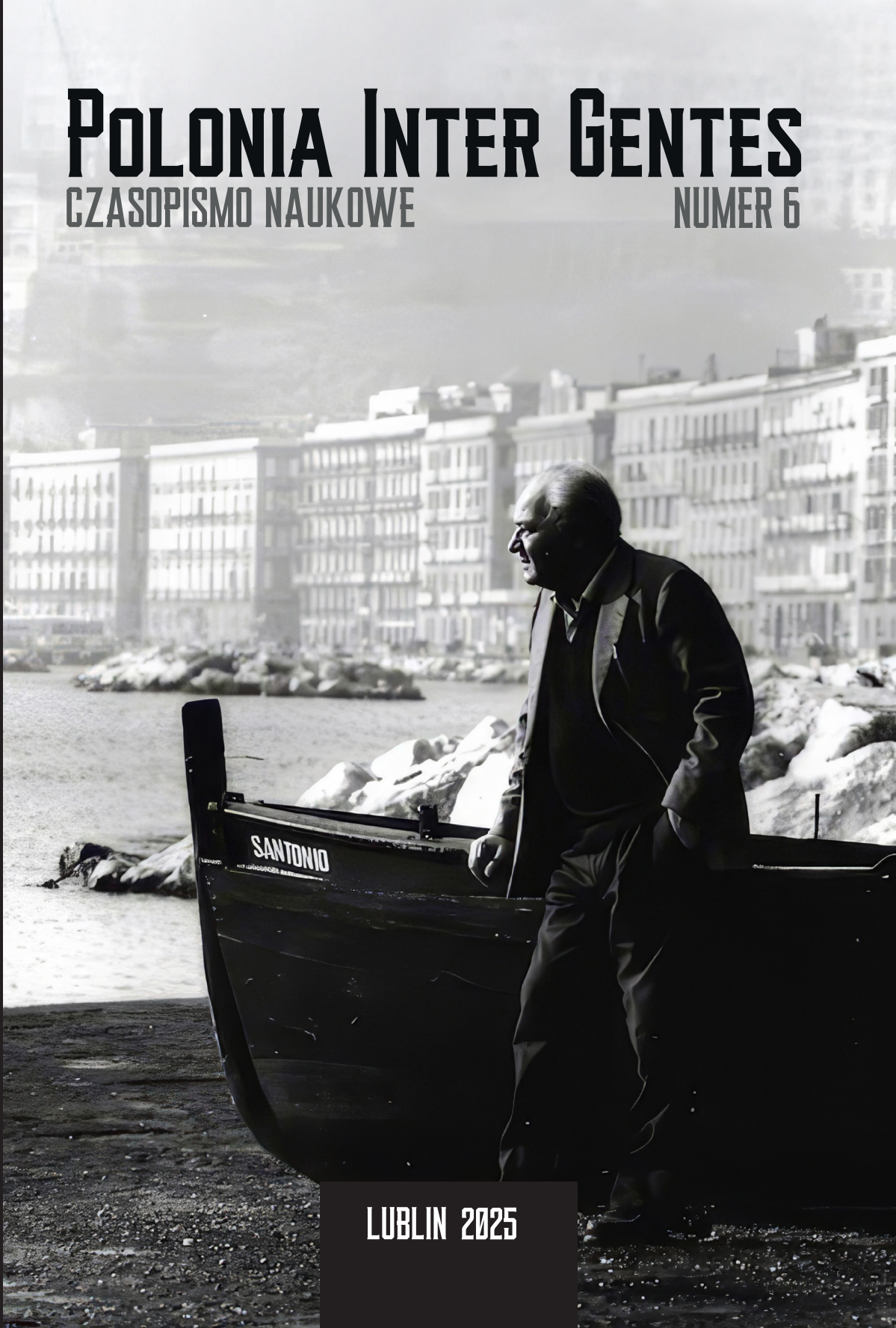
Polonia Inter Gentes

CZASOPISMO NAUKOWE

NUMER 6



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II. MISCELLANEA: WSPOMNIENIA I MATERIAŁY DODATKOWE

Wprowadzenie

Z ogromną radością oddaję w Państwa ręce kolejny, szósty numer *Polonia Inter Gentes*. W tym numerze prezentujemy Państwu wieloaspektowe spojrzenie na twórczość, myśl i kontekst życia Herlinga-Grudzińskiego, otwierając przestrzeń do refleksji nad jego relacją z myślą Benedetta Croce oraz jego rolą jako intelektualnego interpretatora filozofii i historii totalitaryzmu. Tematyka ta zostaje rozwinięta w pierwszych dwóch artykułach autorstwa badaczy z Włoch, którzy odsłaniają wpływy Croce na literaturę i światopogląd Herlinga-Grudzińskiego.

Nie mniej istotne są teksty z dalszych części numeru, które analizują kondycję polskiej diaspory na różnych kontynentach – od Kanady, przez Turcję, po Litwę i Polskę. Artykuły te tworzą ważny kontekst społeczno-kulturowy, ukazując wyzwania, jakie stoją przed polskimi społecznościami na całym świecie. Szczególnie warto zwrócić uwagę na tekst analizujący rolę języka polskiego w Kanadzie, historyczny status polskiej mniejszości w Turcji, zmieniającą się rolę niemieckiej diaspory w Polsce, a także ewolucję politycznej reprezentacji Polaków na Litwie.

Dodatkowo, sekcja *Miscellanea* wzbogaca numer o osobiste wspomnienia Karola Cordella dotyczące Juliusza Chruszczewskiego, a także o pierwszą część artykułu Aldony Jaworskiej poświęconego żołnierzom historii żołnierzy II Korpusu, którzy po wojnie osiedlili się w Kanadzie. Te teksty, pełne pasji i troski o pamięć historyczną, stanowią doskonałe uzupełnienie całego numeru.

Zapraszam do lektury naszego czasopisma, który – mam nadzieję – dostarczy Państwu zarówno intelektualnej satysfakcji, jak i refleksji nad rolą literatury, historii i pamięci w kształtowaniu polskiej tożsamości poza granicami kraju.

Z wyrazami szacunku,
dr Bartosz Czajka
Prezes Instytutu Andersa

I

STUDIA

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Benedetto Croce jako źródło inspiracji literackiej dla Gustawa Herlinga-Grudzińskiego

Sommario

Benedetto Croce non rappresenta per Gustaw Herling-Grudziński un modello „soltanto" in virtù del suo pensiero filosofico, storico e sociale (è ben nota la conoscenza che lo scrittore polacco aveva della *Storia d'Europa nel secolo decimonono* ancora prima dello scoppio della Seconda guerra mondiale), ma assurge anche a fonte di ispirazione letteraria: Croce, infatti, è il protagonista di alcuni racconti di Herling (su tutti, *Il principe costante*), mentre in altri casi suscita e stimola l'interesse di Herling con tematiche che riguardano – principalmente – la città di Napoli e le leggende che la circondano. L'intervento che propongo, dunque, seppure non prescindendo dall'influenza che il pensiero di Croce esercita in generale su Herling, mira a concentrarsi sulla trasfigurazione letteraria di Croce come personaggio/protagonista delle storie dell'autore polacco e su come le passioni da lettore dell'uno si siano tramandate anche all'altro.

Parole chiave: Benedetto Croce, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, letteratura, Napoli, Italia.

Abstrakt

Benedetto Croce stanowi wzór dla Gustawa Herlinga-Grudzińskiego nie tylko ze względu na swoją myśl filozoficzną, historyczną i społeczną (znajomość *Historii Europy w XIX wieku* przez polskiego pisarza jeszcze przed wybuchem II wojny światowej jest powszechnie znana), ale staje się również źródłem literackiej inspiracji: Croce jest bowiem protagonistą niektórych opowiadań Herlinga (przede wszystkim *Księcia Niezłomnego*), podczas gdy w innych przypadkach pobudza on zainteresowanie Herlinga tematami odnoszącymi się – przede wszystkim – do Neapolu i otaczających go legend. Niniejszy artykuł, nie ignorując zatem wpływu, jaki myśl

Crocego wywiera na Herlinga, ma na celu skupienie się na literackiej przemianie Crocego jako bohatera w opowiadaniach polskiego autora oraz na tym, jak namiętności i pasje jednego – jako czytelnika – przekazywały się drugiemu.

Słowa kluczowe: Benedetto Croce, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, literatura, Neapol, Włochy

1. Wstęp. Rozdroże losów

Sposób, w jaki biografia Herlinga splata się z życiem Benedetto Crocego, jest tak zaskakujący, a w pewnym sensie niewiarygodny, że stanowi temat uniwersalny. Herling nie tylko poślubił Lidię Croce, ale inna córka filozofa (Elena) była tłumaczką pierwszego opublikowanego we Włoszech (i po włosku) tekstu Gustawa Herlinga, to znaczy *Guida essenziale della Polonia* (Niezbędny przewodnik po Polsce), który ukazał się w „Aretusa" w 1944 roku[1]. Śmierć filozofa w 1952 roku oznaczała, że on i Herling spotykali się osobiście przy rzadkich okazjach; choć były to jedynie ulotne chwile, to jednak postać i myśl Benedetto Crocego odcisnęły trwałe piętno na osobowości polskiego autora. Jedna z pierwszych okoliczności została opisana w tekście *Willa Tritone. Interludium wojenne we Włoszech* z 1951 roku. Jest wiosna 1944 roku a Herling pojawia się w domu filozofa nieco wcześniej niż zwykle:

> «Tritone» była willą otwartą w najlepszym, europejskim tego słowa znaczeniu. […] Jeszcze dziś rumienię się ze wstydu na wspomnienie dnia, w którym przyszedłszy wcześniej niż zwykle do «Tritone», zostałem bez cienia zażenowania zaproszony przez gospodarzy do jadalni, gdzie podawano właśnie poobiednią kawę. Przy stole siedziało kilkanaście osób, m.in. De Nicola, Sforza i oczywiście Croce. Jak gdyby chodziło o rzecz najzwyklejszą pod słońcem, jak gdybym nie był wcale nikomu niepotrzebnym intruzem, posadzono mnie na wolnym miejscu i rozmowa potoczyła się dalej. A przecież mówiono wówczas o sprawach, które miały zadecydować o przyszłości Włoch, i do dziś nie mogę zrozumieć, jakim cudem obecność polskiego żołnierza-przybłędy nie okazała się dla nikogo z uczestników tego zebrania krępująca.[2]

[1] Elena Croce przetłumaczyła tekst z angielskiego na włoski, gdyż włoski Herlinga nie był wówczas jeszcze adekwatny. Herling opowiada o okolicznościach tej współpracy z Eleną w artykule pt. *A casa Croce. Quando Elena scoprì Pasternak* (W domu Croce. Kiedy Elena odkryła Pasternaka, „Il Mattino", 29 stycznia 2000 r.).

[2] G. Herling-Grudziński, *Willa Tritone. Interludium wojenne we Włoszech*, w: Tenże, *Dzieła zebrane*, t. 10, Kraków 2016, s. 19.

2. Croce jako źródło inspiracji: transpozycja „ideologiczna" bohatera

Poza nieprzewidywalnymi zwrotami losu, które łączą młodego polskiego żołnierza i jego intelektualne odniesienie już od czasów studiów, istnieje inny temat, który im towarzyszy. Ten temat jest rzadziej odwiedzany przez krytyków i naukowców. Mowa o Benedetto Crocem jako źródle literackiej inspiracji dla Herlinga i różnych sposobach, w jakie jest on stosowany. W końcu, jakby zamykając koło, postać neapolitańskiego filozofa jest obecna zarówno w pierwszej, jak i ostatniej z historii napisanych przez Herlinga, w sposób niewyraźny (w przebraniu jednej z postaci) lub poprzez bezpośrednie przywołanie. Między *Księciem Niezłomnym* z 1956 roku a *Wiekiem biblijnym i śmiercią* z 2000 roku (ten ostatni pozostał w formie niekompletnego rękopisu i opublikowany dopiero w 2007 roku) rozwija się cała twórczość narracyjna Herlinga po bolesnym nawiasie *Innego świata*.

Jak zauważa Krystyna Jaworska w swoim komentarzu do *Wieku biblijnego i śmierci*: „Znaczenie myśli Crocego dla Herlinga, widoczne już w *Willi Tritone*, zostaje powtórzone w ostatnim opowiadaniu pisarza, w którym refleksja filozofa na temat śmierci stanowi klucz do narracji"[3]. Refleksja, do której Jaworska się odwołuje, zawarta jest w *Soliloquio* (monologu) Crocego na początku opowiadania:

> […] Straszne byłoby, gdyby człowiek nie mógł w ogóle umrzeć, zamknięty w więzieniu, jakim jest życie, zmuszony do ciągłego powtarzania tego samego rytmu życiowego, który posiadł był jako osoba… Kto sądzi, że *sto morendo* pryzgotowuje nas do śmierci, niech wie, że całe nasze życie jest przygotowaniem do śmierci.[4]

Stąd rozwija się historia głównego bohatera opowieści, Benedetto Spady, znanego jako *Matusalemme* (Matuzalem). Dożyje on 130 lat, stając się symbolem reżimu faszystowskiego właśnie ze względu na swoją długowieczność.

Na faszyzmie skupia się pierwsze z opowiadań Herlinga, wspomniany *Książe Niezłomny*. Autor zawsze podkreślał, że tekst ten stanowił swego rodzaju punkt zwrotny w jego twórczości, świadomy wybór pisarski, (udaną) próbę znalezienia właściwej formy narracji[5].

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[3] K. Jaworska, *Apparati di commento e notizie sui testi*, w: G. Herling-Grudziński, *Etica e letteratura. Testimonianze, diario, racconti,* Milano 2019, s. 1641.

[4] G. Herling-Grudziński, *Wiek biblijny i śmierć,* Warszawa 2007, s. 10.

[5] Zob. M. Śniedziewska, *„Osobiste sprawy i tematy". Gustaw Herling-Grudziński wobec dwudziestowiecznej literatury włoskiej,* Warszawa 2019, https://books.openedition.org/iblpan/16183 (dostęp 30 V 2025).

> […] wybrałem wówczas raz na zawsze, jak sądzę, formę narracji opartą na «ja», czyli opowiadanie w pierwszej osobie. To ma zasadnicze znaczenie. Przecież *Księcia Niezłomnego* nie mogłem napisać po prostu jako obserwator z zewnątrz […]. Ale temat tego opowiadania był moim problemem osobistym. […] każde opowiadanie jest dla mnie problemem osobistym. Niestety, nie mam takiego narracyjnego dystansu do tematu, jakim posługują się noweliści o wyrobionej ręce. Ja piszę o tym, co jest moim osobistym problemem. I z tym jest związana forma opowiadania oparta na «ja». Dlatego nie potrafiłbym przedstawić bohaterów *Księcia Niezłomnego* czy moich innych utworów, tak jakby byli oglądani z zewnątrz, «przez szybę», bez mojego udziału w opowiadanej historii. Muszę być w środku tego, o czym opowiadam, bo to są moje osobiste sprawy i tematy. […] *Książę Niezłomny* jest w moim odczuciu typowym opowiadaniem autobiograficznym.[6]

Autobiograficzna, prywatna i osobista historia, która, jednocześnie, ma charakter ściśle polityczny i historyczny[7]. Centrum opowieści to ideologiczny spór między dwiema formami emigracji. Grudziński przeciwstawia dwa stanowiska znakomitych Włochów wobec faszystowskich władz. Jedno z nich reprezentuje pisarz Guido Battaglia, „[…] który po dwudziestu latach pobytu na emigracji wrócił pod koniec czterdziestego trzeciego roku z Londynu do kraju, do uwolnionego wówczas Neapolu, i odegrał później w Rzymie znaczną rolę w pierwszym roku *Liberazione*"[8]. Pierwowzorami tego bohatera są Ignazio Silone i Gaetano Salvemini.

Gaetano Santoni, inny protagonista opowieści, ze swojej strony wybiera emigrację wewnętrzną: „Przez dwadzieścia lat faszyzmu siedział zamknięty w domu"[9], tak się czyta w opowiadaniu. Herling wzoruje tę postać właśnie na Benedetto Crocego: „[…] pierwowzorem księcia Santoniego, tytułowego *Księcia Niezłomnego*, który w moim utworze reprezentuje emigrację wewnętrzną i broni jej sensu w okresie panowania faszyzmu włoskiego, był Benedetto Croce"[10]. *Książe Niezłomny* w tytule jest zresztą wyraźnym nawiązaniem do dramatu Calderóna de la Barca (*El príncipe constante*) i pośrednim nawiązaniem do moralnej prawości neapolitańskiego filozofa.

Chociaż Battaglia i Santoni mieli wspólny cel – przeciwstawić się systemowi, który przejął ich ojczyznę – droga, która do niego prowadziła, oka-

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[6] W. Bolecki, G. Herling-Grudziński, *Rozmowy w Dragonei,* Warszawa 1997, s. 26.

[7] Zob. tamże, s. 25.

[8] G. Herling-Grudziński, *Książe Niezłomny,* w: Tenże, *Opowiadania zebrane*, t. 1, Warszawa 1999, s. 103.

[9] Tamże, s. 107.

[10] W. Bolecki, G. Herling-Grudziński, *Rozmowy,* s. 6.

zała się tak różna, że między nimi wybuchł swoisty spór ideologiczny: „Był to więc pojedynek o palmę pierwszeństwa dwóch rywalizujących ze sobą arystokracji antyfaszystowskich, z których jedna broniła sensu wygnania z kraju, a druga sensu wygnania w kraju”[11]. Wiele lat później Herling zdaje się zgodzić ze stanowiskiem Santoniego/Benedetto Crocego pomiędzy dwiema stronami tej bitwy ideologicznej:

> Wracając do Crocego – moim zdaniem racja była po jego stronie, bo to właśnie Croce organizował wokół siebie resztki intelektualnego oporu wobec faszyzmu. Croce był autorem słynnego manifestu intelektualistów przeciw faszyzmowi. I mimo że ludzie, których faszyści zastraszyli, po prostu się go bali i unikali jego domu, to jednak w faszystowskich Włoszech Croce był dla wszystkich tą moralną instancją, której ludzie uważnie słuchali. A zabierał głos bardzo często, ponieważ dzięki łagodności ustroju faszystowskiego, co prawda łagodności względnej, Croce mógł wydawać pismo, które miało tytuł «La Critica», i mógł drukować swoje książki. I wszystko, co robił, pisał i publikował, było we Włoszech uważnie czytane i rzeczywiście stawało się źródłem duchowego oporu przeciw faszyzmowi. Jednym słowem: Croce miał rację. Ale miał też niewątpliwie rację jego przeciwnik, Ignazio Silone, tylko że Silone miał o wiele trudniejsze życie.[12]

Wrażenie, jakie można odnieść z tego oświadczenia złożonego Boleckiemu, jest takie, że chociaż Herling uznał większą skuteczność zachowania Crocego przed faszyzmem, to jednak ze względu na swój stan imigranta utożsamiał się raczej z postacią Battaglii/Silonego[13]. Pod tym względem refleksja, którą Battaglia dzieli z narratorem *Księcia Niezłomnego*, jest wyjaśniająca.

> […] emigracja ma to do siebie, że jest innym czasem, czasem rozkraczonym nad teraźniejszością, która przepływa jej między nogami. Jedną nogą tkwi w historii już ostygłej, a drugą szuka punktu oparcia w historii dopiero oczekiwanej. Nie może zmienić tej pozycji, choćby nie wiem jak próbowała wyszarpnąć tylną nogę z ostygłego brzegu i zanurzyć ją w strumieniu historii bieżącej. Cała jest nastawiona na jutro, które musi jej przyznać rację. I bywa czasem, że jutro przyznaje jej rację, ale w zupełnie inny sposób, niż sobie to wyobrażała.[14]

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[11] G. Herling-Grudziński, *Książe*, s. 109.
[12] W. Bolecki, G. Herling-Grudziński, *Rozmowy*, s. 10.
[13] Zob. M. Śniedziewska, *„Osobiste sprawy i tematy”*.
[14] G. Herling-Grudziński, *Książe*, s. 120.

3. Croce jako źródło inspiracji: transpozycja „biograficzna" bohatera

W pierwszym i ostatnim opowiadaniu napisanym przez Herlinga, Benedetto Croce pojawia się zatem jako jeden z protagonistów narracji (pod postacią Santoniego w *Księciu Niezłomnym*) lub bezpośrednio przywoływany (jak w *Wieku biblijnym i śmierci*). Chodzi tu przede wszystkim o jego wygląd „ideologiczny". W różnych okolicznościach niektóre „biograficzne" aspekty Crocego charakteryzują postacie wyobrażone przez Herlinga. Jedną z nich jest niewątpliwie trzęsienie ziemi, lub lepiej, przetrwanie trzęsienia ziemi. Ten temat nieustannie powraca w twórczości polskiego pisarza, który zawsze porusza się na granicy między wymiarami, które się dotykają lub przeplatają; w przypadku trzęsienia ziemi pęknięcia, które ono otwiera, również wizualnie odtwarzają granicę między życiem a śmiercią, z której składa się nasza codzienność. Jak wiadomo, Benedetto Croce stracił rodzinę podczas trzęsienia ziemi w Casamicciola w 1883 roku; życie Silonego zostało również wstrząśnięte przez podobne wydarzenie, to znaczy trzęsienie ziemi w Marsicy w 1915 roku, a Gaetano Salvemini, ze swojej strony, pozostał sam (zginęło mu żona, siostra oraz pięcioro dzieci) po trzęsieniu ziemi w Mesynie z roku 1908. Te trzy postacie są centralne dla intelektualnej ścieżki Herlinga i nie jest on nieświadomy faktu, że łączy je dramat, którego doświadczyli. Herling napisał o Croce i cieniu trzęsienia ziemi, który nigdy go nie opuszczał, w swoim *Dzienniku* w kwietniu 1970 roku.

> W roku tragedii w Casamicciola przyszły filozof neapolitański miał szesnaście lat, przeżył ją ze złamaną prawą ręką i zmiażdżoną kością udową, obrażeniami, których późniejszy ślad bliski był częściowego niedowładu. O obrażeniach psychicznych, nawet po utracie całej prawie rodziny (ocalał nieobecny na letnisku brat), nie zwykło się mówić żyjąc w wulkanicznym od wieków rejonie i chodząc po tak niepewnej skorupie ziemskiej, wpatrując się codziennie w stożek Wezuwiusza i ocierając się wciąż o Pompeje, o Herkulanum, o dymiące *fumarole* Solfatary pod Pozzuoli. Istnieje w tych stronach coś w rodzaju atawizmu klęsk żywiołowych. […] Kto się tu urodził lub zdecydował osiedlić, musi mieć wrodzone czy nabyte poczucie kruchości i ziemi, i życia ludzkiego.[15]

Czasami samo trzęsienie ziemi staje się bohaterem opowieści Herlinga, jak w przypadku opowiadania *Gruzy*, napisanego w 1981 roku i opartego

[15] Tenże, *Neapol, kwiecień 1970,* w: Tenże, *Dziennik pisany nocą 1971–1972,* Warszawa 1995, s. 26.

na wydarzeniach, które dopiero co miały miejsce w Kampanii i Bazylikacie. Innym razem to postacie wyobrażone przez Herlinga noszą w sobie wieczne konsekwencje trzęsienia ziemi, którego doświadczyli (i przezwyciężyli je lub nie, po straszliwym ciosie Nieznanej Ręki[16]). To właśnie tych Bolecki określa mianem „okamienionych": określenie to wskazuje na coś więcej niż tylko osoby milczące. „Okamienieni" w prozie Herlinga to ci, w których milczeniu skrywa się, nie dające nazwać ani wypowiedzieć, doznanie rzeczy ostatecznych"[17]. Sam Herling, mieszkający w Neapolu, wielokrotnie doświadczył trzęsień ziemi i na marginesie wydarzenia sejsmicznego relacjonował, że w jego pojawieniu odczuwał coś metafizycznego.

