.

All the German parties supported the revisionist action of the Weimar Republic and thus, in spite of the declaration of allegiance to the Polish State, they carried on propaganda for a renewed annexation of territories "rent" from Germany and making part of Polish State.

A great campaign for the ideological intergration of the German minority in Poland in the National-Socialist spirit was waged by the *Jungdeutsche Partei* which was often moderated in its radicalism by the Nazi government, especially after the signing of the Polish-German non-aggression pact. This integration soon yielded important results.

The social-democratic and Christian-democratic movement of the German minority in Poland were of minor importance after 1936. Overtly working in Poland from 1934 were agencies of the NSDAP which inspired sabotage activities. After March 1939, their action assumed large proportions. In the campaign of September 1939, excellently armed German diversion troops come out against the regular troops of the Polish Army and against the Polish organizations of civil defence in many regions of the voivodship of Pomerania, Wielkopolska (Great-Poland) and Upper Silesia.

The influence of the Polish Communist Party among the German minority in Poland was relatively small.

The Jewish minority in Poland distinguished itself from other minorities both by its social and occupational structure and by the enormous political differentiation and the degree of organization. In the early 20s, the Jews accounted for the following percentage of the total population in various countries of Central Eu-

rope:⁵⁴ in Poland — 10.4%, in Lithuania — 8.0%, in Hungary — 6.0%, in Rumania — 4.7%, in Latvia — 4.0%, in Czechoslovakia — 2.5%, in Russia — 2.4%, in Germany — 1.0%.

In the 30s, the Jewish population accounted for nearly 30% of all the inhabitants of Polish towns, in the eastern voivodships the figure reached 50%.

The Jewish population had a predominating position in trade (52.5% of the total number of people employed in trade). In the central voivodships, the percentage of Jews in trade was in excess of 58, in the East — 75, in the South — 65, and in the West — 7%. The Jews also constituted the strongest nationality group in handicraft and owned 40% of the total number of shops. Beside the German bourgeoisie, the Jewish bourgeoisie often played a pioneering role in the industrialization of Poland's territories. Among the so-called independent (owners of industrial and craft shops), the percentage of the Jewish population in 1921 was as follows: in paper industry — 84.7%, in food industry — 68.9%, in chemical industry — 68.9%, in mining — 43.4%, in power industry — 40.8%, in textile industry — 39.6%, in clothing industry — 38.5%.⁵⁵

Because of difficulties of employment in public institutions, the Jewish intelligentsia concentrated in the professions (doctors, lawyers).

The Jewish proletariat, accounting for one fifth of the total community, was scattered in thousands of small industrial establishments (mainly in the clothing, food and textile industries), in trade and craft shops lacking modern machines and modern labour legislation.

The high percentage of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois population as well as of intelligentsia and white-collar workers among the Jews, and the fact that their income standards (as compared with the total population) were higher than average, made it possible for the nationalistic parties to give a social colouring to anti-Semitic ideology. For example, the National Democracy in their campaign for the introduction of nationality control (*numerus clausus*) in institutions of higher learning, exploited the fact, that in the 20s the Jewish youth accounted for one fourth of all those studying in secondary and higher schools.

In like manner, the boycott of Jewish shops and craft workshops inspired by the National Democracy, issued from economic motives. In the inter-war period, the Jewish population in Poland displayed broad religious, cultural and educational activities. The boards and Executive Committees of the Jewish communities played the role of leading institutions of national and cultural autonomy. There also existed an extensive system of Jewish schools, both religious and lay. In 1938, there were 226 schools with instruction in Polish and Yiddish or Hebrew, and as many schools with instruction only in Hebrew and Yiddish. These schools were maintained chiefly from private contributions and form grants from Jewish communities. In the late 30s, there were in Poland 20 Jewish theatres including one opera house. The number of press publications reached 130; out of these, 94 were general in-

⁵⁴ A. Sujkowski, *Polska niepodległa [Independent Poland...]* ..., p. 30.

⁵⁵ "Sprawy Narodowościowe," 1929, No. 1, p. 185. Cf. G. Gliksmann, *L'aspect économique de la question juive en Pologne*, Paris 1930.

formation papers, 11 scientific periodicals and only 7 religious journals.⁵¹ In the rich political life, abounding in permanent secessions and splits, four main currents can be distinguished.

The first was the orthodox religious current represented above all by the Agudas Israel, an organization of religious conservatism, of an international character.