> Wojny, rewolucje, masakry, pożogi, epidemie, powodzie – wszystko to nie przerasta człowieka bezapelacyjnie, nie napełnia go przerażeniem równie stężonym i bezsilnym jak ziemia drżąca pod nogami, nie podcina w nim elementarnego, pierwotnego poczucia własnej egzystencji. Jest w trzęsieniu ziemi coś metafizycznego, wymykającego się zmysłom.[18]

W opowiadaniu *Wieża*, które następuje bezpośrednio po *Księciu Niezłomnym* (akcja rozgrywa się w roku 1958), podobnie jak w grze w lustra[19], pojawiają się dwaj „okamienieni": trędowaty mieszkający w wieży Aosty (która, nawiasem mówiąc, jest kamienna) i stary emeryt, były nauczyciel mieszkający w swojej *bara siciliana* (trumnie sycylijskiej), małym domku u stóp góry Mucrone. Żaden z nich nie komunikuje się ze światem; nie rozmawiają oni z nikim. Trędowaty cierpi z powodu tego potępienia ze strony społeczeństwa, które mu je narzuca, ponieważ jest niebezpieczny dla zdrowia współobywateli; emeryt, ze swojej strony, natomiast celowo szuka tej samotności. On przeżył trzęsienie ziemi w Mesynie, podczas którego, jak sobie wyobraża autor, zginęła cała jego rodzina (żona i trójka dzieci). Ta okoliczność zbliża go z pewnością do profilu biograficznego Gaetano

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[16] „Twarze ludzi określanych tu *terremotati* mają zawsze ten sam wyraz. Po co silić się na opisy, jeśli można po prostu powiedzieć: wyraz gruzów? […] Czego nie da się powiedzieć jasno, nie należy mówić w ogóle. Zamiast słów, słów, słów – zdanie, które zawiera może najwięcej: człowiek starty na proch jednym uderzeniem Nieznanej Ręki" – tenże, *24 listopada 1980*, w: tenże, *Dziennik pisany nocą 1980–1983,* Warszawa 1996, s. 90–91.

[17] W. Bolecki, *Maisons-Laffitte, 13 grudnia,* w: *Herling-Grudziński i krytycy – Antologia tekstów,* red. Z. Kudelski, Lublin 1997, s. 281, (273–287)

[18] G. Herling-Grudziński, *Neapol, 9 maja* 1976, w: Tenże, *Dziennik pisany nocą 1973–1979,* Czytelnik, Warszawa 1995, s. 202.

[19] „Każda z dwóch postaci *Wieży,* trędowaty z miasta Aosty i sycylijski *terremotato,* stała przed poczerniałym od starości i przeżartym zwierciadłem; każda odgadywała w nim odbicie, którego wolałaby nigdy nie zobaczyć", Tenże, *Gruzy,* w: Tenże, *Opowiadania zebrane*, t. 1, s. 221.

Salveminiego (który też był nauczycielem w Mesynie w okresie trzęsienia ziemi) oraz Benedetto Crocego:

> W owych latach (w czasie redagowania *Wieży*, not. red.) obijały mi się często o uszy opowiadania o Crocem i o historyku Salveminim, w pewnym sensie antagonistach, bez wątpienia najwybitniejszych indywidualnościach we włoskim życiu umysłowym epoki faszyzmu. W roku 1883 Croce jako mały chłopiec stracił w trzęsieniu ziemi na Ischii rodziców i siostrę. W roku 1908 Salvemini stracił w trzęsieniu ziemi w Mesynie żonę i wszystkie dzieci. Ktoś, kto ich obu znał dobrze, opowiadał o «osobliwym uczuciu» (pamiętałem to określenie i następujące po nim zdanie), jakie wkradało się zawsze w dłuższe z nimi rozmowy: «Jak gdyyby, niezależnie od tematu rozmowy, czasem nawet kłócąc się z tematem i nastrojem rozmowy, musiał nadejść krótki moment zupełnego zatracenia się mówiącego, identycznego zawieszenia wzroku i Crocego, i Salveminiego w próżni».[20]

Filozoficzne adnotacje, które emeryt sycylijski zapisuje w notatkach do książeczki (jedna z nich brzmi: VITA DUM SUPEREST, BENE EST), jeszcze bardziej zbliżą jego postać do tej Benedetto Crocego. Oni, trędowata oraz emeryta, stanowią dwie różne formy śmierci w życiu, to kompenetracja, której trzęsienie ziemi jest namacalnym zjawiskiem. Ale są to również dwie różne formy życia jako przygotowanie do śmierci. I tu wracamy, jakby zamykając koło, jak zawsze w prozie Herlinga, do wypowiedzi Crocego wyjętej z *Soliloquio:* „Kto sądzi, że *sto morendo* przygotowuje nas do śmierci, niech wie, że całe nasze życie jest przygotowaniem do śmierci”[21].

4. Z Neapolu do Europy

Jak wiadomo, proces utożsamienia się Herlinga z miastem nad Zatoką przebiegał raczej powoli. Oczywiście kulminacją będzie zaakceptowanie przez niego własnego statusu Polaka-Neapolitańczyka; ale stanie się to tylko w ostatnich latach życia autora[22]. Najpierw on i miasto, które go gości,

[20] Tamże, s. 222.

[21] Tenże, *Wiek biblijny*, s. 10.

[22] W lutym 1997 roku Galassia Gutenberg, neapolitańskie targi książki, poświęciły swoją doroczną konferencję twórczości Herlinga. Było to pierwsze publiczne spotkanie we Włoszech na temat „polsko-neapolitańskiego pisarza”, jak go wówczas nazywano w tytule (według propozycji samego Herlinga). „Ale impreza w Galassia Gutenberg miała też dodatkowy wymiar sentymentalny: był to akt mojego definitywnego pogodzenia się z miastem, w którym mieszkam od czterdziestu

zdają się obserwować i studiować siebie nawzajem. Polski pisarz przede wszystkim narzeka na polityczne środowisko miasta. „Przez pierwsze lata w Neapolu czułem się bardzo źle. Był to czas, gdy kuratelę nad życiem intelektualnym sprawowali nadal komuniści włoscy, którzy takich jak ja nie dopuszczali do głosu. Czułem, że jestem w kraju, który znajduje się pod nadzorem komunistów, że jestem tu najzwyczajniej śledzony"[23].

Pewien dystans można zaobserwować także w powtarzających się obserwacjach Benedetto Crocego. Historie Neapolu autorstwa filozofa są „[…] nawet zbyt często wypełnione krytycznymi obserwacjami"[24]. Ale powody zachowania negatywnego Herlinga i Crocego do Neapolu są różne. „Nie jesteś Neapolitańczykiem, jesteś z Abruzji!", mówi filozof do siebie w *Discorso di Pescasseroli* (Przemówieniu z Pescasseroli)[25]. Świadectw tego typu można łatwo znaleźć w jego pracach; z nich wyłania się „Można by rzec, pewna kokieteryjna postawa duchowa w wspominaniu dumnej, górzystej i surowej Abruzji, a jednocześnie zbyt często słodkiej, zbyt rozpieszczałej, zbyt zrelaksowanej i zbyt relaksującej Partenope jako własnej, fizycznej i duchowej ojczyzny"[26], pisze Giuseppe Galasso w posłowiu do książki *Un paradiso abitato da diavoli* (Raj zamieszkany przez diabły).

Jeśli chodzi o Crocego, mimo wszystko Neapol można uznać za: „[…] idealną ojczyznę, ojczyznę ducha, a także, jeśli nie więcej, ojczyznę biografii i uczuć"[27]. Dla Herlinga Neapol prawdopodobnie nie stanowił idealnej ojczyzny ani (przynajmniej na początku) ojczyzny ducha; jednak, znalazł tam literacką ojczyznę: to właśnie stąd, ze swojego gabinetu na parterze Villi Ruffo, przeszedł do formy opowiadania po napisaniu *Innego świata*; to właśnie tutaj napisał większą część swojego *Dziennika pisanego nocą* i to tutaj rozwinął idee, wyobrażał sobie postacie, które wstawiał do swoich dzieł.

Podobnie jak u Herlinga, tak samo jak u Crocego, można odnaleźć ślady drogi, która prowadzi z Neapolu do Europy i jej wartości. W wywiadzie udzielonym w 1927 roku angielskiej dziennikarce Linie Waterfield (opublikowanym później w „Observerze"), która zapytała go, jak udało mu się połączyć europejskość jego myśli z wyraźnie neapolitańskimi cechami, filozof odpowiedział:

przeszło lat; i w którym, powiedzmy bez obsłonek, różne bywały moje losy jako pisarza" (Tenże, *22 lutego 1997*, w: Tenże, *Dziennik pisany nocą. Tom 3, 1993–2000,* Kraków 2012, s. 689).

[23] Tenże, *Najkrótszy przewodnik po sobie samym*, Kraków 2000, s. 57.

[24] G. Galasso, *Nota del curatore,* w: B. Croce, *Un paradiso abitato da diavoli,* Milano 2006, s. 300

[25] B. Croce, *Il discorso di Pescasseroli,* "Rivista abruzzese", 1–2 (1966), s. 3.

[26] G. Galasso, *Nota del curatore,* s. 282.

[27] Tamże., s. 287.

> Prawdę mówiąc, w tradycji kultury neapolitańskiej znalazłem tyle europejskości i uniwersalizmu, że nie czułem potrzeby całkowitego oderwania się od ziemi, na której się urodziłem, i wykorzenienia moich naturalnych uczuć i pewnej sentymentalności, którą odczuwam do tych miejsc, rzeczy, zwyczajów i postaw. Kontynuowałem zatem robienie tego, co robili wszyscy Neapolitańczycy z dobrych starych czasów, którzy kochali kulturę francuską, angielską i niemiecką, nie przestając być Włochami i Neapolitańczykami. Oczywiście, nie był to program ani cel, ale stało się to naturalnie. Czytam wiele książek w wielu językach, ale lubię też od czasu do czasu mówić moim dialektem.[28]

O europejskości Crocego, Herling napisał: „Odczytując ostatnio *Historię Europy*, która otwierają i zamykają słowa *la religione della libertà*, zastanawiałem się, ile nauk starego liberala włoskiego przeniknęło do świadomości europejskiej"[29]. Oto, ten europeizm jest tym, co znajdujemy również w intelektualnej posturze Gustawa Herlinga. *Dall'Europa illegale all'Europa unita* (Od nielegalnej Europy do zjednoczonej Europy), to nazwa konferencji, która odbyła się w 1–2 grudnia 2014 roku w Rzymie, poświęcona Herlingowi; a *europejski* to przymiotnik, który teraz stale mu towarzyszy przy okazji każdego nowego artykułu, debaty, wydarzenia, które go dotyczą. W sposób, który czyni tę cechę wyraźną, przy okazji inauguracji tablicy jego imienia w Villi Ruffo (listopad 2012 roku) prezydenci Polski, Niemiec i Włoch (wówczas Giorgio Napolitano) uczestniczyli razem.

Jeśli Neapol staje się dla Crocego też ojczyzną logiki (to właśnie tutaj, w latach 90. XIX wieku, ujawnia się jego powołanie filozoficzne), to na Herlinga, jak wspomniano, miasto działa poprzez kierowanie jego wyborami artystycznymi i narracyjnymi. *Książę Niezłomny* jest już sam w sobie głęboko neapolitańską historią, i to nie tylko ze względu na obecność Santoniego/Crocego: istnieją obszerne opisy Posillipo, Capri, które stanowią ramy i towarzyszą akcji. Neapol jest obecny w (około) jednej trzeciej opowiadań napisanych przez Herlinga[30]. Jest to uzasadnione faktem, że pisze on głównie w pierwszej osobie, wprowadzając elementy swojego życia

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[28] B. Croce, *Epistolario. Scelta di lettere curata dall'autore 1914–1935,* t. 1, Bologna 1954, s. 137–138.

[29] G. Herling-Grudziński, *17 lutego 1991*, w: Tenże, *Dziennik pisany nocą 1989–1992,* Warszawa 1997, s. 218.

[30] W swoim wstępie do włoskiego zbioru opowiadań Herlinga, *Don Ildebrando,* Francesco Cataluccio liczy do 14 „neapolitańskich" opowiadań w całej karierze literackiej autora (zob. Francesco M. Cataluccio, *Un diario in forma di racconti,* w: G. Herling-Grudziński, *Don Ildebrando,* Milano 1999, s. 13). Wśród nich są opowieści, których akcja rozgrywa się w okolicach Neapolu, a nie w centrum miasta, takie jak: *Pietà dell'isola* czyli *Gruzy.* Według tych zasad, włączając w to też opowiadania, które się pojawiły po tekście Cataluccio, będziemy mieć 20 „neapolitańskich" opowiadań z 54 ogólnych opowiadań autora.

osobistego, aby dodać tekstowi autentyczności. Neapol jest istotnym elementem narracji, czasami nawet protagonistą. Dzieje się tak na przykład w dyptyku reprezentowanym przez *Cud* i *Dżumę w Neapolu*, w których Herling posuwa się aż do metaforycznego nałożenia na siebie losów Polski Solidarności i Neapolu Masaniella. To właśnie nie tylko neapolitańskie, czyli polskie, a raczej europejskie oraz uniwersalne opowiadania.

5. Croce i neapolitańskie kroniki

W takich opowiadaniach, to znaczy *Cud* i *Dżuma w Neapolu*, kroniki mają podstawową rolę. *Cud* koncentruje się na rytuale związanym z San Gennaro, tworząc powiązanie (całkowicie fikcyjne) między dwoma okazjami, w których cud upłynnienia następuje wcześniej niż oczekiwano: podczas buntu Masaniella i podczas buntu Solidarności.

> Ale we wrześniu tego roku zaszła rzecz niezwykła, miasto zostało nagle wytrącone z postępującego procesu obojętnienia. Normalnie krew męczennika upłynnia się najwcześniej po półgodzinnych modlitwach i inwokacjach. Tym razem wyciągnięto ze skarbca katedralnego, ku zdumieniu nielicznych świadków cudu, ampułki z już gotującą się krwią. Wielowiekowa kronika cudu odnotowała jeden tylko podobny wypadek: we wrześniu 1647 roku, po plebejskiej rewolucji Masaniella w Neapolu, krew w ampułkach była już upłynniona w momencie otwarcia skarbca.[31]

Zresztą kroniki oraz opowiadania, dzieła innych autorów stanowią warstwę autentyczności (nawet jeśli nie są autentyczne, czytelnik będzie miał takie wrażenie) nad którą Herling opiera swoją narrację, nieustannie mieszając prawdę z fałszem. A kiedy on umieszcza swoje opowieści w Neapolu, odwołuje się często do tych historii lub legend neapolitańskich tak drogich Benedetto Croce'owi. Filozof wydobywa je na światło dzienne, zmierzając do zweryfikowania ich odniesień i autentyczności; Herling, ze swej strony, zaczyna od nich, aby je ponownie odwiedzić, naginając je do intencji narracji. Obecność kronik neapolitańskich jest centralna też w opowiadaniach polskiego pisarza, takich jak *Most. Z kroniki naszego miasta*, *Srebrna Szkatułka*, *Łuk Sprawiedliwości*, *Głęboki cień*, *Madrygał żałobny*.

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[31] G. Herling-Grudziński, *Cud*, w: Tenże, *Opowiadania zebrane*, t. 1, s. 262.

W noweli *Pierścień* (1986) Herling podsumowuje opowieść Boccaccio o Andreuccio da Perugia, wyraźnie odnosząc się do Crocego. „Croce w *Storie e leggende napoletane* ocenia ją wysoko, podkreśla jej «logikę wewnętrzną» bliską absolutnej doskonałości. Wszystko odbywa się w niej tak, jak gdyby inaczej odbyć się nie mogło"[32], pisze Herling. Polski autor wyraźnie dostrzega pokrewieństwo, w scenerii i okolicznościach epizodu, między pierścieniem noweli Boccaccia a Neapolem podczas wojny[33]: zaczyna od tego miejsca, aby rozwinąć „swoją" wersję historii, wyobrażoną w kościele Sant'Egidio, która nie istnieje, a której Herling, prawdopodobnie, przypisuje formy Sant'Eligio[34], zgodnie ze swoim dobrze znanym kodem stylistycznym. Ciągle miesza on wiadomości i fikcję, historyczne poświadczenia i fantazję, aby również stylistycznie przywrócić kompozycję rzeczywistości, która według niego nigdy nie jest jednorodna ani spójna. To są właśnie te cechy, które Croce odnajduje w stylu Boccaccia używanym w *Andreuccio da Perugia*, „[…] być może najbardziej neapolitańska strona, jaka nam pozostała po pisarzu, który spędził najszczęśliwsze lata w Neapolu"[35]. Kiedy filozof, pod koniec swego dzieła, komentuje styl Boccaccia, zauważa: „Ale ciekawa i miła niespodzianka czeka badacza, który z umysłem wypełnionym opowieścią Boccaccia, przeszukuje rejestry andegaweńskie Państwowego Archiwum w Neapolu. Tu i ówdzie natrafia na nazwiska i szczegóły, które dziwnie pokrywają się z tymi, które Boccaccio nadał bohaterom opowieści i są ze sobą powiązane w rozwoju tej opowieści"[36]. To samo dzieje się z tymi, którzy podążają śladami postaci i zdarzeń opowiadanych przez Herlinga w jego opowiadaniach. Polski autor kończy w ten sposób tekst o pierścieniu swojej noweli, który podgrywa inną rolę niż ta przywołana przez Boccaccia.

> W innym wymiarze zaczął żyć nowym życiem, w którym jego wartość realna, a nawet sama egzystencja nie odgrywają już żadnej roli. Zamiast spaść wśród uśmiechów w dół, został wysoko i dramatycznie podniesiony do góry. Rzeczywisty czy zmyślony, prawdziwy czy fałszywy, błyszczy zagadkowo w ciemnościach. Tak toczy się świat, bez tego błysku potoczyłby się w nicość[37].

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[32] Tenże, *Pierścień,* w: Tenże, *Opowiadania,* s. 296.

[33] Zob. tamże, s. 297.

[34] Kościołowi Sant'Eligio, a w szczególności jego łukowi, Herling poświęcił opowiadanie *Łuk Sprawiedliwości.*

[35] B. Croce, *La novella di Andreuccio da Perugia,* w: Tenże, *Storie e leggende napoletane,* Milano 1990, s. 66.

[36] Tamże, s. 87.

[37] G. Herling-Grudziński, *Pierścień,* s. 302.

Zakończenie znakomicie podsumowuje styl, którego Herling używa w prozie swoich opowiadań, a to „stylistyczna spowiedź" jest możliwa właśnie dzięki Croce'owi, jego zainteresowaniom i analizie Boccaccia. Para złożona z realnego-fikcyjnego lub prawdziwego-fałszywego, gdy tylko przestanie nosić szaty antagonistyczne, jest odtworzeniem w prozie tego, jak Herling zamierza ciągłe mieszanie życia i śmierci, dobra i zła.

> A dla mnie ważne, jakkolwiek trudne do przeniknięcia, było i jest pogranicze, ta (żeby użyć porównania) conradowska «smuga cienia», która oznacza bezruch, martwe trwanie wśród zaczajonych żywiołów. Nie ma śmierci, niedostępnej w bezpośrednim doświadczeniu, poza granicami życia. Nie ma Zła, skradającego się podstępnie z oddali, poza granicami Dobra. Panuje tu prawo osmozy.[38]

Obaj, Croce i Herling, w podobny sposób badają również pewne specyficzne zwyczaje społeczno-kulturowe: filozof, na przykład, rozwodzi się długo nad *lazzari*, nazwą nadaną plebsowi neapolitańskiemu, użytą po raz pierwszy z okazji buntu Masaniella w latach 1647–1648; Herling z kolei zajmuje się kilkakrotnie zjawiskiem *iettatura* (złego uroku) i *malocchio* (złego oka), na przykład w opowiadaniu *Don Ildebrando*[39]. Croce uważa, że legendy ludowe są: „[…] produktem ducha zbiorowego, geniuszu rodu, duszy ludu […] mają znaczenie wykraczające poza ich historyczną błędność, ponieważ wyrażają moralne, polityczne, religijne i ogólnie sentymentalne tendencje zarówno tych, którzy je stworzyli, jak i innych, którzy w nie wierzyli lub je rozpowszechniali"[40]. Ponadto, dla Crocego „[…] właściwie każda opowieść ma odrobinę legendy, a każda legenda ma historię"[41]. Ze swej strony Herling, w opowiadaniu *Łuk Sprawiedliwości,* podkreśla jakości tych, którzy ufają „[…] legendom albo nawet uważają je za ustną historię, ważniejszą w pewnym sensie od historii pisanej i zarejestrowanej w kronikach…"[42].

W tych dwóch osobliwych aspektach, a mianowicie analizie i dogłębnym badaniu tego, co go otacza, a także w mieszaniu historii/kroniki i legendy,

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[38] Tenże, *Błogosławiona, święta,* w: Tenże, *Opowiadania zebrane,* t. 2, Warszawa 1999, s. 103.

[39] W tym opowiadaniu Herling pokazuje, że dobrze zna najważniejsze książki o *iettatura* a, między nimi, też rozważania Benedetto Crocego: „Książka Dumasa o Neapolu *Corricolo* (z nadzwyczajną historią księcia Ventignano), historyczne studium Mayera o życiu ludowym w Neapolu w okresie romantyzmu, klasyczne dziełko osiemnastowieczne Nicoli Valletty *La cicalata sul fascino volgarmente detto iettatura* (czyli *Dyskurs o uroku zwanym pospolicie iettatura*), tom Crocego z rozdziałem o owym klasycznym dziełku Valletty" (Tenże, *Don Ildebrando,* w: *Dziennik pisany nocą. Tom 3, 1993–2000,* s. 459).

[40] B. Croce, *Leggende di luoghi ed edifizi di Napoli,* w: Tenże., *Storie e leggende,* s. 295–296.

[41] Tamże.

[42] G. Herling-Grudziński, *Łuk Sprawiedliwości,* w: Tenże, *Opowiadania zebrane,* t. 2, s. 65.

z pewnością odzwierciedlają się niektóre cechy prozy Herlinga. „W neapolitańskiej aurze tych *Storie e leggende*, jak i we wszystkich innych pismach Crocego o tej samej tematyce i inspiracji, impuls narracyjny ma specyfikę, której nie można przegapić", pisze w tym względzie Galasso[43]. Chociaż punkty lądowania są różne, zatem główny i narracyjny impuls, który popycha Crocego i Herlinga w stronę neapolitańskich opowieści lub legend, wydaje się taki sam.

> Aura tych pism, patos, który z nich emanuje i który niezmiennie uderza czytelnika, nie leży tylko w ich możliwej współczesności lub etycznej, intelektualnej, obywatelskiej istotności; ani nie leżą one tylko w wymiarze historiograficznym […] Leżą one w ich szczerej neapolitańskości, w szczerej neapolitańskości Crocego, w neapolitańskiej determinacji jego uczuć i myśli, w ich egzystencjalnym i moralnym pochodzeniu ze świata «najszlachetniejszego Neapolu», który był jego pierwotnym światem.[44]

Dzieląc ten sam impuls co Croce do tego typu dokumentów, Herling coraz bardziej zbliża się do neapolitańskości. Ale dla niego neapolitańskość, jeszcze przed byciem warunkiem ducha, znaczy autentyczność jego tekstów. Kroniki i legendy neapolitańskie są narzędziami w służbie jego prozy: utrzymywane, przerabiane, wymyślane w celu przekazania ciągłego mieszania się rzeczywistości i fikcji. Pod tym względem też toponimia miasta wspiera jego styl. W „neapolitańskich" opowiadaniach często odnosi się on do centrum Neapolu, *Spaccanapoli*, oraz (wcale nie przez przypadek) do Palazzo Filomarino, gdzie mieszkał Benedetto Croce[45]. Odniesienia te, naturalnie, zwiększają u czytelnika poczucie autentyczności tekstu oraz wydarzeń opowiadanych.

Jeśli Neapol staje się dla Herlinga ojczyzną literacką i wreszcie także ducha, to część zasługi należy się Benedetto Croce'owi, który nie stanowi dla polskiego autora wyłącznie intelektualnego punktu odniesienia w okre-

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[43] G. Galasso, *Nota del curatore,* w: Benedetto Croce, *Storie e leggende,* s. 355.

[44] Tamże, s. 356.

[45] Na przykład w opowiadaniu *Ex voto* (G. Herling-Grudziński, w: Tenże, *Dziennik pisany nocą 1993–2000,* s. 402) się czyta: „Spaccanapoli znaczy «ulica rozłupująca» Neapol i jest główną, najstarszą arterią miasta, równoległą do Tribunali. Rozłupuje je rzeczywiście na dwie części, biegnie od dworca do kościelnego wzgórza u stóp San Martino. Nazwa jest potoczna, ludowa, a nawet gwarowa, gdyż składa się na nią szereg krótkich odcinków różnie nazwanych, nanizanych jak kawałki mięsa na drut w szaszłyku. Kiedyś, w średniowieczu, były to uliczki cechowe, pozostał z nich tylko Święty Błażej, patron księgarzy, dawniej raj molów książkowych. Na odcinku ochrzczonym dziś nazwiskiem Crocego (bo tam właśnie mieszkał w pałacu Filomarino, dzisiaj siedzibie Instytutu Studiów Historycznych)…"

sie jego wygnania za granicą: „Cząstka mojej pewności, że runie w końcu gmach, który musiał runąć, pochodziła z «religii wolności»”[46], ale wyróżnia się także jako wzór literacki.

6. Wnioski

Croce jest zatem „wykorzystywany” przez Herlinga w jego opowiadaniach, aby uczynić go postacią intelektualną (tak jest w przypadku transpozycji bohatera-Santoniego) lub odjąć pewne dane biograficzne, które chce przypisać charakterom jego własnych opowieści (nauczyciel w opowiadaniu *Wieża*), lub też, aby oświetlić jego własne opowiadania kluczowymi fragmentami/ideami (tak jest w przypadku *Epoki Biblijnej*). Polski autor przyswaja sobie również od Crocego pasję do neapolitańskich kronik i, ogólniej, do historii, anegdot zaczerpniętych z dzielnic Neapolu, aby podać swoim opowiadaniom pozór autentyczności. Przez wszystkie te różne sposoby Croce pomaga Herlingowi odnaleźć jego drogę literacką, pełniąc wręcz rolę *pater litterarum* wobec polskiego pisarza.

> Nic na pozór nie wskazuje, by Neapolitańczycy słuchali swego filozofa Crocego, który wraz z Goethem wolał: «Precz z grobów!», i zalecał: «Nie myślcie o śmierci: śmierć nie jest problemem, jak nie jest problemem cień wobec światła». Na pozór. Bo w rzeczywistości «cień» i «światło» przenikają tu wciąż nawzajem, tworzą przedziwną mieszaninę, której po tylu latach pobytu w Neapolu nie jestem w stanie uchwycić.[47]

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[46] Tenże, *Przestałem być pisarzem emigracyjnym*, w: Tenże, *Wyjścia z milczenia*, Warszawa 1998, s. 466.

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Liberty, Law and Totalitarianism. Gustaw Herling-Grudziński as an Interpreter of Benedetto Croce

Abstract

This article aims to highlight the intellectual synergy between Benedetto Croce and Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, particularly in the field of the philosophy of law. Croce's influence on Herling-Grudziński's journalistic, literary, and philosophical work is reflected in the profound conviction that the *religion of liberty* will survive catastrophes and disasters, despite humanity's incessant attempts to suppress it. Throughout their lives, both Croce and Herling-Grudziński committed themselves to denouncing any order that, even if legally constituted, employed coercive means harmful to human dignity. As a signatory of the *Manifesto of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals*, Croce vehemently condemned all forms of totalitarian power whose legislative activity degenerated into 'unbridled egoism or severity of command,' thereby assaulting the very idea of liberty as the insurmountable mode of individual existence. Following Croce's example, Herling-Grudziński proceeded to demonstrate the 'twinship' between the Nazi concentration camps (*lager*) and the Soviet forced labor camps (*gulag*). In the *gulag*, the horror is intolerably legalized, and the individual, deprived of his *conatus essendi* and every shred of dignity, becomes simply an "anonymous unit of energy". In that 'world apart,' where humanity is detached from history, civilization meets its end, marked by the advent of the Antichrist theorized by Croce: a vital and obscure dimension of action that is never ethicalized. Consequently, this article delves into Croce's critique of nihilist philosophy, described as a tendentious philosophy, since it reaches its climax in the complete approval of "evil". In a similar interpretive synthesis, Herling-Grudziński identifies the common nihilistic matrix underlying the totalitarianisms that ravaged the 20th century.

Keywords: A World Apart, Croce, Herling-Grudziński, liberty, law, totalitarianism

Sommario

Il presente articolo intende mettere in evidenza la profonda sintonia intellettuale tra Benedetto Croce e Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, con particolare attenzione all'ambito della filosofia del diritto. L'influenza di Croce sull'opera giornalistica, letteraria e filosofica di Herling-Grudziński si manifesta nella comune convinzione che la "religione della libertà" sia destinata a sopravvivere alle catastrofi e ai disastri della storia, malgrado i continui tentativi dell'umanità di soffocarla. Entrambi dedicano la propria vita a denunciare qualunque ordine politico che, pur essendo legalmente costituito, faccia ricorso a strumenti coercitivi lesivi della dignità dell'uomo. In quanto firmatario del *Manifesto degli intellettuali antifascisti*, Croce condanna con fermezza ogni forma di potere totalitario, la cui attività legislativa degenera in "sfrenato egoismo o durezza di comando", attaccando così l'idea stessa di libertà come modoinsuperabile dell'esistenza individuale. Sulla scia del pensiero crociano, Herling-Grudziński evidenzia il "gemellaggio" tra i campi di concentramento nazisti (*Lager*) e i campi di lavoro forzato sovietici (*Gulag*). Nel Gulag, l'orrore risulta perintollerabilmente legalizzato e l'individuo, privato del suo *conatus essendi* e di ogni frammento di dignità, è una semplice "unità anonima di energia". In quel "mondo a parte", in cui l'umanità è recisa dalla storia, la civiltà tocca il proprio limite estremo, segnato dall'avvento dell'Anticristo teorizzato da Croce: una dimensione vitale e oscura dell'agire umano che non trova mai compiuta eticizzazione. L'articolo approfondirà pertanto la critica crociana al nichilismo, definito "filosofia tendenziosa" in quanto approda all'accettazione integrale del "male con la coscienza interferente che esso è male". In un'analoga prospettiva interpretativa, Herling-Grudziński riconobbe la matrice nichilista comune ai totalitarismi che hanno devastato il Novecento.

Parole chiave: Un mondo a parte, Croce, Herling-Grudziński, libertà, diritto, totalitarismo

Introduction

In the complex weave of 20th-century European intellectual history, few thinkers rival the methodological rigor and far-sighted lucidity demonstrated by Benedetto Croce and Gustaw Herling-Grudziński in their profound analysis of the events that shaped that century. This essay aims to reinterpret Herling-Grudziński's work, deeply permeated by Croce's thought,

particularly where his reflection converges on cardinal concepts such as liberty, law, and the critique of totalitarianism. Herling's familiarity with Croce's philosophy is not a late acquisition; rather, it is rooted in his early education. As early as 1937, as a student of Polish Studies at the 'Józef Piłsudski' University of Warsaw, he delved into Croce's writings, encouraged by mentors like Fryde[1], a Polish critic and intellectual. In those years, Croce's works, especially his *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century*[2], exerted an indelible influence on Herling-Grudziński's narrative, journalistic, and philosophical output, so much so that he contributed the afterword to its 1998 Polish edition. Herling-Grudziński himself recalles the depth of this impact in his inaugural lecture upon receiving an honorary doctorate from the University of Poznań on May 20, 1991, on that occasion he recounted a meeting at Aleksander Hertz's home in late spring 1939, where a group of intellectuals, including Fryde, fervently discussed Croce's work:

> I sat intimidated in a corner, trying not to miss a single word of what the illustrious guests were saying. […] Of that discussion I can recall only faint fragments. Two in particular. Firstly, Croce's assertion that in the 19th century the religion of liberty blossomed, matured, and took root in Europe. Then, his profound conviction that attempts to eradicate it will not succeed, even if they are continually undertaken, bringing catastrophes and misfortunes[3].

The events of the Second World War brought Herling-Grudziński to Italy toward the end of 1943. As a soldier under General Władysław Anders[4], he found himself in Southern Italy shortly before the crucial Battle of Monte

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[1] Ludwik Fryde (Warsaw 1912 – Płońsk 1942) studied law, and subsequently philosophy and Polish philology, at the University of Warsaw. His career as a critic quickly began. He was known for his rigorous approach and profound knowledge of both Polish and foreign literature.

[2] B. Croce, *Historia Europy w XIX wieku*, edited by Joanna Ugniewska, with an introduction by Bronisław Geremek, afterword by G. Herling, Warsaw 1998. The first Italian edition, *Storia d'Europa nel secolo decimonono*, was published by Laterza, Bari-Rome, in 1932. The first English translation, *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century*, was edited by H. Furs, New York 1933. In this work, Croce analyzes 19th-century European history through his unique philosophical lens. It is not a history in the traditional chronological sense but rather an interpretation of the events and trends that shaped Europe during that period, with particular attention to the role of culture and thought. For the preparation of these pages, reference will be made to the 1933 English version.

[3] G. Herling-Grudziński, *Być i pisać* (1997). Traduzione italiana: *Essere e scrivere*, a cura di Marta Herling, in *Il pellegrino della libertà*, Napoli 2006, pp. 123–124.

[4] G. Herling, J. Czapski, *Dialog o Dowódcy*, "Kultura," IV, 1970, pp. 15–25: "We were an army of prisoners, commanded by a prisoner and rebuilt with the resistant consent of the prison guards". Traduzione italiana: R. Panzone: *Dialogo intorno al Capo, il generale Władysław Anders, in occasione della sua scomparsa*, in "Poloniaeuropa," no. 1, 2010.

Cassino. After recovering from typhoid fever in the British military hospital in Nocera, he had to spend a period of convalescence in Sorrento. In March 1944, due to the circumstances, he managed to meet Croce personally. He describes the intimate and profound account of that moment in his essay *Villa Tritone: A Wartime Interlude in Italy*:

> The Tritone Villa was not Croce's home; after the Allied invasion of Italy, the elderly philosopher, fearing Fascist reprisals, had been transferred first to Capri and then to Sorrento. His true home was Naples. At the first floor of a building near the Calata Trinità Maggiore, an opaque plaque bearing the stylized initials B.C. […]The conversation revolved around the September campaign, Germany, and Russia. Croce was kind; he inquired with interest about many details, expressing sincere sympathy for Poland and the Poles. When the topic of the war was exhausted and they moved on to other subjects, it was not surprising that the great Italian Hegelian's lips mentioned the name of Cieszkowski several times. Croce was pleased that his philosophy was gaining interest in Poland and listened with interest to my account of the polemics that his aesthetics had provoked in our country[5].

Croce also noted the event in his diary, mentioning "a soldier from the Polish detachment […], a philosophy scholar, a reader of my volumes translated into German, belonging to a group of my philosophy enthusiasts in Warsaw, who wants to translate my books into Polish"[6]. Croce was profoundly impressed by Gustaw Herling-Grudziński's intellectual acumen and his keen interest in philosophy. However, what most captures his attention is Herling-Grudziński's direct testimony of the totalizing evil inflicted by the Soviet regime, which Herling-Grudziński himself had endured. It must be reiterated that when Herling-Grudziński met Croce, his life had already been indelibly marked by such suffering, an experience that not only drastically affected his existence but also defines his intellectual identity[7].

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[5] G. Herling-Grudziński, *Willa Tritone. Interludium wojenne* we Włoszech, "Wiadomości", XXX, 1951. G. Herling, *Villa Tritone. Interludio bellico in Italia*, a cura di V. Verdiani, in *Etica e letteratura. Testimonianze, diario, racconti*, Milano 2019, pp. 1109–1126.

[6] B. Croce, *Quando l'Italia era tagliata in due. Estratto di un diario (luglio 1943-giugno 1944)*, Bari 1948; now in: *Taccuini di guerra 1943–1945*, Milano 2004, p. 107.

[7] Arrested in March 1940, Herling-Grudziński is transferred to various prisons – Grodno, Vitebsk, Leningrad – before ending up in the Ercevo prison camp, on the White Sea. These places of "imprisonment and martyrdom" are vividly recounted in his most significant work, *A World Apart* (published in 1951). Only in March 1942 does Gustaw Herling-Grudziński regain his freedom, thanks to the amnesty granted to Polish prisoners under the Sikorski-Maysky agreement. Still clothed in the rags that identified him as a former gulag prisoner, the young Herling-Grudziński

The Influence of Croce's *Religion of Liberty* in Herling-Grudziński's Thought

Recognizing the authenticity and cultural relevance of Herling-Grudziński's testimony, Croce chose to establishes a vibrant and lasting intellectual dialogue with the Polish writer, fueled by their shared quest for values that could guide human action toward a universal morality. During his stay in Sorrento, Herling-Grudziński had the opportunity to frequently visit Croce's residence. Evenings at Villa Tritone, spent in lively and intense cultural debates, nurtured Herling-Grudziński's intellectual desire to write about Poland. Croce persuaded him to draft an article for the monthly journal "Aretusa." Titled *Guida essenziale della Polonia per buoni europei*, the essay appears in 1944 in the second issue of the journal, directed by Elena Croce and Francesco Flora, and was later reissued in 1946 in *Iridion*, an Italian-language periodical of the Second Corps edited by Włodzimierz Sznarbachowski. In this contribution, Herling-Grudziński lucidly delineates Poland's historical, political, and cultural identity, embedding it within the broader European context. The main point of the argument lies in his clear premonition of the extreme gravity of Soviet political action, whose totalitarian features were still largely unknown. However, Herling-Grudziński's dramatic denunciation was not embraced by the intellectuals of the time, who remained strongly pro-Soviet, to the extent that he himself highlighted how that article:

> it convinced almost no one. In return, I received a great honor: after the article was published, I was briefly summoned by Croce himself, who declared that he was on my side. The old Italian liberal saw and knew too many things to yield to the prevailing fashion in Italy at the time of the Anglo-Soviet-American "holy alliance"[8].

Croce's reaction did not particularly surprise the young Herling-Grudziński. Through his reading of the *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century*, he assimilates and embraces the principles of the *religion of liberty* advocated by the Italian philosopher. This fundamental work, published

embarked on a long and difficult journey, crossing Kazakhstan, then continuing through Iran, Iraq, Palestine, and Egypt. His destination is military training in the Polish army, a force established by General Anders under British command. For further reading, I recommend: M. Herling, "*La religione della libertà*" *di Croce nella biografia di Gustaw Herling* in "pl.it / Rassegna italiana di argomenti polacchi" ,X, 2019, pp. 80–92.

[8] G. Herling, *Etica e letteratura. Testimonianza, diario e racconti*, p. 1118.

by Croce in 1932, offers a detailed and rigorous analysis of the spiritual crisis that had characterized the early 20th century. The book can rightly be interpreted as a warning, an attempt by Croce to restore the "sanity" of intellectual and moral life, which is severely compromised by philosophical orientations he considers reductive and historically decontextualized. Among these, Croce includes Actualism, Marxism, Heideggerianism, and Nihilism, viewes as speculations that, due to their ahistorical nature, trigger a process of decadence, sometimes perceived as irreversible. Croce, thus, observes a growing diffusion of a sentiment intrinsically adverse to liberalism (in its philosophical sense) within Europe. Such activism, in his view, has stripped liberty of its moral spirit and heroism of its purity of purpose. His condemnation is firm when he asserts that:

> Activism is developing with the same impulsiveness, and even with greater vehemence. The nationalist and imperialist outbursts inflame the victorious nations because they are victorious and the vanquished nations because they are vanquished. The new states that have arisen add new nationalisms and new imperialisms. The impatience for liberal institutions has given rise to open or masked dictatorships, and to the desire for dictatorships everywhere. Liberty, which before the war is a static faith or a practice with scant faith, falls from the minds of men even where it has not fallen from their institutions, and is replaced by activistic libertarianism, which more than ever dreams of wars and upheavals and destruction, and bursts out into disordered movements and plans showy and arid works […] Communism, which under the name of socialism has been inoculated into the life of politics and the state and into the course of history, has appeared once more in its scission and crudity, another bitter enemy of liberalism, which it derides and ingenuously calls moralistic[9].

These significant expressions powerfully reveal the depth of a philosophical reflection aimed at unmasking the contradictions of certain orientations, which orchestrated dangerous mystifying propaganda regarding the very concept of liberty. Croce articulates a fierce condemnation of regimes that, through nationalistic and sensationalistic impulses, increasingly and vehemently resort to violence. From this perspective, the authoritarianism prevalent in Europe after the First World War appears to Croce as a form of resurgent and radical Jacobinism founded entirely on abstract economics and abstract political force, where the simplified man replaces the historical man.

[9] B. Croce, *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 353.

Within this intellectual framework, the use of force no longer seemed dictated by contingency that is, by historical necessity; force, in Croce's eyes, becomes the generator of history itself. Force thus supersedes liberty. Aiming to promote the foundational principles of a liberal conception and to re-establish the bases of civilization, Croce seeks to clarify that:

> Communism, of which it is usually said that it has entered the reality of facts and been effectuated in Russia, is by no means been effectuated as communism, but in the manner indicated by its critics and permitted by its internal contradiction, that is, as a form of autocracy, which has deprived the Russian people of what little mental movement and liberty they enjoyed or obtained under the preceding Czarist autocracy[10].

In the wake of these incisive, albeit summary, premises, it seems appropriate to clarify, for the sake of a broader understanding of what is being argued, that Croce clearly distances himself from any manifestation of despotic and self-referential power in his lecture *Antistoricismo*, given in Oxford in 1930 at the Seventh International Congress of Philosophy. It is here that Croce lays the foundations for the speculation that characterises his intellectual journey, revisiting and deepening – in more intense and radical tones – the analysis of the progressive eclipse of liberty that he had already outlined between 1926 and 1927, particularly in the tenth chapter of his *Storia d' Italia dal 1871 al 1915*[11]. The arguments put forward here, as is well known, are also repeated in the subsequent *History of Europe*.

The reactions provoked by the tenor of Croce's argumentation were extensive and varied, manifesting both internationally – with echoes in England and Germany – and, above all, in Fascist Italy. Croce himself meticulously documented this impact through a valuable collection of pamphlets, article clippings, photographs, brief notes, and reports, preserved in the private archive of Benedetto Croce, housed by the Benedetto Croce Library Foundation at Palazzo Filomarino. The *Miscellanea degli scritti di Benedetto Croce* is composed of 90 volumes, of which 3 – volumes 42, 49 and 50 – are specifically dedicated to the Oxford discourse. It goes without saying that the most biting and incisive criticism came from Giovanni Gentile[12],

[10] B. Croce, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

[11] Cfr. B. Croce, *Storia d'Italia dal 1871 al 1915*, Bari 1928.

[12] Giovanni Gentile (Castelvetrano, May 29, 1875 – Florence, April 15, 1944) was a prominent figure in 20th-century Italian philosophical, pedagogical, and political circles. His work falls within the italian neo-idealism movement, where he stood as its foremost exponent alongside Benedetto Croce, contributing significantly to the cultural discourse of the era. Initially, Gentile was a close

who, after carefully reading the conference text published in the journal *La Critica*, sarcastically commented on it on two distinct occasions: in his inaugural address at the National Fascist Institute of Culture, delivered on December 5, 1930, and later published in *Educazione fascista* under the title *La formazione politica della coscienza nazionale*, and in the article *Buffonate antifasciste* published in January 1931. Gentile's harsh reaction is emblematic for framing the cultural impact of Croce's lucid and incisive denunciation of any system that bases its legitimacy on terror and fear. Croce's perspective is clear and leaves no room for doubt: antihistoricism corresponds to a mental impoverishment or moral weakness that pervades the human spirit, now annihilated by progressive ideological instances – a crisis not exclusively confined to the political sphere, but one that appeared radical and invasive.

> Together with antihistoricism – states Croce – it is observed, and intrinsically forms a unity with it: the decadence of the liberal ideal, which in some countries has also resulted in the formation of illiberal regimes, but which is noted almost everywhere in words and deeds, in books and political methods, and even more in restless desires. Historical sentiment and liberal sentiment are, in truth, inseparable, so much so that no better definition of history can be given than that of "history of liberty," because only from this does it obtain meaning and only through it does it become intelligible. Undoubtedly – continues Croce – in history one also sees theocratic and authoritarian regimes, regimes of violence and reactions and counter-reforms and dictatorships and tyrannies; but what alone and always re-emerges and develops and grows is liberty, which, now in those various forms fashions its means, now bends them to its instruments, now uses its apparent defeats as stimuli for its own life[13].

collaborator and co-founder of "La Critica.Rivista di letteratura, storia e filosofia", a journal directed by Benedetto Croce from 1903 to 1944. In this early phase, Gentile's contributions were crucial to the journal's philosophical direction. However, progressive philosophical divergences between Croce and Gentile eventually led to a rupture. While Croce maintained a position rooted in an idealistic and anti-metaphysical historicism, Gentile fully developed his actualism. Adding to these philosophical disagreements were profound political differences, with Gentile's embrace of fascism contrasting sharply with Croce's growing anti-fascist opposition. This discord culminated in Gentile ceasing his collaboration with "La Critica. Rivista di letteratura, storia e filosofia" in 1923. Gentile subsequently founded his own journal, "Giornale critico della filosofia italiana" (1920–1946), which became the primary vehicle for disseminating his actualist thought.

[13] B. Croce, *Antistoricismo*, in "La Critica. Rivista di letteratura, storia e filosofia", XXVIII, 1930, pp. 276–284.

Considering these key reflections, it is evident that the decadence of the liberal idea occurs when an idea of force prevails, superseding the very concept of morality. Liberty, according to the interpretation by Croce, represents the authentic expression of the human spirit. It follows that any legal or political action must be oriented toward a single purpose: to promote and defend liberty, both in oneself and in others. Following this rigorous speculative approach, Croce arrives at a radical revision of the concept of justice. In an excerpt titled *Revisione filosofica dei concetti di "Libertà" e "Giustizia"*, which appeared in his journal in 1943, he argues that the concept of justice cannot be disjoined from that of liberty, since:

> A consequence of the principle thus established is that, since liberty fully coincides with morality and encompasses every moral duty, there is no task of that quality that it does not reach and that remains outside its sphere, as if inviting another spiritual power to assume and execute it; for, whatever would this other power be, if liberty embraces the whole and is the whole? And this is the reason why I cannot manage to tolerate – I repeat, logically, and not for its sentimental motives – that companionship that one wishes to give it, of another idea, designated by the name of Justice, its corrector or integrator, its friend or its superior, or its emulator and rival, with which it sometimes quarrels and, for better or for worse, compromises and accommodates itself. No: liberty has no need of this because everything that is to be done morally, it does and must do by itself, drawing it from itself, and never finding any other force outside itself[14].

Croce harshly criticizes the materialistic interpretation of justice, which equates it with the equal well-being of all and the equal capacity of all for everything.

> The radical, utopian abolition of economic diversities and political hierarchy, which was the dream that arose from that logical error – and to which, in practice, as has been said, nothing could correspond but failure or an outcome contrary to expectation – was attempted by Jacobinism and, more directly, by Babeuf's Jacobin "Conspiracy of Equals", to which also traces the widely resonant, yet intellectually elusive, formula of *de facto* liberty, to be realized after the achievement of "formal liberty" of "social equality" in substitution for "equality before the law"[15].