The Jewish national movement, the most dynamic in the inter-war Poland, was divided into two factions: the Folkists and the Zionists. "The Folkists — Aleksander Hafftko wrote — consider themselves autochthons whose only motherland is the country of their residence and who proclaim that complete national self-fulfilment, both in the political and in the social and cultural sense, is necessary and indispensable where Jews have settled for centuries".⁵⁷

The Zionists, broken up into many competing organizations and fractions, propagated the idea of the Jewish national abode. Active among the petty and middle bourgeoisie were orthodox Zionists from the Mizrahi enjoying considerable influence in the Sejm, local self-government and the Jewish communities. Quite influential among the intelligentsia and petty bourgeoisie was the group of Izak Grünbaum who formulated the programme of his fraction in the following way: "The Jews in Poland are not struggling for the right to unite with the ruling nation but for the right to preserve their national individuality and for its development. This is what differentiates the Polish and East-European Jewry from that of Western Europe".⁵⁸

The third influential faction were the so-called Zionists-Revisionists who, unlike the Grünbaum group, advocated collaboration with the *Sanacja* regime. According to the founder of that movement, Włodzimierz Żabotyński, beside the anti-Semitism of ideas, there existed the anti-Semitism of things, i.e. the objective events and situations which force the Jews to build their own state in Palestine. In the spring of 1934, the World Union of Zionists-Revisionists launched in Poland and in other European countries a great political campaign for the abolition of immigration restrictions and in support of the Palestinian solution.⁵⁹

Active among workers, cottage-workers, and impoverished artisans and white-collar workers, was the Poalej Zion, divided into two fractions and seeking to offer a synthesis of Zionism and socialism.

All the political currents named above were fought by the Bund which considered Zionist plans of building a Jewish state in Palestine as a nationalistic fantasy. The Bund called for the introduction of national and cultural autonomy for the Jews. In the years of depression and of the imminent threat of fascism, the Bund opposed vigorously any coalition policy and fought against the reformism of the PPS towards which it followed the line of "friendly criticism".

⁵¹ MRS, 1939, p. 345, table 9.

⁵⁷ A. Hafftko, *Żydowskie ugrupowania polityczne w Polsce [Jewish Political Groupings in Poland]*, "Sprawy Narodowościowe," 1930, No. 3/4, p. 344.

⁵⁸ "Sprawy Narodowościowe," 1927, No. 1, p. 93.

⁵⁹ Cf. W. Żabotyński, *Państwo żydowskie [The Jewish State]*, Warszawa 1936.

The revolutionary working-class movement won much sympathy among the Jewish minority in Poland. This movement was offering the prospect of overcoming the nationalism of the ruling nation and the nationalisms of the national minorities. In the ranks of that movement there was no room for the feeling of alienation and loneliness, for the necessity of mimetism. An especially great number of Jews joined the KPP (Polish Communist Party) in the years of depression and fascist menace.

In the policy of the changing governments in the two inter-war decades, there was no clearly defined line of conduct in relation to the Jewish minority.

In the years when the framework of Poland's second statehood was being built, the Right was spreading the opinion about the hostile attitude of the Jews towards Poland. The anti-Semitic excesses connected with the election of Narutowicz for President increased the vigilance of the Left. A relaxation of tension occurred in the period of Władysław Grabski's premiership. On 4 July 1925, a protocol on the collaboration of the Jewish Parliamentary Group with the Government in connection with the budget debate, was signed. After the coup of May 1926, further rapprochement took place. Statements made by Prime-minister K. Bartel and other members of the Government repeatedly emphasized understanding for many postulates of the Jewish population. Until Pilsudski's death, the Government cut itself off decidedly from all anti-Semitic excesses inspired mainly by the youth from the National Party and the Camp of Great Poland.

The depression, the Polish-German rapprochement, the growing radicalism of the so-called national movement, and the desire to win over the latter's clientele, brought about a dualism in the Jewish policy of the *Sanacja*. On the one hand, it proclaimed, mainly through the propaganda apparatus of the Camp of National Unification, a programme of nationality regulation, on the other hand it supported the demands of the Zionist movement both at home and in the international forum, seeing in emigration a palliative for tensions in the labour market. In September 1939, all legal Jewish parties took an active part in preparing the defence of the country. The danger of Nazi aggression united all the hitherto political adversaries who were able to analyze the realities soberly.

REMARKS ON THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE VARIOUS NATIONAL MINORITIES

On the initiative of the leaders of the Zionist movement (Grünbaum) and of the German minorities (Hosbach), a political rapprochement between most national minority parties was reached during the elections of 1922. A political bloc was formed which represented a considerable force in the Sejm of the 1st term. That bloc was boycotted by the communists and socialists. In the Constituent Sejm, after the incorporation of Pomerania and of the region of Vilna, the Jewish minority was represented by 11 deputies, the German minority by two deputies. The bloc policy made it possible to bring into the Sejm of the 1st term 81 deputies; out of this number, 35 or 8% of the total number of deputies, represented the Jewish

minority, 12 — the Ukrainians, 11 — the Byelorussians, 17 — the Germans, 6 — other minorities. The campaign waged by the National Democracy in connection with the election of President Narutowicz contributed to a political integration of the Bloc of National Minorities.