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[14] B. Croce, *Revisione filosofica dei concetti di "Libertà" e "Giustizia"*, in "La Critica. Rivista di letteratura, storia e filosofia", XLI, 1943, p. 277.

[15] B. Croce, *op. cit*., p. 280.

This stance, which elevates liberty to a supreme ethical and political principle while reducing justice to its intrinsic manifestation, was widely received, and discussed, eliciting discordant reactions among scholars of the time. It must also be noted that Croce's thought stands in clear opposition to the totalitarian tendencies of certain doctrines that promise 'social justice' by sacrificing individual liberties, anticipating insights later developed by authoritative intellectuals. His aversion to egalitarian utopia reflects a deep distrust of political projects that, in pursuing an ideal of uniformity, risk annihilating the typically human creative dimension. Croce was thus considered the preeminent representative of the liberal ideal, guardian of a spiritual matrix in which European civilization finds its recognition. In an analogous interpretive synthesis, Herling-Grudziński highlights that the ideological propaganda promoted by Russia, having its roots in the Enlightenment and European rationalism, was, for a long time, a political phenomenon difficult to counteract.

> The judgment starts from the premise that communism is not a national and racial utopia, but a social utopia. Therefore, the Soviets, as the architects of this utopia's realization, somehow must be granted the right to commit "errors": initially, their choice is justifiable; it is a matter of realizing the social utopia[16].

It is paradoxical, Herling-Grudziński argues, to aspire to an ideal of a classless and stateless society that denies the individual the most basic freedom: to speak and express dissent against a legality not aimed at respecting human dignity. Herling-Grudziński, having personally experienced the tragedy of the Gulags, with exemplary intellectual lucidity, demolishes the rhetoric of "necessary evil" justified by the goal of social utopia. Croce's intuitions confirm Herling-Grudziński's reflection, where he makes a significant critique of those philosophical systems that often do not seek the truth of facts at all, but rather construct abstract arguments concerned only with conferring logical coherence on their reasoning.

The End of Civilization in Herling-Grudziński's *A World Apart*

To make accessible to the Polish public, and more generally to the exiled community, a thought that would constitute a strong and authoritative

[16] G. Herling, *Variazioni sulle tenebre*, a cura di Stefano De Matteis, Roma 2022, p. 277.

alternative to totalitarianism, Herling-Grudziński decided to publish the Polish translation of Croce's work, *The End of Civilization* (*Zmierzch cywilizacji*), in the journal *Kultura*[17]. *Kultura* represented the most important cultural tool used by opponents of communist ideology in the post-war period who were committed to supporting a free Polish identity. After the war, Herling-Grudziński, like many other intellectuals, directed his reflection toward interpretive frameworks capable of explaining the extent of the catastrophe they had just experienced and the unprecedented, not-so-hidden threats that the future held.

This hermeneutic movement finds vital nourishment precisely in Croce's essay, which offers a remarkable philosophical perspective for developing an authentic reflection aimed at tracing the causes of the radical barbarization of the European politico-cultural sphere. It is important to note that for Croce, the "end of civilization" does not translate into an apocalyptic prediction of physical or material destruction. On the contrary, it is considered as a profound crisis, inextricably linked to the corruption of the ethical and aesthetic categories that defined *humanitas*. It delineates the decay of the moral consciousness and critical capacity of the liberal civilization that Croce had theorized and defended. In this sense, his analysis distinguishes itself from deterministic or providentialistic visions of history, maintaining a firm faith in human liberty and responsibility.

> The end of civilization of which we speak, of civilization universally, is not the elevation but the rupture of tradition, the establishment of barbarism, and it takes place when the lower and barbaric spirits, which, although held in check, are present in every civil society, regain vigor and, ultimately, preponderance and dominion. Then these spirits, incapable of resolving the existing civilization within themselves by raising it to a greater and better power, undermine it, and not only overcome and oppress the men who represent it, but turn to undoing the works that were instruments for their own further works, and they destroy monuments of beauty, systems of thought, all the testimonies of the noble past, closing schools, scattering or burning museums, libraries, and archives, and doing other similar things, as has been seen and is still being seen, whether this

[17] In 1946, Jerzy Giedroyc founded the Instytut Literacki (Literary Institute), a significant publishing institution. Among its early publications was Adam Mickiewicz's *The Books of the Polish Nation and of the Polish Pilgrimage*, featuring a preface by Gustaw Herling. Within the Instytut Literacki, Herling played a central role in editing the journal "Kultura". The first issue of this influential publication appeared in Rome in April 1947, including texts by Paul Valéry (from 1919) and Benedetto Croce (from 1946). Herling actively contributed to the journal, with a brief interruption between 1948 and 1956, and continued his collaboration until 1995.

> occurs through ignorance and carelessness, or through a cheerful spirit of destruction, or through deliberate intent[18].

In 1946, the same year Croce oversaw the publication of *The End of Civilization* in *Quaderni della Critica*, he was also working on his *Antichrist*. Both works, though with distinct titles, reflected the profound disquiet of the philosopher in the face of a reality passively resigned to the meaninglessness of life. Furthermore, for Croce, the *Antichrist* does not hold a theological or eschatological significance. It does not refer to a superhuman or demonic figure, nor to a principle of metaphysical evil. Rather, the *Antichrist* is a powerful metaphor for indicating the negation or perversion of the ethical and spiritual principles that are intrinsic to humanity and that constituted the foundation of its humanity and civilization itself.

> This is truly the Antichrist, opposed to Christ: the Antichrist, destroyer of the world, rejoicing in destruction, heedless of not being able to construct anything other than the perpetually more dizzying process of this destruction itself, the negative that wishes to behave as a positive and be as such no longer creation but, if one could so put it, de-creation[19].

Through this interpretation, Croce sharply distances himself semantically from the nihilistic current, numbering it among those tendentious philosophies that catalyze the emergence of absolute and totalizing ideologies. Such ideologies, in his view, located the meaning of human existence in the satisfaction of primordial instincts, responded to a desire for mere prevarication and self-affirmation through the exclusion of alterity. This correlation was not accidental but derived from his profound understanding of the nature of spirit and history. For Croce, nihilism is not simply one philosophical current among many, but a veritable disease of the spirit, a radical negation of the possibility of truth, ethical values, and rationality itself. In this perspective, Croce equates the *Antichrist* with that dimension of the vital – that dark side of doing – which never ethicizes itself and always re-emerges with a lust for power. Moreover, the idea of liberty that stemms from Croce's reflection is certainly not reconcilable with that of Nietzsche and his will to power, which is situated beyond good and evil and considers morality a superstructure, a lie that paralyzes action. Croce's liberty is

[18] B. Croce, *La fine della civiltà* in "Quaderni della Critica", Vol. II, n.6, 1946, p. 2. Now in: B. Croce, *La fine della civiltà. L'anticristo che è in noi*, Brescia 2022.

[19] B. Croce, *L'anticristo che è in noi* in "Quaderni della Critica", Vol. III, n.8, 1947, p. 67.

one that expressed itself in the authentic dynamics of human existence. And the action of the human, for Croce, always tends toward the universal, not allowing itself to be overwhelmed by contingency. Croce sharply criticizes the essence of a tendentious philosophy that culminates in the total approval of evil and non-resistance to it, interpreted as one of the possible faces of good. He denounces the totalitarian drifts that such a doctrine carries with it when he noted that "faith in liberty has been challenged and shaken… The affirmation of the strongest took precedence".

And it is precisely in Herling-Grudziński's *A World Apart*[20], where humanity is detached from history, that the end of civilization unfolds, now marked by the advent of Croce's *Antichrist*, which manifests as the "disavowal, negation, outrage, derision of values themselves, declared empty words, fabrications or even worse, hypocritical deceptions, which more easily than not pass off, in the dazzled eyes of the credulous and the foolish, as the only reality, that is, personal greed and desire directed entirely towards pleasure and comfort". In A World Apart, every individual, deprived of *conatus essendi*, is treated as an object, in a condition that can be defined as minority[21] in a Kantian logic. This state is a systematic and forced deprivation of the capacity for rational self-determination, a denial of the moral foundation upon which Croce builds his concept of freedom. In the prison camp,

[20] It is almost unnecessary to reiterate that Herling's denunciation of Soviet atrocities in A World Apart led to his forty-year ostracism from his homeland, Poland. The original Polish version of A World Apart was clandestinely circulated in London in 1953 and in Paris in 1965. In 1980, during the so-called "sixteen months of Solidarność," it was finally published uncensored in Poland. However, just a year later, following the coup d'état of December 13, 1981, it was banned again. It was only in 1989 that it was republished and began circulating freely once more. A World Apart was translated into English and published in London in 1951, with an introduction by Bertrand Russell. The work garnered widespread acclaim. However, its dissemination in Italy and France had a different fate. In Italy, it was published by Laterza in 1958, translated by Gaspare Magi, a pseudonym for Lidia Croce and Antonia Maresca. Herling recalled that Laterza, Croce's publisher, printed it reluctantly, almost out of a "family obligation," so to speak.From the documentary sources preserved in the invaluable Herling Archive at the Italian Institute for Historical Studies, it emerges that Albert Camus, in 1956, actively worked to have A World Apart published in France by his publisher, Gallimard. Despite Camus's intervention, the publishing house decided not to proceed with publication "pour des raisons commerciales" (for commercial reasons). It was only translated into French in 1985.The bond between Herling and Camus is particularly noteworthy, characterized by profound mutual respect. Herling never stopped reading Camus, and Camus, struck by the Polish writer's raw description of Soviet horrors in A World Apart, intensified his ongoing polemic with Sartre. Reference is made to the English edition: G. Herling, *A World Apart: A Memoir of the Gulag*, trans. by J. Marek, London 1951. The original Polish edition is Id., *Inny świat. Zapiski sowieckie*, London 1953. For the most recent Italian edition, see *Un mondo a parte*, Milano 2017, now included in G. Herling, *Etica e letteratura. Testimonianze, diario, racconti*, Milano 2019

[21] I. Kant, *Stato di diritto e società civile*, a cura di Nicolao Merker, Roma 2015.

there is passive and unconditional obedience to a tyrannical hierarchical order. This order is succesfully "only when all criteria, all standards of comparison which apply at liberty, have been completely obliterated from the prisoner's mind and memory", could he be fully induced to conceive of his state of imprisonment not as an anomaly but as normality.

Herling-Grudziński, with his raw narration of the tortures inflicted on prisoners, subjected to a condition of "concentrationary civilization", makes us participate in a pain that annihilates all hope and devalues subjectivities, stripped of their dignity, to a biological state. Here, evil is absolute, and cruelty is "legally" organized.

> The inhuman thoughtlessness of Soviet labour camp legislation has created a situation in which a prisoner who drops dead at his work from exhaustion is just a nameless unit of energy, which with one stroke of the pencil is eliminated from the plan of production, while a prisoner wounded at work is a damaged machine, sent off for repairs as soon as possible[22].

Herling-Grudziński portrays a world with its own laws, its own customs, where people lived in a state of perennial despair. In these pages, the interpreter confronts the horror of the absurd. Significant is the passage where Herling-Grudziński recounts the emotions he experienced upon learning of his release. Having received the news, he cannot feel joy or relief. Guilt overwhelms him, leading to a bitter and profound realization: "there is no suffering in this world greater than to experience happiness before the unhappy, to eat in front of the hungry"[23], His thoughts turns to his comrades. Now spiritually disintegrated, they place their last hopes in death, weary of fighting for an ephemeral survival that negated the memory of their existence.

> Soviet prisoners have been deprived even of hope, for not one of them can ever know with any certainty when his sentence will come to an end. He can re-

[22] G. Herling-Grudziński, *A World Apart*, p. 18. See also S. De Matteis, *Per non dimenticare «gli occhi asciutti degli adulti dei colpevoli»* in Andrea F. De Carlo e Marta Herling, *Gustaw Herlingi e il suo mondo. La storia, il coraggio civile e la libertà di scrivere*, Roma 2022, p. 183: "In his long testimony-struggle against evil, to which he dedicated his entire life, Herling-Grudziński argues in his usual essential and necessary style that one must first and foremost remember and recount, narrate and make known. This is not out of a subjective and personal desire or a narcissistic calling to write. Rather, it's because when facts and events are reported, one speaks not only about others and their contexts, about abuses and the evil of history, but also for others."

[23] G. Herling, *A World Apart*, p. 228.

> member literally hundreds of cases where sentences have been prolonged by another ten years with one stroke of a pen at the Special Council of the N.K.V.D in Moscow[24].

In the Ercevo prison camp, there is passive and unconditional obedience to intolerably unjust but formally legal laws.

> In the days of my *A World Apart* or Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, the tormentors in the camps are executors of the will of an omnipotent and vengeful demiurge, with prisoners as mere slaves offered as sacrifice at his altar. It is an immutable reality, an irreversible destiny: it left no room for hesitation among the oppressors, nor for the thinks of rebellion among the oppressed. Schlomer describes the revolt in the Vorkuta camp in the aftermath of Stalin's death. It is the day of the birth of a new Soviet prisoner, a free slave[25].

Considering the scope and complexity of the issues addressed, Herling-Grudziński's narrative disrupted the intellectual landscape of Italy, still deeply scarred by the wounds of war and the political East-West dialectic. Its reception was primarily among intellectual and academic circles, particularly among those who were critical of Communism or sought a deeper understanding of the tragedies of totalitarianism. Intellectuals like Ignazio Silone[26], who wrote the preface for the 1958 Italian edition, immediately grasped its moral and historical significance, recognizing it as a fundamental document for deconstructing the Soviet myth and addressing the

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[24] G. Herling-Grudziński, *A World Apart*, p. 32

[25] G. Herling, *L'opposizione fra i reticolati* in *Scritti Italiani 1944–2000*. Volume I, a cura di M. Śniedziewska, Napoli 2022, p. 561. A crucial initiative for scholars of Gustaw Herling-Grudziński is the complete compilation and reorganization of all his Italian-language writings. This impressive work was curated by Marta Herling and Magdalena Śniedziewska. Currently, this collection is available in typescript format and is preserved at the library of the Italian Institute for Historical Studies in Naples. This Neapolitan institute serves as an irreplaceable resource, offering unique access not only to a vast amount of study material related to Herling-Grudziński but also to a valuable testament to his profound thought and rich life.

[26] Ignazio Silone (Pescina dei Marsi, Italy, 1900 – Geneva, Switzerland, 1978) was a significant Italian writer, journalist, and politician. rom 1956, together with Nicola Chiaromonte, he founded and directed the journal "Tempo Presente," an important point of reference for Italian and international cultural debate. The collaboration between Silone and Herling on "Tempo Presente" symbolizes a convergence of intellectual and moral paths. Both, although coming from different contexts (Silone from Italian anti-fascism and criticism of post-Stalinist communism, Herling from direct experience in the gulag), were united by shared liberal values, an uncompromising critique of all forms of tyranny, and a belief in the importance of individual testimony and freedom of conscience. In this regard, Herling recalls in *Etica e letteratura. Testimonianze, diario, racconti*, p. 479: "I met Silone, as well as Chiaromonte, at the end of 1955. They proposed that I write for "Tempo Presente", which

question of individual liberty in the face of oppressive regimes. Its publication helped to break a certain silence or, at least, to challenge the predominant narratives regarding the Eastern Bloc, offering a direct perspective on the reality of forced labor camps. A perspective that contributed to forming a critical consciousness in a part of the Italian intelligentsia, fueling the debate on human rights, the nature of authoritarian regimes, and the necessity of preserving historical truth. An authentic truth that dismissed all forms of political pretense and confronted the reader with evil.

Conclusions

The theme of evil recurs frequently throughout Herling-Grudziński's works – an evil that characterizes the 20th century, an era deprived of those values that imbued thought with hope. Herling-Grudziński endeavored to seek the reasons for that evil, personally endured, to re-establish the ethical order that totalitarianism had severely undermined. His reflection aims to draw a well-defined theoretical furrow: to assign meaning to the brutal experience of Ercevo and not to be defeated by the consequences of exile. Herling-Grudziński, on the long journey undertaken to achieve freedom, is simply a pilgrim of hope, and his sole mission is to educate humanity in solidarity, the genealogical principle that upheld the world. He thus denounces destructive and totalizing ideologies, founded on terror and fear, which ultimately annihilate humanity, forced to endure the brutal and vulgar force masterfully described by Simone Weil. The exiled writer's condemnation is total. Herling-Grudziński, having personally experienced the absurdity that suddenly descendes upon human life, paraphrasing Camus, recounts existences interrupted by contingent laws, expressions of the will of the strongest. Exemplarily, he warns that:

> Ideology leaves no liberty either to the individual or to society as a whole, which must conform to a pre-established model. Those who deviate have no right to live in society. From this point of view, ideology is terrible, because it develops a tendency towards evil[27].

they had just founded […] But back then, in that atmosphere of intellectual conformism, bad faith, disinformation, and moral torpor, the issues of "Tempo Presente" were usually met with hostility, if not aversion and gnashing of teeth, accompanied by the usual stupid label of a Cold War product".

[27] G. Herling, *Variazioni sulle tenebre*, p. 367.

In this *mare magnum* of ideological absurdities, liberty, the defining characteristic of human creativity, is stifled, annihilated by the advent of those totalitarianisms, which were the architects of unacceptable injustices. If we consider law in its phenomenological sense that is, as a hypothesis of norms for hypothetical behaviors always oriented toward respecting the liberty of others, a principle rooted in the rational *a priori* of Kantian ethics and jurisprudence, it becomes emblematic that this interpretation of the legal phenomenon had been completely discarded by totalitarian regimes. Croce, the initiator of a religion dedicated to liberty, and the author of the *Manifesto of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals*, strived to oppose any system, even if legally established, whose legislative activity devolves into crude imposition, thus threatening the very idea of liberty, understood as the insurmountable way of being of the individual. Both Croce and Herling-Grudziński radically oppose every form of arbitrary, self-referential power not oriented toward respecting a principle of substantive equality that acknowledges alterity while respecting its difference. Influenced by Croce's convictions, Herling-Grudziński demonstrates the twin nature shared by the *lager* and the *gulag*. This insight, far beyond mere historical comparison, reveales a profound understanding of totalitarian dynamics, which were founded on control and repression. Such a perspective echoes Croce's position, for whom totalitarianism, in all its forms, represents a pathology of history and spirit, a regression toward barbarism that denied the autonomy of morality and politics. Based on what has been argued so far, it is evident that both Herling-Grudziński and Croce converge in recognizing the intrinsically antithetical nature of authoritarian systems compared to the foundational values of European civilization.

> From 1825 onwards – Herling-Grudziński observes – the struggle for freedom in Russia followed autocratic power like an inseparable shadow. The famous extremism of Russian revolutionaries is merely an extreme reaction to the extreme oppression of the tsars. The resurgence of state terror increased the desperate violence of terrorism – how desperate and tormented Camus recounts in The Rebel – by the hand of bombs or pistols for the assailants (…) Under Stalin, Herling-Grudziński continues, political opposition is silenced and decimated. The apparatus of terror becomes so omnipotent as to render even the most cautious and timid reservations about the regime irreprehensible[28].

[28] G. Herling, *I clandestini russi della libertà*, in *Scritti Italiani 1944–2000*. Vol. 1, a cura di Magdalena Śniedziewska, p. 594.

Herling-Grudziński, in fully embracing Croce's speculation, is guided by a theoretical imperative: no man can ever discern between good and evil if he is deprived of his freedom. Herling-Grudziński, however, does not succumb to despair; he glimpses hope. Man can and must rebel against totalitarian ideologies that violate fundamental rights. In a similar interpretive synthesis with Croce's thought, he conceives of liberty as the engine and purpose of history, condemning every form of violence that, despite originating from instances of freedom, ultimately betrays itself in the establishment of new despotisms. In this sense, Herling-Grudziński does not allow himself to be defeated by the meaninglessness of life professed by new nihilisms. He did not accept the label of exile but asserted his status as a pilgrim of freedom. Following Croce's *lectio*, he considers force the great illness of Europe: "it is all a matter of blood" – Herling-Grudziński stated – "which is the only seal of conquest". Ultimately, the comparison proposed here between Croce's thought and Herling-Grudziński's work is not a mere exercise in intellectual philology but constitutes an essential contribution to an authentic understanding of the deep roots of the European crisis of the 20th century and its possible responses. Their shared aversion to egalitarian utopias and strenuous defense of liberty do not represent an echo of an anachronistic liberalism, but rather a perennial warning. In an era that continues to confront new forms of ideological and technological enslavement, the lesson of Croce and Herling-Grudziński's testimony resonates with a prophetic force: only in safeguarding individual liberty and in constant vigilance against every form of absolutism can human dignity be cultivated and civilization preserved. Their legacy compels us to recognize that liberty is never a given, but a daily conquest, the only true possible justice for the spirit. The contemporary relevance of the ideological encounter between these two giants of thought continues to fuel contemporary debate and is a subject of study and comparison among scholars committed to reinterpreting cultural relations between Italy and Poland in the 20th century.

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The Polish language in Canada: selected factors shaping its ethnolinguistic vitality

Abstract

This paper offers a preliminary examination of the ethnolinguistic vitality of the Polish language in Canada, applying the framework developed by Giles, Bourhis and Taylor to assess the interplay of status, demographic and institutional factors shaping language maintenance and shift. Drawing on historical migration data, census statistics and community observations, it traces the evolution of Polish settlement from the late 19th century to the present, highlighting the erosion of intergenerational transmission, high rates of exogamy and declining recent immigration as major challenges. While Polish retains symbolic prestige within its ethnic community, its functional utility in Canadian public life remains limited, reducing incentives for active use. The analysis underscores the critical role of institutional support – particularly heritage schools, Catholic parishes and Polish-language media – in sustaining linguistic continuity, even as these institutions face declining enrolment, resource constraints and generational disengagement. Additional factors such as parental education levels, ethnic pride and technological advances in communication are examined for their mitigating or intensifying effects on language shift. The paper concludes that maintaining Polish in Canada requires deliberate and coordinated strategies to strengthen both the objective and subjective dimensions of vitality, integrate local initiatives into broader networks and enhance community awareness of the heritage language's cultural and identity value.

Keywords: Polish language in Canada; ethnolinguistic vitality; heritage language maintenance; language shift

Introduction

The Polish presence in Canada is rooted in multiple waves of immigration, each shaped by distinct historical and political circumstances. From early arrivals in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to the post-World War II refugee influx and the diminishing migration following Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004, Polish Canadians have established a variety of communities across the country. Cities such as Toronto, Mississauga, Winnipeg, Vancouver – just to mention a few – have become cultural hubs where Polish traditions and language continue to thrive, although to varying degrees. However, like most European heritage language communities, Polish Canadians face challenges related to language shift, particularly among second- and third-generation speakers.

Historically, Polish migrants have placed great importance on language as a key element of cultural identity, successfully maintaining their heritage language across three to four generations in various host countries[1]. Within emigrant communities, a high level of Polish language use in the family has consistently aligned with a strong sense of Polish identity among both first- and second-generation migrants[2], as well as with widespread support for the preservation of Polish culture. The family has been identified as the primary bastion of Polish identity abroad[3]. For the first generation in particular, the Polish language was regarded as a *core value* – one whose abandonment could risk social exclusion from the ethnic group[4]. While most second-generation individuals continue to believe that speaking Polish is essential to being considered Polish, the connection between language and identity in this cohort has weakened[5].

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[1] J. Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, Essex 2000.

[2] J. Lustański, *„Czy warto uczyć się polskiego?" Refleksje studentów kanadyjskich o polszczyźnie*, „Poradnik Językowy" 7 (2018), p. 39–58. About Polish in Australia see: E. Drozd, *They have come a long way: the settlement of the 1980s wave of Polish immigrants in Melbourne*, Footscray 2001; E. Lipińska, *Proces stawania się dwujęzycznym. Studium przypadku polskiego chłopca w Australii, rozprawa doktorska*, Kraków 2001; R. Dębski, *Dynamika utrzymania języka polskiego w Australii*, „Postscriptum Polonistyczne" 1 (2016), p. 133–150.

[3] J. Smolicz, *Language Core Values and Cultural Identity in Australia: Some Polish, Welsh and Indian Minority Experiences*, "Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society" 19 (1991), p. 115–17.

[4] *Ibidem*.

[5] This weakening connection between language and identity has been examined in Dębski's works (2009, 2016) as well as in one of my own studies: *Polish Canadians and Polish immigrants in Canada: self-identity and language attitude*, "International Journal of the Sociology of Language" 199 (2009), p. 39–61.

The maintenance of a heritage language is often a key indicator of cultural continuity in immigrant communities. It supports identity formation, intergenerational cohesion and access to cultural inheritance[6]. Yet, maintaining minority languages in multicultural societies like Canada can be difficult in the face of assimilation pressures and dominant-language environments[7]. In this context, the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality – as proposed by Giles, Bourhis and Taylor[8] – offers a useful framework for understanding the factors that influence the long-term survival of minority languages. The complexity of intergroup relations between linguistic groups can be measured using three-related sociocultural factors which are status (prestige and institutional recognition), demography (population size and distribution) and institutional support (presence in education, media and public life). Vitality can be evaluated both objectively – such as measured by actual statistics – and subjectively measured by individuals' perceptions[9]. It is argued[10] that objective and subjective vitality provide a starting point from which the difficult link between sociological (collective) and social-psychological (individual) accounts of language, ethnicity and intergroup relations can be explored.[11]

This article offers a preliminary discussion of the ethnolinguistic vitality of the Polish language in Canada. Drawing on available demographic data, community observations conducted by the author – who has lived in Canada for more than two decades researching the Polish community – and the theoretical framework outlined above, this paper explores selected factors that contribute to or hinder the continued use of Polish within the Canadian context. The paper is structured as follows: it begins with a brief overview of the Polish community in Canada, followed by an explanation of the ethnolinguistic vitality model. Next, it examines selected elements –

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[6] See: W. Miodunka, *Moc języka i jej znaczenie w kontaktach językowych i kulturowych*, in: Język polski w świecie, ed. W. Miodunka, Kraków 1990, p. 39–49.

[7] See: J. Chambers, *English: Canadian varieties*, in: Language in Canada, ed. J.R. Edwards, Cambridge 1998, p. 252–272.

[8] It was first published as the following paper: *Towards a theory of language in ethnic group relations*, in: Language, ethnicity and intergroup relations, ed. H. Giles, London 1977, p. 307–348.

[9] Subjective dimensions of vitality are out of scope of this paper.

[10] P. Johnson, H. Giles, R.Y. Bourhis, *The viability of ethnolinguistic vitality: A reply*, "Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development" 4 (1983), p. 258.

[11] There are other frameworks that identify other factors influencing language maintenance and shift, but they are out of the scope of this paper. One of them was presented in the book by Nancy Conklin and Margaret Lourie *A host of tongues: language communities in the United States*, New York 1983.

status, demographic trends and institutional support – before concluding with reflections on current challenges and suggestions for future research.

The Polish Language in Canada: A Historical Overview

The history of the Polish language in Canada is closely tied to successive waves of immigration, each shaped by political, economic and social factors in both Poland and Canada. The earliest Polish presence in Canada dates back to the 18th century[12], but large-scale immigration began in the late 19th century, with significant numbers of Kashubian settlers arriving in Ontario's Madawaska Highlands in the 1850s. A significant influx of Polish immigrants occurred before World War I, when approximately 60,000 individuals – primarily from Galicia and some other parts of Central Europe – arrived to work in agriculture, railway construction and mining. The interwar years brought additional settlers, many of whom carried strong national identities shaped by Poland's recent independence. After World War II, Canada welcomed more than 150,000 displaced persons from Eastern Europe, including educated elites and war veterans. There were about 50,000 Poles among them.

Another major wave followed in the 1980s and 1990s, when roughly 115,000 Poles immigrated in response to the repression of the Solidarity movement and political unrest in Poland. In the 21st century, Polish immigration to Canada has declined to about 2,000 people per year, with numbers in recent years dropping below one thousand.[13] The recent census by Canadian Statistics shows that in 2021 only 135,030 Canadians declared Poland as place of birth, among them there were 3780 immigrants who arrived in Canada in 2001–2021[14].

The demographic composition and geographic distribution of the Polish community in Canada have evolved over time. According to the 2021 Canadian census, 982,815 individuals claimed Polish ancestry, represent-

[12] A. Reczyńska, *Polonia kanadyjska*, in: Polacy w Kanadzie. Słownik biograficzny, eds. J. Kozak, T. Piwowarek, Toronto 2006, p. 13. See also: A. Reczyńska., *Polska diaspora w Kanadzie*, in: *Polska diaspora*, ed. A. Walaszek, Kraków 2001, p. 30–50.

[13] See: A. Reczyńska, T. Soroka, *Polska emigracja do Kanady na przełomie wieków XX i XXI w kontekście kanadyjskiej polityki imigracyjnej*, „Studia migracyjne – Przegląd Polonijny" 39 (2013), 3(149), p. 5–18.

[14] Statistics Canada – https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810033801 (accessed: 20.01.2025); A. Reczyńska, *Polska diaspora w Kanadzie*, in: *Polska diaspora*, eds. M. Lesińska, A. Walaszek, J. Wojdon, Warszawa 2026 (in press).

ing 2.65% of the national population. While only 14% of these were born in Poland, the vast majority are descendants of earlier immigrants. Ontario is home to the largest Polish population, with over 461,000 people of Polish descent, including significant concentrations in Toronto, Mississauga and Hamilton. Alberta ranks second, with notable communities in Edmonton and Calgary, while British Columbia – particularly Vancouver – hosts the third largest Polish-speaking population. Most Polish Canadians reside in urban centers, with rural concentrations much smaller and largely historical. The 2021 data also reflect an aging population and declining use of Polish as a mother tongue, indicating both assimilation and reduced recent immigration.

The Polish language in Canada has been preserved and nurtured through the support of community institutions. Catholic parishes were foundational in early Polish settlements, with the first established in the 1870s in Hagarty, later renamed Wilno[15]. These religious centers often hosted not only worship in the Polish language, but also Polish-language education and community events. Over time, other Polish organizations were established and then flourished, including mutual aid societies, youth groups, choirs and cultural clubs[16]. The 20th century saw the development of Polish community centers, such as the Polish Cultural Centre in Mississauga and SPK veterans' halls across the country. Saturday schools and heritage language programs have also been critical, with over 100 such schools operating at their peak in the 1970s. Though many of these institutions face declining enrolment today, they remain key pillars of the Polish language vitality in Canada.

Ethnolinguistic Vitality – Theoretical Framework

The concept of ethnolinguistic vitality was first introduced as a theoretical tool to explain the strength and survival potential of language communities within intergroup contexts. Rooted in Social Identity Theory[17], ethnolinguistic vitality refers to a group's ability to maintain and assert its language and cultural distinctiveness in the face of dominant societal pressures. Vitality is thought to come from three primary sociostructural factors: status, demography and institutional support. These dimensions serve to assess a group's

[15] A. Reczyńska 2001, p. 36.

[16] Ibidem.

[17] See: H. Tajfel, J.C. Turner, *An integrative theory of intergroup conflict*, in: The social psychology of intergroup relations, ed. W.C. Austin, S. Worchel, Monterey, CA 1979, p. 33–53.

capacity to act as a collective entity and influence its environment linguistically and culturally. The framework distinguishes between objective vitality, based on measurable data (e.g. population size or institutional presence) and subjective vitality, which refers to group members' perceptions of their own vitality. Both forms can shape language behaviour and community cohesion, with subjective perceptions often predicting responses, such as linguistic resistance or revival, more accurately than statistics alone.

The status component encompasses a group's standing in terms of prestige, wealth, education and cultural recognition, both internally (within the group) and externally (in the eyes of society at large). Four specific types of status are typically assessed: economic (control over financial resources), social (general societal esteem), sociohistorical (whether the group has a respected or marginalized past) and linguistic (the perceived prestige of the group's language and culture). A group with high status is one that enjoys economic influence, cultural respect and positive visibility. Importantly, status is not simply a function of current position but is shaped by historical narratives and public discourse. For minority language groups, status can directly impact intergenerational language transmission – when the heritage language is viewed as valuable and prestigious, community members are more likely to pass it on.

The demographic dimension refers to the number and distribution of group members in a given territory, region or country. Key variables include absolute population size, geographic concentration, migration patterns, intermarriage rates as well as birth and death rates. Groups with high demographic vitality typically have large, dense populations that maintain strong internal social networks and experience relatively low levels of out-migration or assimilation. Conversely, groups that are dispersed, shrinking in number or experiencing high intermarriage rates tend to exhibit lower vitality. According to the framework, demographic strength enhances a group's ability to form stable institutions and sustain language practices over time. However, as Abrams *et al*.[18] caution, demographic indicators are often misestimated by individuals, which complicates their use in subjective assessments.

The third dimension, institutional support, captures the degree to which a language group is represented and supported in public and private institutions. This includes domains such as education, media, government,

[18] See: J.R. Abrams, V. Barker, H. Giles, *An examination of the validity of the Subjective Vitality Questionnaire*, "Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development" 30 (2009), p. 59–72.

religion, business and cultural life. Groups with high institutional support are visible in national broadcasting, have access to bilingual or heritage language education and maintain political advocacy structures. Importantly, institutional support can be both formal (e.g. state policy, school curricula) and informal (e.g. community organizations, local events). Abrams *et al*. note that in practice, the status and institutional support factors often overlap, as visibility in institutions may also elevate group prestige. Nevertheless, a clear presence in institutional life remains essential for linguistic survival, especially for minority communities in multicultural or multilingual societies.

The presented concept of ethnolinguistic vitality offers a valuable framework for analyzing the position of minority language communities such as Polish Canadians. It helps explain the potential of an ethnolinguistic group to maintain its language and cultural identity within a broader intergroup context. In the Canadian context – where multiculturalism is an official policy – the framework is particularly relevant for understanding how heritage languages like Polish are maintained or eroded across generations. While Polish is not an official language in Canada, it is still one of the more widely spoken heritage languages, making it a compelling case for vitality analysis.

Selected Factors of Polish Ethnolinguistic Vitality in Canada

Status of Polish in Canada

The status of the Polish language in Canada is shaped by both the historical trajectory of Polish immigration and shifting perceptions of the language's prestige and functional utility. Although Polish has never held any form of official or institutional status in Canada – unlike English and French – it has enjoyed a form of symbolic prestige within its own ethnic community, closely tied to narratives of cultural resilience, national pride and intellectual legacy. Polish immigrants have long been perceived as hardworking and community-oriented, and those arriving in the post-World War II and post-Solidarity waves further elevated the group's socio-professional standing. Many among them were engineers, technicians, academics, clergy, artists and political activists, including refugees with strong anti-communist credentials. This influx contributed to a positive image of Poles as politically aware and culturally sophisticated, reinforcing the symbolic status of the language, especially among the older generation.

Despite this internal recognition, Polish has remained a peripheral language in the broader Canadian linguistic landscape**.** It lacks visibility in government institutions, mainstream media and the educational system outside of heritage and multicultural programs. Unlike some other heritage languages that have recently achieved greater public utility – such as Mandarin, Punjabi or Spanish – Polish is rarely used in business, politics or public services. Its presence in public signage or municipal resources is minimal. The language's instrumental status is therefore limited. Moreover, among younger generations of Polish Canadians – many of whom are English- or French-dominant – its perceived value is primarily cultural or emotional rather than practical[19]. This weakens incentives for active language transmission and use, even among families who maintain strong ties to Polish traditions.

However, within the framework of Canada's official multiculturalism policy, Polish is acknowledged as one of the country's heritage languages and this recognition has enabled certain forms of institutional and symbolic support. For example, at the peak of multicultural programming in the 1970s and 1980s, Polish language instruction was incorporated into certain public and Catholic school systems, while community-run Polish-language newspapers, libraries and cultural festivals benefited from federal and provincial funding. The main Canadian services, like the Canadian Dental Care Plan, Employment Insurance and public pensions offer flyers and information booklets in Polish.[20] Moreover, some organizations supporting newcomers, like Culture Link, offer services in Polish. They do have not only free settlement services, like employment assistance and school navigation, but also mental health support, mentorship and community connection programs[21]. Some public libraries and community centers in areas with significant Polish communities (e.g., Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton) offer Polish-language materials or programs, though availability varies by location. Together, these resources help preserve Polish language and culture in Canada, while also supporting community members in navigating life and accessing essential services in their heritage language.

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[19] J. Lustański, *„Czy warto uczyć się polskiego?" Refleksje studentów kanadyjskich o polszczyźnie*, „Poradnik Językowy" 7 (2018), p. 39–58.

[20] See: canada.ca (accessed: 10.07.2025).

[21] https://www.centralhealthline.ca/displayservice.aspx?id=133272 (accessed: 12.07.2025).

Demographic Characteristics

The demographic profile of the Polish Canadian community reveals trends that are both supportive of and challenging to language maintenance. According to a statistician René Houle who provided a longitudinal comparison of the 1981 and 2006 Canadian censuses[22], Polish mothers in 1981 passed their language on to 34% of their Canadian-born children under 18, a figure that increased to 64% by 2006. This notable rise in first-generation transmission suggests that Polish retained a certain vitality within immigrant households, despite competition from Canada's dominant languages. However, when examining intergenerational transmission – specifically the ability of second-generation women to pass the language to their own children – the percentage dropped to 17%, highlighting a steep decline between generations. By the third generation, only 6% of grandchildren retained Polish as their mother tongue, placing Polish among the heritage languages with the lowest long-term retention rates[23].

Several factors help explain this pattern of erosion. Houle emphasizes the role of endogamy as the strongest predictor of language transmission: the more likely a person is to partner with someone who shares the same mother tongue, the greater the likelihood of passing that language to children. For the Polish group, high levels of exogamy among Canadian-born descendants significantly reduced intergenerational transmission. In 2006, many Polish-Canadian women were in relationships with partners who spoke English or French, limiting opportunities for sustained language use in the home. Demographic dispersion has also played a role. Although large Polish populations exist in cities like Toronto, Mississauga, Edmonton and Vancouver[24], these communities are often scattered across neighborhoods, which limits the density of Polish-language interactions in public or informal settings. In smaller communities, where Polish groups are older and more rural, e.g. in Arvida, Quebec, and Sydney, Nova Scotia, assimilation has been especially pronounced[25]. In such places, spatial diffusion lowers the chances of creating reinforcing environments for the language,

[22] R. Houle, *Recent evolution of immigrant language transmission in Canada*, "Canadian Social Trends" 11–008 (2011), pp. 3–12.

[23] A similar pattern for the Polish ethnic group was observed in Clyne's studies in Australia. M. Clyne, *Community Languages: The Australian Experience*, Cambridge 1991.

[24] A. Reczyńska, *Polska diaspora w Kanadzie*. in: *Polska diaspora*, eds. M. Lesińska, A. Walaszek, J. Wojdon, Warszawa 2026 (in press).

[25] See: T. Urbaniak, *The Survival of Polish Communities in Small Canadian Industrial Cities. A Comparative Study of Arvida, Quebec, and Sydney, Nova Scotia*, "Polish American Studies" LXIX (2012) 2, p. 59–77.

weakening both family and communal language transmission. This contradicts the general statement that resistance to language shift tends to last longer in rural than urban areas[26].

Additionally, the Polish community – unlike some newer immigrant groups – had low levels of recent immigration, which meant there were fewer new speakers to reinforce community use of the language. As already mentioned in this paper, census data from 2021 supports this trend: while nearly 983,000 Canadians reported Polish ancestry, only 14% were born in Poland, and a much smaller subset – about 160,400 individuals – reported Polish as their mother tongue[27]. Taken together, these patterns illustrate how Polish in Canada faces a gradual but persistent decline, particularly beyond the first generation. Without renewed demographic influx or concentrated community networks, the long-term vitality of the language will depend heavily on conscious efforts to sustain it within families and community institutions.

Institutional Support

In terms of institutional support, this lack of demographic renewal contributes to the declining presence of Polish in public and private spheres over time. In the past decades, Polish has benefitted from a historically strong and diverse network of educational, religious and cultural organizations, however this has changed in the last two decades.

In the second half of the twentieth century, multiple education courses for Polish immigrants and Saturday schools for children were established at Polish parishes and organizations. According to Reczyńska[28], by 1950 there were 20 such schools, and by the 1970s, the number had grown to about a hundred, the largest concentrations being in Toronto and the province of Ontario. As of recent data, only half of the school still operate. Most of them are managed by local parent associations, parishes or diaspora organizations. They typically offer classes once a week, focusing on Polish language, history, geography and cultural traditions. These schools rely on minimal provincial funding, volunteer effort and occasional support from the Polish government. Within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), there is also a bilingual school "Quo Vadis" and a small, privately owned "Alderwood Academy" of a similar kind. Finally, Polish language is highly supported by

[26] Holmes, p. 59.
[27] After: Reczyńska 2026.
[28] Reczyńska 2026.

two schools supervised by ORPEG (Ośrodek Rozwoju Polskiej Edukacji za Granicą) who oversees Polish schools established at Polish diplomatic missions. They deliver a free supplementary educational program – covering Polish language and knowledge of Poland – to children of Polish citizens temporarily or permanently residing in Canada. Instruction is offered from kindergarten through secondary school, adopting the Polish curriculum and awarding Polish school certificates, including credit recognition within Ontario's school system for high-school level students.

All these schools function as cultural and linguistic anchors, allowing students to experience Polish heritage in a social setting that reinforces ethnic pride and language use[29]. While their instructional time is limited, they are seen as crucial in supporting intergenerational language transmission and fostering a strong Polish-Canadian identity[30]. The effectiveness and long-term sustainability of Polish heritage schools, however, depend on several intersecting factors, including generational status, family language practices and broader societal influences. First-generation immigrant parents are typically the most motivated to enrol their children and actively support the schools, viewing them as key to preserving their cultural and linguistic heritage. That interest tends to decline among second- and third-generation families, particularly when children begin to prioritize mainstream Canadian extracurricular activities over weekend heritage classes. The data shows that while 60% of respondents expressed strong support for maintaining the Polish language in Canada, only 27% reported enrolling their children in Polish schools, pointing to a gap between declared values and actual practice[31]. Additional challenges include a reliance on volunteer teachers, limited funding and variability in teaching quality. Despite these obstacles, for those families who remain committed to cultural transmission, Polish Saturday schools continue to serve as one of the most structured and accessible means of supporting heritage language retention in the Canadian context.

At the post-secondary level, Polish is currently offered at only a small number of universities across four Canadian provinces: British Columbia,

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[29] J. Lustański, *Sacrum i profanum w nauczaniu polszczyzny w szkole polskiej w Kanadzie – perspektywa tożsamościowa*, in: *Polszczyzna dla cudzoziemców – sacrum i profanum*, eds. P. Garncarek, B. Łukaszewicz, Warszawa 2025, 31–53.

[30] J. Lustański, M. Stroińska, *The Polish language and culture maintenance in Canada "scented with resin"*, in: Polish as a Heritage Language around the World, eds. P. Romanowski, A. Seretny, London 2024, 116–137.

[31] See: J. Lustański, *Język polonijny w Kanadzie*, Toronto 2009, pp. 109–114.

Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario. Enrolment in these programs is modest and has been declining, reflecting a broader contraction of academic infrastructure that poses challenges to long-term language maintenance, despite the symbolic value of such programs within the community. Students may take Polish either as an elective or as part of their program requirements. The University of Toronto remains the only institution in Canada offering full undergraduate and graduate degree programs in Polish language and literature. At the University of Manitoba, the Polish studies program was recently expanded and restructured into a minor, consisting of 18 credit hours (or six one-semester courses), thanks to the support of the Polish-Canadian community in Winnipeg. Polish language courses are still available at the University of Alberta and the University of British Columbia, although the number of offerings has been reduced in recent years. McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, which offered beginner and intermediate-level courses for more than forty years, continues – after a three-year break – to sustain its offerings through endowments from the local Polish community[32].

Polish Catholic parishes in Canada have long served as key institutions for preserving both religious traditions and the Polish language. As noted by A. Reczyńska[33], approximately 30 Polish Roman Catholic parishes currently operate across the country, functioning not only as places of worship but also as cultural anchors for Polish-Canadian communities. Major parishes such as St. Maximilian Kolbe in Mississauga and St. Eugene de Mazenod in Brampton hold regular Masses in Polish, while smaller parishes also maintain Polish-language services. Beyond liturgy, these parishes host cultural events, holiday celebrations and community gatherings that reinforce intergenerational transmission of language and identity. Their programming often incorporates traditional music, Polish-language announcements and communal prayer – all of which offer opportunities for passive and active language exposure in a natural, meaningful context.

Despite a broader trend of declining religiosity, particularly among younger Polish Canadians, attendance at Polish-language Masses remains relatively strong – especially among second-generation individuals. For many, the appeal lies less in religious doctrine and more in the emotional and cultural familiarity conveyed through the Polish liturgy. The Church thus functions as a symbolic space where the heritage language continues to carry personal and collective meaning. Some parishes actively involve

[32] J. Lustański, M. Stroińska, p. 130.
[33] Reczyńska 2026.

children in the service by inviting them to read passages in Polish, which not only fosters literacy, but also builds a sense of ownership and pride in their linguistic heritage. Although the language level of these readings may exceed the children's proficiency, the effort to include youth demonstrates the Church's ongoing – if evolving – role in language maintenance. In an environment where other institutional supports for Polish are limited, Catholic parishes remain vital community spaces where the heritage language is heard, spoken and celebrated.

Polish-language media in Canada – both paper and digital – continues to play a key role in preserving the heritage language and fostering cultural continuity among Polish Canadians. Historically, newspapers like *Związkowiec*, *Czas* and *Gazeta* connected dispersed communities and provided a shared space for public discourse in Polish. While many print publications have ceased operation or been absorbed, newer outlets such as *Wiadomości*, *Goniec* and their online counterparts (*Bejsment*, *GoniecTvToronto*) reflect efforts to adapt to changing media consumption patterns. Digital formats – websites, podcasts (e.g. *POLcast*) and social media – offer more accessible, bite-sized engagement with Polish, particularly beneficial for younger or less fluent speakers. Platforms such as *Culture Avenue* further enrich the linguistic landscape by offering virtual lectures and discussions that expose viewers to contemporary cultural and language trends from Poland.

At the same time, broader social changes – including assimilation, technological shifts and evolving ties to Poland – have transformed Polish-Canadian media. While the number of Polish-language print publications has declined, some media continue to innovate: *Gazeta* has transitioned fully to digital since 2019, integrating interviews and audio content, and *POLcast* reaches English-speaking audiences interested in Polish topics worldwide. Other long-standing outlets, such as *Głos Polski*, have become marginalized due to political shifts. Still, new initiatives persist, including online-only publications like *Polish Winnipeg*, *Komunikaty Ottawskie* and *Panorama Montreal*. Despite decreasing television and radio offerings, programs like *Radio Polonia* (Winnipeg), *Radio Bis* (Hamilton) and broadcasted on the Internet a long-standing *Radio 7* remain valuable spaces for heritage language use. Though fragmented and under-resourced, the Polish-Canadian media ecosystem continues to support Polish language maintenance by offering intergenerational, diasporic access to Polish content in both traditional and contemporary forms.

Taken together, these educational, religious and media-based institutions offer a robust – if uneven – scaffold of support for Polish language

maintenance in Canada. Within the ethnolinguistic vitality framework, they represent key channels of institutional support, balancing formal and informal mechanisms. However, challenges remain, mainly declining enrolment in schools and university programs, generational disengagement from traditional organizations and resource limitations – all impact the reach and sustainability of these efforts. Nevertheless, the diversity and adaptability of Polish institutional life – from Saturday schools to online platforms – illustrate a community actively negotiating the tension between assimilation and heritage preservation.