After the coup of May 1926, the different attitudes towards the victorious regime brought about a process of disintegration of the Bloc. In 1928, the Bloc started the publication of its own press organ "Natio" which appeared in Polish, German, English and French versions. In the elections to the Sejm in 1922, the Bloc already won only 12.6% of the seats out of the total of 23.8% seats won by national minorities. The orthodoxes, the Aguda and a part of the Zionists gave their support to the list of the Non-Party Bloc for Cooperation with the Government (BBWR), sponsored by the Piłsudski camp. This resulted in a dissipation of the vote of the national minorities which, until 1933 came out solidarily against all forms of discrimination.

The authoritarian regime of Piłsudski treated its attitude, positive on the whole, towards the Jewish minority, as an instrument in its fight against the National Democracy. That is why in the 1930 "Brześć" elections to the Sejm of the 3rd term, the greatest part of the Jewish votes were cast for the BBWR lists. The Bloc of National Minorities ceased to exist.

The discrimination against minority lists found expression in the fact that the minorities which received 14.3% of the total vote, obtained only 7.4% of the seats. By wooing skillfully the leaders of the Jewish bourgeois parties, Piłsudski paralyzed intergroup processes among minority groups; these processes had an objective basis in the deteriorating political situation of the minorities. The victory of Nazism in Germany was an essential factor in the political disintegration of the national minorities which, owing to the anti-democratic electoral law, played but a marginal role in the Sejm elections of 1935 and 1938.

The German minority, orientating itself after the lines of Nazi fascism, launched an anti-Semitic campaign that was joined by nationalistic Ukrainian parties inspired by the German Government.

The struggle against fascism and Piłsudski's authoritarian regime steering towards totalitarianism gave rise to processes of political integration that took place above all within the Jewish, German, Ukrainian and Byelorussian democratic Left. The revolutionary Left (communists) was inspiring those processes within the framework of the policy of a united popular front.

THE PLACE OF NATIONALITY CONFLICTS IN THE POLITICAL LIFE

The social and political system of Poland provided no possibilities for a solution of the problem of national minorities. A more liberal policy might have resulted in avoiding a number of conflicts but it could not have eliminated the sources of those conflicts. Since all the minorities, with the exception of the Jews, were advancing postulates of territorial changes, the condition of a radical solution of

the problems was the return of Poland to the historical area of her national territory and the transfer of the German population from the northern and western territories to Germany.

The nationality conflicts in Poland were largely of a social character and issued from the nationality structure of the big property, of industrial and financial capital, of trade, etc. It was not until the post-war nationalization of the means of production and, consequently, the elimination of many barriers hampering social activity, that chances were created for the overcoming of nationality prejudices which, by force of inertia, still persist, especially in the consciousness of the older generation and which find fuel in the unsolved problem of today's world.

In the inter-war period, the problem of minorities was the source of many internal frictions. On the one hand, it stimulated to activity the social Right which, professing the ideas of a national state, advocated brutal colonization and regulation programmes; on the other hand, it caused the Left and some Centrist parties to seek compromise solutions in the common interest. The struggle among Polish political parties for the methods of solving nationality conflicts went on throughout the whole between the two World Wars period. Those conflicts aggravated Poland's relations with her neighbours and brought about a debasement of her authority in the international forum. The Polish Left was faced with the dramatic dilemma of the alternative choice between a humanist and social position of principle and the defence of the reasons of State. This alternative strengthened the reformist tendencies in the tactics of the political struggle waged by socialists, peasant leaders and democrats.

The nationality problem in Poland was treated by the imperialistic powers and by other states as an instrument of interfering in Poland's internal affairs, a classic instrument of foreign policy. The nationality problem created a particularly difficult situation for the revolutionary movement whose internationalist and pro-Soviet position was branded by the Right as anti-State and anti-national.

Under these circumstances, the chance of enriching cultural values resulting from the fact that many nationalities were living together within one State, could not be turned to advantage. Conflicts predominated over peaceful coexistence, cooperation, tolerance and mutual friendliness.

State integration, sometimes based on forcible Polonization of the Slav minorities in particular, was accompanied by disintegration processes which intensified the nationalism of the majority and the nationalisms of the national minorities.

(Translated by Antoni Szymanowski)