Other Selected Factors Contributing to Language Maintenance and Shift

While the ethnolinguistic vitality framework provides a useful lens for assessing the structural and sociocultural conditions that influence the survival of minority languages, it does not capture the full range of variables affecting language use and transmission. Language vitality can also be examined through the sociological dimension of *linguistic capital*[34], alongside additional factors that shape patterns of maintenance and shift. Some of these factors fall within the scope of the Subjective Ethnolinguistic Vitality theory, which emphasizes individual perceptions of group vitality; although this perspective lies beyond the focus of the present study, its insights remain relevant for understanding processes of language retention and decline[35]. In the case of Polish in Canada, these additional factors include socio-demographic variables such as parental education levels, attitudinal dimensions such as ethnic pride and affective ties to Poland, and contextual influences such as geographic distance from the homeland – each of which can either reinforce or undermine the transmission of the heritage language across generations.

Houle's analysis[36] highlights a clear relationship between maternal education level and the transmission of heritage languages, including Polish. In both 1981 and 2006 censuses, Polish mothers with lower levels of formal education were significantly more likely to pass on their mother tongue to their Canadian-born children. Specifically, mothers without diplomas had

[34] See: P. Bourdieu, *La distinction*, Paris 1980; A. Prujiner, D. Deshaies, J.F. Hamers, M. Blanc, R. Clement, R. Landry, *Variation du comportement langagier lorsque deux langues sont en contact*, Montreal 1984.

[35] See: C. Husband, V. Saifullah Khan, *The viability of ethnolinguistic vitality: Some creative doubts*, "Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development" 3 (1982), p. 193–205; R. Landry, R. Bourhis, *Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality. An empirical Study*, "Journal of Language and Social Psychology" 16 (1997), p. 23–49.

[36] Houle, pp. 11–12.

the highest transmission rates, while those with university degrees were least likely to do so. This pattern reflects a broader trend among immigrant groups, where lower educational attainment is often associated with stronger adherence to traditional cultural practices, including language retention. In the case of Polish Canadians, this may also relate to earlier waves of immigration, where many immigrants came from working-class backgrounds and settled in culturally homogeneous communities, creating more favorable environments for maintaining the language within the family. Notably, other European-origin groups such as Italian, Portuguese and Hungarian mothers also exhibited declining transmission rates as education levels rose, reinforcing the idea that heritage language maintenance weakens when paired with high levels of integration and emphasis on official language acquisition.

Pride in ethnic identity is another feature that adds to language maintenance or shift. Pride in being Polish among Polish immigrants in Canada plays a crucial role in heritage language maintenance by reinforcing emotional attachment, cultural values and the symbolic significance of the Polish language. As psychologist Paweł Boski[37] researching Polish immigrants in Canada demonstrates, a strong criterial identity – anchored in knowledge of and personal relevance attached to national symbols, including language – correlates with sustained use of Polish. While this attachment weakens across generations, the correlated identity, rooted in enduring cultural values such as family orientation and altruism, often persists and supports language retention in private and community settings. Affective involvement with Poland, especially among older and recent immigrants, further motivates intergenerational language transmission. Overall, pride in ethnic identity functions as both a psychological and sociocultural anchor that mitigates language shift in the Canadian context.

Geographical distance between the country of settlement and the country of origins is another factor shaping the status of the Polish language in Canada. In Stanisław Dubisz's classification[38], the form of migration from Poland to Canada is categorized as overseas emigration, opposed to *continental* emigration within Europe where the prospects for language maintenance are generally stronger. The vast distance historically hindered the development of Polish-language social networks, reduced the frequency of visits to and from Poland and ultimately limited immigrants' direct

[37] P. Boski, *Remaining a Pole or Becoming a Canadian: National Self-Identity among Polish Immigrant to Canada*, "Journal of Applied Social Psychology" 21 (1991), p. 41–77.

[38] S. Dubisz, ed., *Język polski poza granicami kraju*, Opole 1997.

contact with the Polish language. However, over time, the perceived gap between Canada and Poland has narrowed significantly due to advances in communication and digital technologies. The widespread use of the Internet, social media platforms, streaming services and instant messaging apps (e.g. Zoom, Messenger or recently retired Skype) has made it easier for Polish Canadians to access Polish-language content, engage with Polish media in real time and maintain regular contact with family and friends in Poland. These developments have created new opportunities for language exposure and reinforcement, especially among younger generations, and have helped mitigate some of the isolating effects of geographic distance[39].

Preliminary Observations and Discussion

The Polish language currently occupies a marginal position in Canada's public and institutional life. Unlike heritage languages tied to large and growing immigrant groups – such as Mandarin, Punjabi or Arabic – Polish does not benefit from strong demographic renewal or widespread societal visibility. As noted by Houle, recent immigration plays a critical role in the vitality of heritage languages, helping to replenish speaker bases and increase demand for language-specific services and education. However, Polish immigration to Canada has slowed significantly since the mid-1990s, and with no substantial new waves of migrants, the language has become increasingly reliant on second- and third-generation speakers. In this context, the intergenerational transmission of Polish has weakened, especially in environments where English, or French, dominate not only public life but also private and family domains.

This vulnerability is compounded by broader sociolinguistic and attitudinal trends. Heritage language transmission tends to be weaker in families where parents – particularly mothers – have higher levels of education, as they often prioritize dominant societal languages for their children's academic and professional success. Notably, women, who often serve as cultural transmitters within families, display patterns of bicultural adaptation that may support bilingualism despite broader shifts toward assimilation. In addition, Polish is frequently perceived within the community as less useful or prestigious than English or French. Importantly, some research-

[39] On this topic, see the works by Robert Dębski as well as Lustański & Stroińska 2024.

ers[40] highlight that Poles themselves are not fully aware of the value of the Polish language. This lack of awareness likely undermines motivation to actively maintain or pass it on, particularly among younger, upwardly mobile individuals. As a result, Polish is increasingly reduced to a symbolic marker of ethnic pride rather than a tool of everyday communication, weakening its chances of long-term survival within Canada's multilingual environment.

These developments are consistent with Mougeon and Beniak's *minority language restriction* theory[41], which suggests that minority languages tend to become confined to fewer and less socially prominent domains over time. In Polish-Canadian institutions, this trend is visible in the growing use of English for annual reports and official correspondence – seen, for example, in organizations like the Canadian Polish Research Institute and The Association of Polish Engineers in Canada. Even in the Catholic Church, historically a cornerstone of Polish language maintenance, this pattern is observed. As the number of priests born and educated in Poland declines, clergy of Polish descent raised in the United States or Canada – often with limited fluency – prefer to conduct sermons, classes and community meetings in English, particularly when addressing younger generations who are more fluent in the dominant language.

The shrinking utility and visibility of Polish in both public and private domains suggest that the language is losing ground in the *linguistic market*, where its cultural and social capital has diminished[42]. This decline is not unique to Canada; similar observations were made in the Polish-Australian context, indicating a broader diasporic challenge[43]. While ethnic identity remains a strong component of Polish-Canadian cultural life, the weakening of linguistic competence signals a shift in how this identity is expressed. Without institutional support, community mobilization and a stronger awareness of the intrinsic value of the heritage language, Polish in Canada risks becoming a largely symbolic asset – valued in theory but no longer sustained in practice.

In addition, the COVID-19 time marked a period of profound change for many ethnic communities, including Polish Canadians. During this period,

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[40] A. Dąbrowska, W. Miodunka, A. Pawłowski, *Wyzwania polskiej polityki językowej za granicą: kontekst, cele, środki i grupy odbiorcze*, Warszawa 2012.

[41] R. Mougeon, E. Beniak, *Linguistic consequences of language contact and restriction: The case of French in Ontario, Canada*, Oxford 1991.

[42] P. Bourdieu, *La distinction*. Paris 1980.

[43] See: R. Dębski, *Dynamika utrzymania języka polskiego w Australii*, „Postscriptum Polonistyczne" 1 (2016), p. 133–150.

some ethnic organizations dissolved or suspended their activities. Multiple heritage schools closed, e.g. S. Staszic's Polish School in Scarborough, M. Konopnicka's Polish School in Toronto, and participation in religious life declined significantly. Among the Polish community organizations that weathered the hardship, some have continued their activities, while some have gradually wound down (e.g. The Canadian Polish Research Institute), scaled back operations (e.g. The Association of Polish Engineers in Canada) or transformed their mission. A notable shift in their mode of operation is evident: most initiatives now have a distinctly local scope, often remaining unknown outside their immediate community. This trend reflects a process of specific deinstitutionalization, in which activities are carried out primarily at the local level, social networks are maintained within small circles, and interaction occurs mostly among Polish acquaintances with shared interests and perspectives. Paradoxically, the smaller and more localized character of these organizations may, in some cases, contribute to heritage language retention, as close-knit networks foster stronger emotional bonds[44] and more frequent use of Polish in interpersonal communication.

Conclusions

The analysis of Polish ethnolinguistic vitality in Canada reveals a heritage language that, while historically resilient, now faces structural and demographic challenges that threaten its long-term maintenance. The absence of significant recent immigration, high rates of exogamy and the geographical dispersion of speakers have eroded both the demographic base and the density of Polish-language social networks. While institutions such as Saturday schools, Catholic parishes and Polish-language media continue to provide spaces for linguistic and cultural engagement, their reach is increasingly limited by generational disengagement, declining enrolment and constrained resources. All these factors reduce the opportunities for intergenerational transmission, relegating Polish to fewer domains of use and weakening its functional presence in everyday life.

Despite these constraints, one should note some important resources that can be leveraged to support language vitality. The persistence of Polish cultural pride, the symbolic significance of heritage institutions and the

[44] K. Yagmur, M. Ehala, *Tradition and Innovation in the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory*, "Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development" 32:2 (2011), p. 101–110.

adaptability of media to digital formats all suggest that the language retains both affective value and potential for revitalization. Close-knit, localized networks – often emerging in the context of deinstitutionalization – can foster frequent interpersonal use of Polish, creating micro-environments that reinforce language skills and emotional attachment. Furthermore, technological advances, particularly in digital communication and online cultural programming, have also mitigated the effects of geographic distance from Poland, offering younger generations greater access to authentic linguistic input and opportunities for transnational engagement.

Notably, Poland has become an increasingly active and reliable partner in supporting the maintenance of Polish as a heritage language in Canada. A growing range of high-quality teaching and learning materials (developed in Poland specifically for heritage learners and learners of Polish as a foreign language) are now widely available, often free of charge[45]. These resources enhance both the accessibility and the attractiveness of Polish language instruction. In addition, funding mechanisms introduced by Polish government institutions, such as Ośrodek Rozwoju Polskiej Edukacji za Granicą (ORPEG), Instytut Rozwoju Języka Polskiego im. św. Maksymiliana Marii Kolbego (IRJP) and the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA) demonstrate a strengthened *institutional engagement*, which constitutes a key factor reinforcing the vitality of Polish in Canada.

Lastly, to sustain Polish as a living heritage language in Canada, coordinated efforts from the community and institutions will be essential. These should aim to enhance both the objective and subjective dimensions of vitality by strengthening educational infrastructure, broadening institutional presence and raising awareness within the community about the intrinsic value of the language. Programs that connect local initiatives to broader national and transnational networks could amplify visibility and resources, countering the isolating effects of localized activity. Without such actions, Polish in Canada risks becoming primarily a symbolic marker of ethnic identity – preserved in cultural traditions but rarely used as a medium of communication – making it more urgent to invest in collaborative revitalization.

[45] For instance: https://www.gov.pl/web/udsc/-materialy-dydaktyczne-do-nauki-jezyka-polskiego; https://biblioteka.ceo.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2022/09/Darmowe-materialy-do-nauczania-je%CC%A8zyka-polskiego-jako-obcego-1.pdf; https://www.wspolnotapolska.org.pl/bezgranic/polski_5.php (accessed: 15.10.2025).

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Where Have all the Germans Gone? Poland's Diminishing German Minority

Abstract

Following the end of the Second World War, Poland hosted many more former Germans than is commonly realised. Despite steady voluntary migration to Germany since the end of the post-war forced migrations in 1949[1], Poland still hosts an indigenous German minority. The number of self-declared Germans residing in Poland today is a matter of conjecture. What does appear certain is that their number is diminishing. This paper seeks to establish why this is the case and argues that the answer is to be found in the nature of contemporary Polish society and the post-Communist value system. It also considers the role of evolving national identities in shaping minority self-identification.

Key words: German minority in Poland, Post-war migrations, Self-identification, Post-Communist society, Poles in Germany

Zusammenfassung

Nach dem Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs lebten in Polen weit mehr ehemalige Deutsche, als gemeinhin angenommen wird. Trotz der kontinuierlichen freiwilligen Auswanderung nach Deutschland seit dem Abschluss der nachkriegszeitlichen Zwangsumsiedlungen im Jahr 1949 besteht in Polen weiterhin eine autochthone deutsche Minderheit. Die genaue Zahl der heute in Polen lebenden, sich selbst als

[1] For many years after the war, members of German refugee organisations and many other Germans failed to comprehend the fact that the forced migrations that affected civilian Germans were part of a much wider internationally sanctioned policy that blighted other nationalities, especially Poles. In addition, ethnic Germans began fleeing westward across what became the post-war German-Polish border as early as January 1945. See, for instance, M Beer, *Flucht und Vertreibung der Deutschen*, München, 2011, pp.67–78.

Deutsche deklarierenden Personen lässt sich jedoch nur schwer bestimmen. Sicher erscheint lediglich, dass ihre Zahl rückläufig ist. Der vorliegende Beitrag geht der Frage nach, welche Ursachen diesem Befund zugrunde liegen, und argumentiert, dass diese im Charakter der gegenwärtigen polnischen Gesellschaft sowie im postkommunistischen Wertesystem zu verorten sind. Darüber hinaus wird die Rolle sich wandelnder nationaler Identitäten für die Selbstzuschreibung von Minderheiten in den Blick genommen.

Schlüsselwörter: deutsche Minderheit in Polen; Nachkriegsmigrationen; Selbstidentifikation; postkommunistische Gesellschaft; Polen in Deutschland

Counting Heads

According to at least one estimate, when the Polish Citizenship Law of 1951 came into effect, there were 1.1 million Polish citizens who had previously held German citizenship[2]. In other words, although post-war Poland was ethnically far more homogenous than its pre-1939 predecessor, the country still hosted an apparently sizeable German minority, comprised a number of, sometimes overlapping groups. In fact the German element of the population was larger in both absolute and percentage terms in 1951 (4.47%) than it had been in 1931 (2.3%),[3] which given the attempt to recreate Poland as an ethnically homogenous state, presented Poland's communist rulers with something of a conundrum. The minority mostly comprised of pre and post-war Polish citizens who during the period of German occupation had for whatever reason had affirmed their affinity to Germany by having registered on the *Volksliste*; which itself was divided into four categories according to presumed levels of allegedly observable affinity to German culture[4]. If we delve a little more deeply into this phenomenon, we find that a number of distinct groups collectively comprised the majority of post-war Polish citizens who had previously held German citizenship.[5]

[2] J. Kulczycki, *The National Identity of the "Natives" of Poland's Recovered Lands*, "National Identities", Vol3, No3, 205–219, 2001.

[3] P. Eberhardt, *Ethnic Groups and Population Changes in Twentieth-Century Central-Eastern Europe*, London, 2003, pp.113–141. The census of 1931 gave the German minority as constituting 741,000.

[4] H. Weidelener und F. Hemberger, *Deutsches Staaatsangehörigkeitsrecht*, München, 1993, pp.149/150.

[5] T. Urban, *Deutsche in Polen: Geschichte und Gegenwart einer Minderheit*, München, 1994, pp.67/93, discusses the subtleties of the situation

In many cases, the root of the issue with regard to former German citizens lay in the contested national provenance and belonging of some culturally-distinct groups of people who inhabited areas of post-war Poland that for centuries had been Polish-German cultural borderlands. They were the Mazurs of East Prussia; the Kashubes of Pomerania; and especially the *Slazaks* (Silesians) of rural Upper Silesia. In addition to inhabiting cultural borderlands, these three groups were united by a variety of commonalities. It is important to note that as a rule adherents to these groups did not speak either standard Polish or German in everyday discourse, although individuals often had a working knowledge of both or either 'national' language[6].

The Kashubes differed slightly in the sense that, although knowledge of both German and Polish was relatively widespread, in everyday life the Kashubian language was the common means of communication and dialogue. Inevitably, with regard to the Kashubes, Mazurs and *Slazaks*, this cultural mix together with their position as the inhabitants of primarily rural backwaters contributed to the growth of collective identities that were contingent, situational and to the outsider sometimes completely contradictory[7]. Moreover, from the early nineteenth century with the arrival of modern nationalist ideology, these such groups found themselves to be at the centre of a kind of bidding war on the part of both Polish and German nationalists, whose arguments concerning the historical provenance and claimed national characteristics of these three groups of people were of course diametrically opposed. During the Second World War, this contest for 'hearts and minds' reached its nadir with the construction of the aforementioned *Volksliste* initially at the behest of the Gauleiter of Danzig-West Prussia, Albert Forster and then *Reichsführer* SS Heinrich Himmler. In short, an attempt was made in German occupied Poland to separate the Polish and German populations from one another and to establish an ethnic hierarchy with Germans and other Aryans at the top with Poles being regarded as barely human[8].

Other groups in post-war Poland who had previously enjoyed German citizenship were smaller in terms of their composition. The first consisted of people who although possessing some German cultural characteristics, had never actually been registered on the *Volksliste*. This was so, because

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[6] A. Evans, *Sojourn in Silesia 1940–1945*, Ashford, 1995

[7] T. Kamusella, P Kacir, *Upper Silesia 1918–45* in ed K. Cordell, *The Politics of Ethnicity in Central Europe,* Houndmills, 2000, pp. 92–126.

[8] *T Piotrowski, Poland's Holocaust*: *Ethnic Strife*, *Collaboration* with *Occupying Forces* and *Genocide* in the *Second Republic*, *1918–1947, Jefferson North Carolina, 2007, Passim.*

in the autumn of 1943 Himmler effectively abandoned the whole project on the grounds that far too many Poles were managing to masquerade as Germans[9]. That may or may not have been the case. Whatever the truth of the matter, the upsurge in interest in parts of the former cultural borderlands, with a past connection with Germany in the 1990s showed the existence of such individuals and their descendants. Related to this group were the much more numerous indigenous *Ślązacy* from pre-war Germany, primarily in the area around Opole, who were not deported from post-war Poland on the grounds that they were Poles who had acquired a German veneer by virtue of their having lived under varieties of German rule for several centuries[10]. The final group consisted of members of Poland's pre-war German minority who had not fled or been expelled and following incarceration in forced labour camps were offered restitution of Polish citizenship[11]. Some accepted the offer. Needless to say, the majority to whom this offer was made, elected for Germany even though the only German state they had been citizens of was the Nazi variant that had occupied Poland and regardless of the fact that many school age Germans had only become functional in German after having been transferred into 'Aryan schools' with the collapse of Poland in September 1939.

To this number must be added another group of people who did not possess Polish citizenship and were clearly and obviously German. As the Red Army rolled westward in 1945, huge numbers of German civilians resident in pre-war Germany also fled in a westerly direction. Just how many were left within the boundaries of post-war Poland is a matter of dispute which will never be satisfactorily resolved. A figure of five million comprising of residents of pre-war residents of Germany to the east of the Oder-Neisse river boundary plus wartime refuges from western Germany is as good an estimate as any. The large majority of such people was deported to occupied post war Germany: initially at least with great brutality. However, within months of the end of hostilities it became clear to both the Soviet military and the incoming Polish authorities that there was now a distinct lack of manpower in certain industries. As a result, in the industrialised parts of Upper Silesia and much of neighbouring Lower Silesia, and in the city of Koszalin in Pomerania skilled workers and their families were forbidden from leaving. The objective was to eventually replace them with Polish co-

[9] T. Kamusella, P. Kacir, *Upper Silesia 1918–45*….. 104–110.

[10] K. Cordell & S. Wolff, *Germany's Foreign Policy Towards Poland and the Czech Republic: Ostpolitik Revisited*, Abingdon, 2005, pp. 30–40.

[11] H. Hirsch, *Die Rache der Opfer*, Berlin, 1998, Passim.

unterparts, which is what eventually did happen, but the fact of the matter is that as of 1950, when the forced migrations had been officially completed, there were up to 250,000 former *Reichsdeutsche* living in post-war Poland, who had in effect been rendered stateless[12].

Pathways to Migration

During the period of Communist rule, there was continuous migration to Germany on ancestral grounds, which apart from the years 1952–55, always exceeded 1,000 individuals a year[13]. There were, however, considerable variations in the annual totals. The first upward shift occurred in 1957–58, when following further changes to Polish citizenship laws over 200,000 people migrated from Poland to the Federal Republic. The migrants were overwhelmingly composed of former *Reichsdeutsche* who were allowed to leave for either German state as by that time there were sufficient skilled Polish workers to perform those jobs previously held by Germans[14]. It was also at this point that *Reichsdeutsche* were given the option of obtaining Polish citizenship and of becoming members of the newly-established German minority organisations.[15] Information on numbers is sketchy, but in the city of Walbrzych in Lower Silesia, (where the organisation was headquartered) there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that an obvious German presence was discernible until the early 1970s.

Emigration then tailed off again, until 1971, when in the wake of Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik and the de facto recognition by Bonn of Poland's western border, migration for that year passed the 25,000 mark[16]. From that year and up until 1987, migration to the Federal Republic by people acknowledged by the government in Bonn as having some degree of German ancestry ranged from 7,000 to 27,000 per annum with the exception of 1980

[12] K. Cordell & S. Wolff, *Germany's Foreign Policy* …. pp. 30–40

[13] https//www.bund-der-vertriebenen.de/information-statistik-und-dokumentation/spaetaussiedler/aktuelle-aussiedlerstatistik.html, accessed 9 May 2025

[14] B. Linek, *Polish and Czech Silesia Under Communist Rule*, in ed. K. Cordell, *The Politics of Ethnicity in Central Europe*, Houndmills, 2000. pp131–132

[15] C. Eichenberger, *Die Deutschen in Polen: Von der verleugneten Minderheit zur anerkannten Volksgruppe*, Augsburg, 1994, pp.34–85, for an account of the overall situation of the German minority in Poland in the years 1949–1988.

[16] https//www.bund-der-vertriebenen.de/information-statistik-und-dokumentation/spaetaussiedler/aktuelle-aussiedlerstatistik.html, accessed 9 May 2025.

when in the midst of renewed political turmoil in Poland it topped 50,000[17]. The theme of migration to Germany, was still very much a taboo subject in Poland, but during the 1970s the first questions began to be asked in the Federal Republic about the extent to which these latest post-war migrants were really German. In the German Democratic Republic, the question of post-war migration of ethnic Germans from post-war Poland and elsewhere in Communist-ruled Europe was no more a topic for discussion that were the post-war forced migrations[18]. As stated earlier, the inhabitants of the former cultural borderlands possessed multiple cultural characteristics: local; Polish and German. Having lived in an authoritarian nationalising Polish state, where manifestations of German culture were frowned upon, real knowledge of modern Germany was often lacking. In addition, those claiming German ancestry were allowed to bring immediate family members with them, who despite the largely endogenous nature of these communities, were sometimes clearly Polish and who, like the children of such marriages invariably spoke only Polish (and to a lesser degree the obligatory Russian). The consequence was that large sections of the host German society looked askance at their new compatriots[19].

As the political situation in Poland as elsewhere in Communist-ruled Europe began to deteriorate apace from late 1988, so the number of migrants to the Federal Republic shot up. Between 1989 and 1991 over 400,000 people migrated from Poland to the Federal Republic on the grounds that they had at least one German grandparent or were the close family members of someone who had such lineage[20]. The extent to which such migrants to Germany had any real affinity with their new homeland is open to debate. Clearly in some cases, kinship did play a role. However, two other factors should also be considered. First, given the ongoing political uncertainties, some decided to leave for the Federal Republic as a kind of insurance policy, lest the political situation deteriorated further. Secondly, in this *Ausreiswelle* as in all

[17] https//www.bund-der-vertriebenen.de/information-statistik-und-dokumentation/spaetaussiedler/aktuelle-aussiedlerstatistik.html, accessed 9 May 2025.

[18] See K. Cordell and S. Wolff, *Germany as a Kin-State: The Development and Implementation of a Norm-Consistent External Minority Policy towards Central and Eastern Europe*," Nationalities Papers", Vol. 35, No. 2, pp.289–316, 2007, for a substantive discussion of how this difficult legacy was overcome.

[19] See K. J. Bade *Fremde Deutsch*e in Hrsg. K. J. Bade, *Deutsche in Ausland: Fremde in Deutschland*, München, 1993, pp. 401–410, for an assessment of how *Spätaussiedler* were received in the Federal Republic.

[20] Bund der Vertriebenen, https//www.bund-der-vertriebenen.de/information-statistik-und-dokumentation/spaetaussiedler/aktuelle-aussiedlerstatistik.html, accessed 9 May 2025.

such others, economics played a role. Poland's post-war recovery paled into insignificance in comparison to that of the Federal Republic and in the 1980s the gap drew ever wider. To those, especially younger people and parents with young families, migration to the Federal Republic presented an opportunity for betterment. Other sections of Polish society took a sceptical view of this sudden enthusiasm for Germany on the part of their compatriots and the (ironic) term *Volkswagendeutsch* (as opposed to *Volksdeutsch*) came to be employed to describe this particular group of migrants[21].

A Changing Landscape

According to official figures, when the Communist regime finally crumbled in 1990, the German minority had effectively ceased to exist[22]. Mazurs, Kashubes and *Slazaks* were categorised as Poles, regardless of who they might have viewed themselves. After successive waves of migration since 1950 to both German states and especially the Federal Republic, given the lack of any overt German presence in everyday life, that assumption could have been taken to be not too far off the mark. However, as Communist rule crumbled in Poland, in Opole and Upper Silesia in particular, a somewhat surprising development took place.[23] By late 1990, some adherents to various German Friendship Circles and related organisations (including in Germany itself), that had sprung up in different parts of the country were claiming that anywhere up to 1.1 million Polish citizens had some kind of German background. This estimate was clearly absurd, and in the opinion of this author its close correspondence to the 1951 figure of former German citizens having been accorded Polish citizenship, is not necessarily accidental. By the same token, it was soon obvious that the official estimate of 3,500 was equally wide of the mark. The question remained though, of just how many people of (part) German extraction remained in Poland. Without wishing to become sidetracked into methodological issues, a figure of approximately

[21] The implication being that more often than not, such migrants used their sometimes tenuous familial links to Germany as a means of escaping the bleak reality of Poland in the 1980s.

[22] B. Ociepka, Institute of Institute of International Studies, University of Wrocław, interview with A. Dybczński, 4 May 2004.

[23] W. Borodziej, Die Katastrophe: Schlesien nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg in Hrsg. B. Schlanstein usw. Als die Deutsche weg waren, Reinbek, 2011, pp.84–114, offers a comprehensive account of German life in Silesia in the aftermath of the war.

500,000 Polish citizens of partial or wholly German descent for the year 1990 is not unreasonable[24].

The various German societies, most of which came together under the umbrella of the *Verband der deutsche sozial-kulturellen Gesellschaften in Polen* (Association of German-Cultural Societies in Poland/VdG) have never claimed such numbers among their membership[25] and successive census returns have shown a decline in the number of declared Germans since the census of 2002. In that census 152, 897 respondents declared themselves to be German, whereas by 2021, the number had dropped to 144,177[26]. Similarly, despite obtaining a surprising seven seats in the Sejm in the first post-communist fully competitive election of 1991 plus one seat in the Senate, national returns since then have gradually diminished resulting in the failure of any German candidates to be elected to the Sejm in 2023. As it turned out, the national political weight of the German minority in post-Communist Poland proved to be ephemeral, although German minority candidates continue to maintain a presence at local and regional level in the Opole Voivodship. However, as with national elections they have been faced with diminishing returns since the peak of the early 1990s[27].

Indeed, it is in the Opole Voivodship that one today finds there to be a reasonably significant German presence[28]. Their presence in the Upper Silesian province has been reduced to a fragment in comparison to the situation in the early 1990s, let alone any other post-1945 decade. With regard to the Kashubes those who remain are overwhelmingly happy to articulate either a Kashubian or Kashubian-Polish identity, German-orientated Kashubes having long ago opted for Germany. As for the Mazurs, many of whom were actually Polish-speaking, but who regarded themselves as Polish-speaking Germans, the vast majority long ago migrated to Germany. Their adherence to Protestantism made life for them particularly difficult after 1945, given that the Catholic Church found no fault with the principle

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[24] K. Cordell, *Nation and Citizenship in Upper Silesia*, in ed. M. Žagar et al, *The Constitutional and Political Regulation of Ethnic Relations and Conflicts*, Ljubljana, 1999, p.165.

[25] The website of the Verband der Deutschen Sozial-Kulturellen Gesellschaften Polen, cites a peak figure of 300,000 members in the early 1990s https://vdg.pl/de/ueber-den-vdg-in-polen/, accessed 9 May 2025.

[26] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2021_Polish_census, accessed, 10 May 2025.

[27] See K. Born and K. Cordell, *The Strategy of the German List*, in "East European Politics and Societies", Vol. 15, No. 3,2001, pp. 625–648, for an assessment of the early success of the German electoral list in Opole Silesia.

[28] See E. Kuhn, *Schlesien: Brücke in Europa*, Berlin, 1997, for a general account of the aspirations of German minority organisations in the initial phase of politics in post-Communist Poland.

(if not the means), of the Communists' desire to render Poland all but ethnically homogenous[29].

The question remains however, where have all the Germans gone and what does the future hold for those who remain? Emigration to Germany provides few clues, given that it slowed to a trickle in 1992. Mortality plays a role, since those who sought German passports after 1990 were disproportionally elderly and middle aged, but these two factors do not provide us with either an individual or collective explanation. Rather, we need to examine the nature of contemporary Poland and compare it with the situation in the years after the war. With the accession to power of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), following the rigged election of January 1947, Poland lost any liberal-democratic trappings it had briefly gained with the defeat of the Nazis. Moreover, in an effort to boost its legitimacy, the PZPR had assumed the mantle of the pre-war Polish right with regard its attitude toward ethnic diversity. Prior to the destruction of Poland by the German-Soviet alliance in September 1939, as much as one third of the population of pre-war Poland were not baptised Roman Catholics. In addition to a tiny number of Polish Protestants, Poland was home to Jews, Germans, Belarusians, Czechs Lithuanians and especially Ukrainians, many of whom adhered to non-Catholic forms of Christianity. Indeed, in parts of eastern Poland, an on-off low level civil war raged between the Polish security forces and Ukrainian nationalists. In short, given sundry competing nationalist aspirations, the Second Republic's encounter with diversity was not a particularly happy one[30]. As Poland's borders were arbitrarily re-shaped in 1945 and as a consequence of the Holocaust, and forced migrations, post-war Poland found itself largely be shorn of the aforementioned minorities, the Germans to one side.

It is important to note that the post-war forced migration of Germans from Poland did not take place in some kind of vacuum but was part and parcel of a much wider process of forced migrations sanctioned by the wartime allies and sundry post-war governments throughout Europe and elsewhere. Having rid itself of the vast majority of its unwanted German population, the question then became one of what to do with the remaining Germans? As we noted earlier in the text, with regard to former *Reichsdeutsche*, the answer was easy, offer them the opportunity to leave as soon as replacement Polish labour was ready. If a few chose to stay, then so what? They could easily be accommodated. As for the *Ślązacy*, Kashubes and Mazurs and

[29] R. Blanke, *Polish-Speaking Germans? National Identity Among the Masurians since 1871*, Köln, 2001, pp147–149.

[30] A. Zamoyski, *Poland: A History*, London, 2009. pp.297–313.

others (forced) assimilation was to provide the solution. From the perspective of the government and indeed much of wider Polish society, the vast majority of such people were essentially Polish who through their contact with Germany and as a result of consequent German assimilationist pressures, had lost their true Polish essence. The task then of the government was to pursue policies that facilitated the return of these groups to the 'Polish hearth'. The means chosen to accomplish this were in effect to create a legal framework whereby it was legally impossible for members of the aforementioned groups to (publicly) manifest any signs of adherence to Germany and German culture[31].

By 1956, legal hurdles facing people of a German background had been gradually removed, but popular suspicion and hostility remained. What was constant however, was continued political uncertainty, and economic under-performance. Similarly, personal contacts with Germany, particularly the GDR, never completely ceased. As a consequence, Polish citizens of German origin have always had some kind of contemporary yardstick with which to draw comparisons, even if such comparisons owed as much to wishful thinking as they did to real knowledge of the situation in either German state. In other words, Communist-ruled Poland was not a particularly attractive proposition to the large majority of its inhabitants and those with family ties to Germany had an option, i.e. privileged migration rights that were simply not open to most of their compatriots and as we have seen, they were utilised in sometimes surprising numbers. In effect, by pursuing authoritarian assimilationist policies and failing to deliver any kind of sustained economic success, the PZPR inadvertently strengthened identification with Germany among communities that previously had either happily identified with the locale or saw no contradiction in having a national identification that was either contingent or dual[32].

Conclusion

Today's Poland is very different from its Communist predecessor. Despite an ongoing debate about such measures as German-language education,[33]

[31] B. Linek, *Polish and Czech Silesia Under Communist Rule*, ….pp. 139–142.

[32] K. Cordell, *Poland's German Minority*, in ed. S. Wolff, *German Minorities in Europe*, Berghahn Books, Oxford, 2000, p.82

[33] Verband der Deutschen Sozial-Kulturellen Gesellschaften Polen, https://vdg.pl/de/ueberden-vdg-in-polen/,

Poland It is a country that acknowledges its diversity and which does not discriminate in law against any of its (small) indigenous minorities. To be sure, the Polish right often draws dubious comparisons with regard the apparently overly-generous privileges enjoyed by the German minority in Poland in comparison to the structural disadvantages suffered by the Polish minority in Germany which as of 2016 officially totalled 866,690.[34] Having said that the number of Germans who have some Polish ancestry is certainly higher, albeit not as high as the staggering eight million claimed by some[35]. What is also open to dispute are the uglier aspects of the forced migration that took place between 1945–1949 are often glossed over in Poland or are simply denied flat out. These caveats to one side, Poland is both politically and economically a much more attractive option than it was between 1945–90. During this period there were few incentives for those with some kind of German background to identify with Poland, in the face of bitter memories of the immediate post-war era and continued opprobrium. These disincentives are now firmly in the background and those who do have a German cultural background are not disadvantaged in the same way as were those born before during or in the years immediately after the Second World War.

We must also ask ourselves to what extent have affinities with Germany lessened as a result of direct unfiltered contact with the country itself. The large majority of Germans in Germany itself has no interest in the remaining *Volksdeutsch* fragments in Poland or elsewhere. Moreover, when Polish-speaking people arrive in Germany, as far as most Germans are concerned, they are Poles, despite any protestation to the contrary. A belief that in recent years migrants from Poland and elsewhere, were and are motivated by economic as opposed to political or cultural concerns is not a solely German phenomenon. It may also be the case that contemporary encounters with Germany may have lessened enthusiasm for Germany. Moreover, enhanced freedom of movement within the European Union lessens the desire or need to migrate to a 'mother country' such as Germany.

Evidence for such a change in perceptions and priorities is fragmentary, but as we noted earlier, under certain circumstances, identities, including

[34] https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/1221/umfrage/anzahl-der-auslaender-in-deutschland-nach-herkunftsland/, accessed 23 July 2025.

[35] The debate over the nature and extent of the Polish minority in Germany is covered in: M. Nowosielski, *Relations Between Polish Immigrant Organisations in Germany and Institutions of the Polish and German States*, in eds. A. Udrea, D. Smith and K. Cordell, *Poland's Kin-State Policies*, Abingdon, 2022, presents a nuanced analysis of the situation.

national affiliation may be contingent and malleable. For example, just as the German minority in the *Górnośląsk* (Upper Silesian) Voivodship in recent years has fallen, the number of people in that province claiming to possess a Silesian as opposed to a German or Polish identity has risen dramatically: from 173,593 in 2002 to a remarkable 596,224 in 2021.[36] There are many reasons for this, not the least of which is anger at the consequences of environmental damage and the adjustment away from heavy industry. What the example illustrates is that national identities should sometimes be viewed as existing on a continuum and not as fixed. In other words, although many newly-minted Silesians may previously have identified with Poland, some may have previously identified with Germany.

Finally, and most importantly in trying to answer the question of 'Where Have all the Germans Gone?' we need to consider the type of society that Poland has become. Above all, the German minority in Poland continues to shrink precisely because wider Polish society has changed. This change has resulted in remaining German communities becoming less insular and in younger people feeling more comfortable with a Polish or indeed Polish-German identity, precisely because their ethnically Polish compatriots do not see Germany and the Germans in the same way in which they were viewed by previous generations. In other words, there has been an internal identity shift away from Germany towards Poland, precisely because Polish society at large is more comfortable within itself Despite the continued existence of the 'True Pole' mentality in some quarters, Polish society at large is not in thrall to nationalist dogmas as was the case following creation of the Second Republic in 1918 and right up until the collapse of Communist rule in 1990. Prior to 1990, the modern Polish nation-state had never been a fully functional liberal democracy with secure borders. It is this change above all that has facilitated the growth of a society in which ethnic identification although important, is no longer the divisive issue that it was between 1918 and the 1980s. Whether or not the German minority has a future as a minority, is another matter, but whatever the case, the most important point is that people be allowed to choose how they want to live on condition that in so doing they do not threaten others and that they are not threatened simply because of who they are. This argument applies to all minorities and not simply to the case under consideration in this paper.

[36] https://stat.gov.pl/spisy-powszechne/nsp-2021/nsp-2021-wyniki-ostateczne/, accessed, 10 May 2025.

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Between Minority and Diaspora: The Polish Community in Türkiye[1]

Abstract

The Polish diaspora in Türkiye can be broadly categorized into two historical waves with distinct social, cultural, and linguistic characteristics. The first wave, known as the "old diaspora", consisted of Polish exiles and political refugees who settled in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century, particularly after the November (1830–1831) and January (1863) uprisings. Polonezköy (formerly Adampol), a village near Istanbul, remains a historical symbol of this politically motivated migration. In contrast, the "new diaspora" emerged after the 1990s, as post-Cold War Polish nationals began migrating to Türkiye for professional, academic, or personal reasons. Unlike their predecessors, this group is more globally mobile and driven by voluntary rather than political factors. This study examines the contrasting adaptation processes of these two groups, highlighting how historical context, motivation, and patterns of integration have shaped their identities and roles within Turkish societies.

Keywords: Polish diaspora, Polonezköy, Migration, Adaptation processes, Identity

Özet

Türkiye'deki Polonya diasporası, toplumsal, kültürel ve dilsel açıdan farklılık gösteren iki tarihsel dalga çerçevesinde ele alınabilir. İlk dalga, "eski diaspora" olarak adlandırılmakta olup, 19. yüzyılda özellikle 1830–1831 Kasım ve 1863 Ocak ayaklanmalarının ardından Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na sığınan Polonyalı sürgünler ve

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siyasi mültecilerden oluşmuştur. İstanbul yakınlarındaki Polonezköy (eski adıyla Adampol), bu siyasal saiklerle gerçekleşen göçün tarihsel bir simgesi olarak varlığını sürdürmektedir. Buna karşılık, "yeni diaspora" 1990'lardan sonra ortaya çıkmış; Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesiyle birlikte Polonyalıların Türkiye'ye mesleki, akademik ya da kişisel nedenlerle yöneldikleri bir göç biçimi olarak şekillenmiştir. Öncekilerden farklı olarak bu grup, siyasal baskılardan ziyade gönüllü motivasyonlarla hareket eden ve daha küresel ölçekte hareket kabiliyeti bulunan bireylerden oluşmaktadır. Bu çalışma, söz konusu iki grubun farklı uyum süreçlerini karşılaştırarak tarihsel bağlam, motivasyon ve entegrasyon kalıplarının Polonya diasporasının Türkiye toplumundaki kimlik ve rollerini nasıl biçimlendirdiğini irdelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Polonya diasporası, Polonezköy, Göç, Uyum süreçleri, Kimlik

Introduction

Polish migration abroad is a complex and significant phenomenon for Poland, both historically and culturally. It especially evolved after the country joined the European Union in 2004. Polish migration has occurred on a notably large scale with diverse motivations and evolving patterns. Historically, Polish migration dates to the 19th century, when it was primarily directed toward Western Europe, the United States, and Canada[2]. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the EU enlargement in 2004, Poland experienced one of the largest migrations flows in its modern history, estimated to be around three million people[3]. The main destination countries included the United Kingdom, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, and Iceland[4]. Migration intentions among Polish citizens vary from short stays to long-term settlement, mainly influenced by job satisfaction, remittances, and experiences in both Poland and host countries[5]. Over time, Polish migration patterns have shifted from permanent settlement toward more

[2] W. I. Thomas, F. Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, vol. 1, New York 1927.

[3] M. Obojska, J. Kędra, Z Hua, *Connecting Polish families in Europe: changing dynamics in language and communication practices,* "Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development", 42 (2021), p. 413–417. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2021.1913499; E. Goździak, *Polish Migration after the Fall of the Iron Curtain*, "International Migration", 52 (2014), p. 1–3. https://doi.org/10.1111/IMIG.12146.

[4] L. Wojnicz, *Przyczyny migracji Polaków w Unii Europejskiej po 1 maja 2004 roku*, "Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski", 38 (3), 2016, p. 131–150. https://doi.org/10.18276/pdp.2016.3.38-06.

[5] S. Drinkwater, M. Garapich, *Migration Strategies of Polish Migrants: Do They Have Any at All?*, "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies", 41 (2015), p. 1909–1931. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2015.1027180.

fluid or circular forms. Many Poles are now maintaining mobility between Poland and host countries[6].

This pattern of circular and temporary migration has led to return migration, particularly among post-2004 migrants. However, many have remained open to re-migration due to reintegration challenges and job insecurities. Some eventually settle abroad permanently, especially after unsuccessful attempts at returning[7]. In this process, the networks and family strategies are important. Social networks in both Poland and abroad influence decisions regarding migration, duration of stay, and the level of community cohesion[8]. Migration often involves complex family arrangements, with transnational ties and reconfigured family roles. Family support and obligations shape migration experiences and settlement patterns[9].

Polish migration to other EU countries has often been driven by economic motivations, as Poland has one of the highest labour expectation rates in the EU[10]. However, Polish migrants also move for reasons such as higher education, personal relationships, and family reunification. Unemployment and low wages in Poland, especially among youth, are among the key push factors[11]. Polish migration is also deeply intertwined with personal relationships, which shape migration decisions, settlement outcomes, and the lived experiences of migrants. This often results in complex transnational family arrangements and evolving social ties.

While Polish migration has traditionally been oriented westward, it has also historically extended eastward, particularly toward the Ottoman Empire and, later, the Türkiye. Unlike larger-scale labour migration to Western Europe, this movement was closely tied to the geopolitical relationship between Poland and the Ottoman Empire, which often sheltered Polish exiles and resisted recognizing the partitions of Poland. This long-standing

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[6] J. Friberg, *The Stages of Migration. From Going Abroad to Settling Down: Post-Accession Polish Migrant Workers in Norway*, "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies", 38 (2012), p. 1589–1605. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2012.711055. Goździak, Polish Migration after the Fall.

[7] A. White, *Polish Return and Double Return Migration*, "Europe-Asia Studies", 66, (2014), p. 25–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2010.487520.

[8] L. Ryan, A. White, *Polish 'Temporary' Migration: The Formation and Significance of Social Networks*, "Europe-Asia Studies", 60 (2008), p. 1467–1502. https://doi.org/10.1080/09668130802362227.

[9] B. Siara, R. Sales, L. Ryan, M. Tilki, *Family Strategies and Transnational Migration: Recent Polish Migrants in London,* "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies", 35 (2009), p. 61–77. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830802489176.

[10] Goździak, *Polish Migration after the Fall*.

[11] Obojska, Kędra, Hua. *Connecting Polish families in Europe;* A. White, *Young people and migration from contemporary Poland*, "Journal of Youth Studies", 13 (2010), p. 565–580. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2010.487520.

political sympathy created conditions for Polish elites and refugees to view Ottoman lands as a place of asylum and strategic partnership[12].

The most prominent example of this link was the political vision of Prince Adam Jerzy Czartorski and the émigré circle known as the Hôtel Lambert in Paris. After the November Uprising (1830–1831), Czartoryski and his associates developed a long-term diplomatic strategy to maintain the "Polish question" in European politics. One of the central elements of this policy was the Balkan programme, which identified the Ottoman Empire and Balkan peoples as potential allies against Russian influence[13]. His envoys, such as Michał Czajkowski, directly engaged with Ottoman officials and, in 1842, helped establish Adampol (Polonezköy) near Istanbul, as both a refuge for exiles and a material expression of *Hôtel Lambert's* diplomatic project[14].

Polish migration has taken many forms across different regions and historical periods. While the Hôtel Lambert's diplomatic initiatives and the founding of Adampol symbolize the earliest political dimension of Polish settlement in Ottoman lands, the broader story of Poles in Türkiye extends far beyond. The following section examines the historical development of Polish migration to the Ottoman Empire and the Türkiye, tracing how these early exiles and later arrivals shaped a district community that oscillates between categories of a cultural minority and a diaspora.

Historical Polish Migration and the Establishment of a Minority Community in Türkiye

The establishment of Adampol (now Polonezköy) in 1842 was one of the most enduring expressions of Polish migration to Ottoman lands. Founded under the guidance of Polish prince Adam Czartoryski and supported by

[12] M. Dworski, *The Balkans as a gateway to Polish independence: The face of the Balkan policy of the Hôtel Lambert towards national movements forming within the borders of the Ottoman Empire*, "Acta Histriae", 31 (1), 2023, p. 17–38. http://dx.doi.org/10.19233/AH.2023.2; A.A. Urbanik, J. O, Baylen, *Polish exiles and the Turkish Empire, 1830–1876*, "The Polish Review", 26 (3), 1981, p. 43–53.

[13] H. H. Hahn, *Die Diplomatie des Hôtel Lambert 1831–1847*, "Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas", 21 (3), 1973, p. 345–374; R. A. Berry, *Czartoryski's Hôtel Lambert and the Great Powers in the Balkans, 1832–1848*, "The International History Review", 7, 1, (1985), p. 45–67. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40105449; Dworski, *The Balkans as a gateway to Polish independence*.

[14] J. Skowronek, *Sprzymierzeńcy narodów bałkańskich*, Warszawa 1983; P. Michalak, *Michał Czajkowski (Sadyk Pasza) a polityka Hotelu Lambert*, "Balcanica Posnaniensia. Acta et studia", 18 (2011), p. 163–177; Dworski, *The Balkans as a gateway to Polish independence*.

the *Hôtel Lambert*, the village was originally envisioned as a base for Polish exiles and soldiers. It quickly became both a refuge for migrants and a symbol of Polish Ottoman solidarity[15].

The establishment of Adampol was closely connected to Czartoryski's broader political program, developed through the émigré circle of a political movement in France[16]. Czartoryski envisioned the Ottoman Empire and Balkan nations as natural allies against Russian expansion and actively sought to link the Polish cause with regional struggles for independence[17]. Through envoys such as Michał Czajkowski, the *Hôtel Lambert* supported Polish refugees. Also aimed to strengthen Ottoman-Polish cooperation in a shared struggle against imperial domination[18]. Thus, the Polish settlement near Istanbul should be seen not only as a refuge but also as a symbolic marker of this broader diplomatic strategy[19].

The initial settlement included 12 people[20], eventually growing to 38 as more soldiers arrived[21]. The village's founding purpose profoundly influenced its identity, and Polish cultural traditions remained strong in the community over generations. Beyond Polonezköy, another important reflection of Polish presence in Ottoman lands was the establishment of the Polish Minority School in Edirne, sometimes referred to as the *Polak Mektebi*. Founded in 1862 by a group of Polish Resurrectionist priests who had taken refuge in the Ottoman Empire, the school became known as the "Polish School" because of its founders, rather than its students. In fact, it primarily educated Catholic Bulgarians[22]. While it was often referred to as a Bulgarian Catholic school, its Polish origins demonstrate that Poles were not confined to a single rural settlement but also engaged in broader Ottoman society, leaving traces in other urban centers.

Another overlooked dimension of Polish-Ottoman and Polish-Turkish relations was the employment of Polish officers, engineers, and technical experts. From the 18th century onward, Poles contributed to Ottoman military

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[15] Urbanik, Baylen, *Polish exiles and the Turkish Empire.*

[16] Hahn, *Die Diplomatie des Hôtel Lambert*.

[17] Dworski, *The Balkans as a gateway to Polish independence*.

[18] S. Kalembka, *Polskie zabiegi dyplomatyczne między powstaniem listopadowym a styczniowym (koniec 1831–1860)*, in: L. Bazylow (ed.), *Historia dyplomacji polskiej: 1795–1918*, Warszawa 1982, p. 231–432.

[19] Urbanik, Baylen, *Polish exiles and the Turkish Empire*.

[20] *Dom Pamięci Zofii Ryż*, Jolanta Adamska (ed.), Warszawa 2004.

[21] J. S. Łątka, *Adampol – Polska wieś nad Bosforem,* Kraków 1992, p. 35–36.

[22] F. Türk, *Edirne Bulgar Cemaati ve Polonya Azınlık Okulu 'Polak Mektep'*, "Belleten", 73, 2009, p. 705. https://doi.org/10.37879/belleten.2009.

reforms, agricultural projects, and engineering works, and this pattern continued into the early Republican era. These professionals facilitated knowledge transfer and modernization, particularly in areas such as cartography, fortification, and transport infrastructure[23]. While individual Polish experts and professionals contributed to Ottoman modernization in diverse fields, the most enduring expression of a collective Polish identity on Ottoman soil remained centered in Polonezköy.

As Polonezköy evolved into a symbol of Polish identity abroad, its political and cultural importance increased. The Ottoman Empire's taxation policies for the non-Muslim community created tensions with the villagers, but a formal petition led to the village gaining a special administrative status. This status meant that the community was granted certain privileges as Polonezköy was incorporated into Beykoz as a *karye* (village) in 1893 with partial tax exemptions. However, further disputes emerged when villagers, rejecting their previous national affiliations, cooperated with the Austrian consulate. This move led to public expressions of Polish national identity and resistance[24].

In 1911, the villagers petitioned for Ottoman citizenship and tax exemptions, citing their military service and local contributions[25]. During World War I, increased surveillance of foreigners revealed that 39 Polish inhabitants of the village had changed their nationalities to French or Russian. Despite such tensions, the founding of the Republic of Türkiye brought changes. The adoption of secularism and the new constitution based on equal citizenship reshaped identity and belonging in Polonezköy[26].

According to Ziółkowski[27], Polish remained the primary language in the village during the 1920s, when the Polish population reached around 165. The introduction of the Latin-based Turkish alphabet on November 1, 1927, marked a turning point in the linguistic and cultural identity of the village. This reform led to a faster transition from Polish to Turkish in both the written and spoken language. While earlier adaptations had already in-

[23] T. S. Birbudak, B. Akbaba, *II. Dünya Savaşı yıllarında Türkiye'de bulunan Polonyalılar*, "Atatürk Yolu Dergisi", 16 (62), 2018, p. 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1501/Tite_0000000491.

[24] H. Topaktaş, P*olonezköy (Adampol) (1842–1922) – Kuruluş, Tabiyet Meselesi, İmar Faaliyetleri ve Sosyal Hayat*, "Belleten", 79 (284), 2015, p. 300. https://doi.org/10.37879/belleten.2015.293

[25] Ibid., p. 303

[26] Ibid., p. 304.

[27] P. Ziółkowski. *Adampol (Polonezkioj). Osada Polska w Azji Mniejszej – Zapiski historyczne*, İstanbul 1922.

troduced Turkish vocabulary into Polish[28], the shift in alphabet accelerated orthographic changes.

These changes were especially visible in cemetery inscriptions, where traditional Polish spellings such as "*SZ*" and "*Ś*" were replaced by Turkish equivalents like "*Ş*". The linguistic blending continued as later generations assimilated into Turkish society. Kowalski documented these changes, citing examples such as "*Büjük Czarszy*" instead of "*Büyük Czarszy*". By the third generation, significant changes in language, identity, and culture had taken place, reflecting adaptation to the evolving Turkish context[29].

Although the Polish community in Polonezköy is not officially recognized as a minority under the Treaty of Lausanne, it meets many sociocultural criteria related to religion, language, and ethnicity. Mylonas uses the term "non-core groups" to describe such communities whose status depends on political and strategic considerations[30]. Given Polonezköy's size and Türkiye's selective recognition of minorities, the Polish community remains unofficial despite its distinct cultural identity.

Polish migration to Türkiye continued during and after World War II. Polish Jews, in particular, sought refuge in Türkiye or used it as a transit country. Pre- and post-war agreements between Türkiye and Poland strengthened bilateral relations. Although Türkiye remained neutral during the war, it provided humanitarian aid and offered Poles exceptional rights, including work permits and citizenship benefits not extended to many other foreign nationals[31].

During this period, a new group of Poles settled in various Turkish cities. However, their numbers were small and scattered, making it difficult to identify a cohesive diasporic identity outside the village. Most of these individuals integrated into Turkish society rather than forming separate communities. Nevertheless, these historical connections laid the groundwork for ongoing political, cultural, and human mobility between the two countries. Although the mid-20th-century Polish presence in Türkiye was limited in size and cohesion, it established a framework of familiarity and contract that did not disappear. These earlier ties, however modest, helped prepare the ground for the more dynamic exchanges that began in the 1970s, when

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[28] T. Kowalski, *Nieco o wpływie tureckim na język Polaków z Adampola* (reprint from "Rocznik Tatarski"), Wilno 1932.

[29] Ibid.

[30] H. Mylonas, *The politics of nation-building: Making co-nationals, refugees, and minorities*, Cambridge 2012. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139104005.

[31] Birbudak, Akbaba, *II. Dünya Savaşı…*, p. 4–6.

migration between Poland and Türkiye acquired a mutual and structured character shaped by trade, tourism, and political change.

Origins of the Contemporary Polish Migrant Community

Another significant wave of Polish migration began in the late 20th century, continuing historical patterns while taking on new economic, professional and personal dimensions. The years between the 1970s and to 1990s marked a further stage of this migration, during which movement between Poland and Türkiye became more reciprocal and dynamic[32]. This period also set the foundation for modern Polish-Turkish migration networks. While Poland was part of the Soviet bloc, Istanbul emerged as a key trade hub for Poles[33], particularly in clothing, textiles, and leather goods[34]. During this period, personal and commercial connections were formed that continue to shape movement between Türkiye and Poland today.

Jomma[35] notes that the first wave from Türkiye to Poland began in the 1950s, when Kurdish individuals arrived in Polish cities as students and later settled. Andrejuk[36] adds that larger Turkish migration began in the 1990s and intensified after Poland joined the EU. Earlier connections date back to the "suitcase trading" era, when Turkish manufacturers and wholesalers developed ties with Polish sales markets[37]. These connections laid important groundwork for the later Polish movement to Türkiye. The formation of a Turkish diaspora in Poland helped to build political, cultural, economic, and social links between the two countries. This included the establishment of the Polish-Turkish Economic Chamber and bilateral agreements supporting Turkish business and entrepreneurship in Poland[38]. As these connec-

[32] M. Kırcı. Türkiye'deki Bavul Ticareti – Gelişmeler ve Yeni Alternatifler, unpublished MA thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi SBE, İstanbul 2007.

[33] S. Yapar Saçık, *Türkiye'de bavul ticaretinin dış ticaret içerisindeki yeri ve büyüme – bavul ticareti ilişkisi* "Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences", 12(4), 2013, p. 809.

[34] H. Bal, Geçiş *Ülkelerinde Yolsuzluk ve Kayıtdışı Ekonomi: Kırgızistan Bavul Ticareti Örneği*, "Manas Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi", 5 (9), 2004, p. 179.

[35] F. Jomma, *Kurdowie i Kurdystan*, Gdańsk 2001.

[36] K. Andrejuk, *Strategizing integration in the labor market. Turkish immigrants in Poland and the new dimensions of South-to-North Migration*, "Polish Sociological Review", 206 (2019), p. 35–54. https://doi.org/10.26412/psr206.03.

[37] K. Pędziwiatr, *Turkish Community in Poland: From Textile Vendors to Top Managers*, in: K. Kujawa (ed.), *Polish-Turkish Foreign Policy: 600 Years of Bilateral Relations*, Çanakkale 2014.

[38] Andrejuk, *Strategizing integration in the labor market*.

tions grew stronger, Turkish immigrants in Poland increasingly became involved in tourism agencies and travel-related activities.

This evolving Turkish presence in Poland significantly influenced the growth of the Polish diaspora in Türkiye, especially from the early 2000s onward. Over the past two decades, Turkish immigrants, entrepreneurs, and cultural promoters have actively encouraged Polish tourism, education and investment in Türkiye[39]. This interest has gradually shifted from tourism to long-term migration, including settlement, intercultural marriages, deeper socioeconomic integration, and establishment of Polish-owned businesses in Türkiye[40]. Initiatives such as cultural festivals, city partnerships and charter flights between Polish and Turkish cities reflect the growing strength of these ties. Individuals with cross-national connections, such as Turkish professionals promoting Poland in Türkiye and vice versa, have played a key role in shaping this modern diaspora, which contrasts sharply with the 19th-century wave of Polish settlers.

Polish tourism to Türkiye began to rise notably in the 2010s. Atasay and Wendt report that in 2015, over 350,000 Polish tourists visited Türkiye[41]. Of these, 2.6% came to visit friends or relatives, indicating a pattern of Polish settlement, especially in Alanya. Despite Türkiye ranking 13th among foreign destinations for Poles[42], a significant portion of Polish travellers arrange their trips independently[43]. This aligns with the trend of visiting friends and family rather than engaging in organized travel.

The most popular destinations for Polish tourists and now for settlers are Alanya, Antalya, Istanbul, and Izmir. These cities are home to the largest concentrations of Poles living in Türkiye today. As tourism networks expand and Polish interests in Türkiye grow, the new diaspora continues to establish roots across these regions. Alanya and Antalya, in particular, attract both short-term and long-term residents thanks to their tourism

[39] See Hasan Çiftçi, Homepage, https://hasanciftci.pl/index.php/en/index.html (access: 20 V 2025), Onur Travel, Homepage, https://onur.pl/index.html (access: 20 V 2025).

[40] See Alanya Online, Homepage, https://alanyaonline.pl/ (access: 28 V 2025), Metin Tour, Homepage, https://metintour.pl/ (access: 28 V 2025).

[41] E. Atasoy, J. Wendt, *Changes in tourist traffic from Poland to Turkey on the background of other major directions of travel*, "Journal of Geography, Politics and Society" 2016, p. 39–44.

[42] I. Sobota-Miszczak Aslan, *Quantitative and qualitative characteristics of Polish tourists' activities in Turkey*, in: S. Laçiner, H. Palabıyık, K. Kujawa (eds.), *Polish-Turkish foreign policy: 600 years of bilateral relations*, Çanakkale 2014.

[43] K. Waraszko, Turystyka kulturowa jako składnik oferty turystycznej wybranych miast i wsi Turcji, BA thesis, Wyższa Szkoła Bankowa we Wrocławiu, Wydział Finansów i Zarządzania, Wrocław 2013.

infrastructure, warm climate and familiarity built through visits. Izmir also appeals to many with its European character, openness, and high quality of life. Istanbul stands out as an international hub, drawing global migrants with its rich economic, educational, and cultural opportunities. While Ankara receives fewer tourists, it plays a strategic role due to its status as the capital, attracting individuals working in diplomacy, NGOs, and administrative sectors. Together, these cities highlight the geographic and social diversity of the new diaspora, which spans lifestyle migration, academic exchange, professional relocation, and family reunification.

In addition to tourism and entrepreneurship, Polish migrants have also been active in professional, cultural, and diplomatic fields. Some have taken positions in Turkish universities, language schools, or international organizations, while others have worked in cooperation projects, NGOs, and cultural institutes. A number of Poles are employed in embassies, consulates, and EU-related programs, highlighting that migration today is not limited to lifestyle and family moves but also involves skilled labor and institutional collaboration. This professional dimension builds on the longer tradition of Polish experts serving in Ottoman and early Republican modernization projects, now reshaped in a contemporary context of exchange and partnership.

Evidence from community associations, voting registration and sustained family ties suggests the Polish presence in Türkiye is shifting from temporary migration toward a diaspora formation. In diaspora studies, the term typically refers to a dispersed community with sustained ties to both their homeland and host country. It is often shaped by shared identity, continuity, and transnational networks[44]. While the historical community of Polonezköy exemplified an enclave in the classic sense, recent migrants display elements of what Dufoix describes as an "enclaved mode" of diaspora. These diasporas form community associations and maintain cultural links through tourism businesses, intercultural marriages, and social media networks. Their presence in cities such as Alanya, Antalya, and Izmir, combined with growing settlement patterns and personal ties, suggests that a Polish diaspora is gradually emerging within Türkiye's multicultural landscape.

[44] S. Dufoix, *What is a diaspora?*, in: idem, *Diasporas*, transl. W. Rodarmor, Berkeley–Los Angeles 2008, p. 4–34.

Social and Cultural Adaptation of Old and New Polish Migrants

The social, cultural, and linguistic adaptation processes of Polonezköy and the newly forming Polish diaspora in Türkiye differ significantly, shaped by distinct historical contexts and motivations. The settlers of Polonezköy were mostly political exiles, rebels, soldiers, and intellectuals fleeing repression in partitioned Poland[45]. Their migration was rooted in strong national identity and resistance, which influenced the preservation of the Polish language, Catholic traditions, and cultural memory in exile[46]. For many years, Polonezköy functioned as a relatively closed community, limiting adaptation with surrounding Turkish society.

Archival records and local histories indicate that these processes influenced the village's cultural, religious and ethnic identity[47]. Dynamics shaped the village's cultural, religious, and ethnic identity for nearly 200 years[48]. While good relationships with local communities and Turkish authorities evolved, key national reforms, such as the switch from Arabic to Latin script, had a direct impact on the village's linguistic adaptation. These changes are particularly visible in orthographic shifts on cemetery inscriptions and personal names. The transition from the Ottoman Empire's millet system to the secular Turkish Republic also influences the village's cultural landscape. According to local histories, a notable moment came when *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk* visited the village, reinforcing its symbolic status. Over time, villagers became Turkish citizens, which transitioned their status from refugee to official membership in the nation.

Today, the village's identity reflects this dual heritage. Many residents hold dual citizenship and continue to uphold religious practices. As documented during research visits, the local church still holds services in Polish on major religious holidays and every Saturday evening (instead of Sunday, due to the priest's responsibilities at St. Anthony of Padua Church in Istanbul). While Turkish is the primary language of daily life, Polish continues to be used in ceremonial and symbolic contexts. These practices preserve the community's Catholic and language identity, even as full fluency in Polish declines.

In contrast, my empirical findings indicate the new Polish diaspora is not driven by political necessity but by tourism, marriage, professional

[45] Łątka, *Adampol – Polska wieś nad Bosforem.*

[46] K. Dopierała, *Adampol–Polonezköy: Z dziejów Polaków w Turcji*, Poznań 1983.

[47] Kowalski, *Nieco o wpływie tureckim na język*

[48] Ziółkowski, *Adampol (Polonezkioj).*

opportunities, and lifestyle choices. These migrants tend to take a more flexible approach to integration. In Alanya and Antalya, the Polish community has organized through groups such as Polonialanya and Polonijne Stowarzyszenie Kultury i Nauki w Antalyi. These associations support cultural, legal, and social needs while placing special emphasis on language, particularly for children. They organize Polish language classes, celebrate religious and national holidays, and host regular community events to pass Polish traditions to younger generations.

Drawing on field research, in Istanbul, the Polish community has also been historically active, through groups like Stowarzyszenie Polonii w Stambule, the Church of St. Anthony of Padua, and the Polish Consulate. However, this association has become less active due to limited support and participation. Still, Istanbul's historical ties with the Polish diaspora, cosmopolitan character, and proximity to Polonezköy make it a unique destination where multiple diaspora layers intersect, even if their reasons for settling differ from those in southern coastal regions.

As documented during research visits, Ankara is home to another active community, centered around the PolAnka association. Like its southern counterparts, this group organizes cultural, social, and linguistic activities. Many of its members work in the Polish Embassy, universities, or in public institutions, giving the group a stable and respected presence in the capital. In all cities, many individuals engage with Polish networks while also learning Turkish, building intercultural families, and navigating layered identities.

Field observations suggest the new diaspora is largely urban, digitally networked, and less tied to a single ethnic narrative. Its members often blend Polish, Turkish, and wider European influences in their daily lives. Their adaptation is marked less by resistance and more by openness, flexibility, and a strong sense of transnational belonging.

Conclusion

This study has examined the evolution of the Polish diaspora in Türkiye by comparing the historical "old diaspora" of political exiles with the "new diaspora" shaped by modern migration dynamics. Through the lens of social, cultural, and linguistic adaptation,this study shows that the old diaspora exemplified by the village of Polonezköy was rooted in exile, national

identity, and cultural preservation. While the new diaspora is characterized by transnational mobility, intercultural relationships, and pragmatic integration. These two waves differ in their motivations, settlement patterns and how they negotiate identity and belonging within Turkish society.

By tracking this transformation from historical exile to contemporary migration, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of diaspora diversity and the changing nature of Polish migration. It also highlights Türkiye's unique role as both a place of refuge and opportunity, shaped by shifting geopolitical contexts and interpersonal ties. The comparison underscores how diasporic identity is not static but constantly redefined by social, political, and cultural forces. Further research could explore the everyday experiences of the new Polish diaspora across different Turkish cities, investigate second-generation identity formation, or compare the Polish case with other small European diasporas in Türkiye. Such work would enrich the broader discourse on diaspora studies, migration, and intercultural relations in the region.

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From Historical Identity to Modern Representation: The Evolving Political Role of the Polish Minority in Lithuania – An Overview

Abstract

This research examines the political influence of the Polish ethnic minority in Lithuania, analyzing its historical foundations, contemporary representation mechanisms, and future integration prospects. Despite constituting only 6.5% of Lithuania's population, the Polish minority maintains political presence, particularly in southeastern regions such as Vilnius and Šalčininkai districts. The study employs qualitative content analysis of official documents and institutional formation from 2021–2025, focusing on three key dimensions: historical identity formation, political representation and institutional participation, and future integration visions. The analysis reveals that the the Lithuanian Polish Election Campaigns – Unions of Christian Families party (EAPL) has served as the primary vehicle for Polish political mobilization since 1994, achieving consistent success in municipal elections (securing 56–67 mandates) and maintaining representation in national parliament and European Parliament. However, recent developments indicate an evolving pattern of political integration, with Polish-origin politicians increasingly participating in mainstream parties beyond ethnic-based platforms, exemplified by appointments such as Robert Duchnevič as mayor and Ewelina Dobrowolska as former Minister of Justice.The adoption of the National Minorities Law in November 2024 addresses a 14-year legislative vacuum, providing formal recognition and enhanced protections for minority rights. The research concludes that the Polish minority represents a relatively successful case of minority political integration in the Baltic region, though future challenges persist regarding language policy, cultural preservation, and balancing ethnic identity with broader civic participation. The study demonstrates that political mobilization in nationalizing states relies increasingly on symbolic representation rather than substantive policy delivery, while

successful integration depends on maintaining cultural vitality alongside active engagement in Lithuania's pluralistic democratic processes.

Keywords: Lithuanian Polish minority, political representation, EAPL, minority rights, Baltic states, cultural integration.

Santrauka

Šiame tyrime nagrinėjama Lenkijos tautinės mažumos politinė įtaka Lietuvoje, analizuojami jos istoriniai pagrindai, šiuolaikiniai atstovavimo mechanizmai ir ateities integracijos perspektyvos. Nors Lenkijos tautinė mažuma sudaro tik 6,5 % Lietuvos gyventojų, ji išlaiko politinę įtaką, ypač pietryčių regionuose, pavyzdžiui, Vilniaus ir Šalčininkų rajonuose. Tyrime taikoma kokybinė oficialių dokumentų ir institucinio formavimo 2021–2025 m. turinio analizė, sutelkiant dėmesį į tris pagrindinius aspektus: istorinės tapatybės formavimąsi, politinį atstovavimą ir institucinį dalyvavimą bei ateities integracijos vizijas. Analizė rodo, kad nuo 1994 m. Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcijos – Krikščioniškų šeimų sąjungos partija (LLRA-KŠS) buvo pagrindinė lenkų politinės mobilizacijos priemonė, pasiekusi nuoseklų sėkmę savivaldybių rinkimuose (užsitikrinusi 56–67 mandatus) ir išlaikiusi atstovavimą nacionaliniame parlamente ir Europos Parlamente. Tačiau naujausi pokyčiai rodo besikeičiančią politinės integracijos tendenciją, kai lenkų kilmės politikai vis dažniau dalyvauja pagrindinėse partijose, neapsiribodami etninėmis platformomis, pavyzdžiui, Robertas Duchnevičius buvo paskirtas meru, o Ewelina Dobrowolska – buvusia teisingumo ministre. 2024 m. lapkričio mėn. priimtas Nacionalinių mažumų įstatymas užpildo 14 metų trukusią teisėkūros spragą, suteikdamas oficialų pripažinimą ir stipresnę mažumų teisių apsaugą. Tyrime daroma išvada, kad lenkų mažuma yra palyginti sėkmingas mažumų politinės integracijos Baltijos regione pavyzdys, nors ateityje išlieka iššūkiai, susiję su kalbos politika, kultūros išsaugojimu ir etninės tapatybės bei platesnio pilietinio dalyvavimo pusiausvyros išlaikymu. Studija rodo, kad politinė mobilizacija nacionalizuojančiose valstybėse vis labiau remiasi simboliniu atstovavimu, o ne esminių politikos priemonių įgyvendinimu, o sėkminga integracija priklauso nuo kultūrinio gyvybingumo išlaikymo ir aktyvaus dalyvavimo Lietuvos pliuralistiniuose demokratiniuose procesuose.

Raktažodžiai: Lietuvos lenkų mažuma, politinis atstovavimas, LLRA-KŠS, mažumų teisės, Baltijos valstybės, kultūrinė integracija.

Introduction

The Polish ethnic minority in Lithuania, although relatively small in size, plays a significant role in the nation's political landscape. With historical roots that date back centuries, this minority's influence is felt in various spheres of Lithuanian society, from local governance to national politics. Understanding their impact requires an examination of the historical context, current political dynamics, and future implications. Historically, the Polish minority in Lithuania traces its origins to the Polish – Lithuanian Commonwealth, a political union that shaped much of the region's history. The close ties between the two nations resulted in a shared cultural and linguistic heritage, particularly in the Vilnius region, where a significant proportion of the Polish community resides today. After the partition of the Commonwealth and the subsequent political shifts in the 20th century, including Soviet occupation and Lithuania's eventual independence, the Polish minority's position evolved in relation to national identity and state -building efforts.

The objective of this research is to analyze the political influence of the Polish ethnic minority in Lithuania by: (1) tracing its historical foundations, (2) examining its current mechanisms of political representation, particularly through the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania, and (3) assessing evolving forms of political engagement beyond ethnic party structures. The research question: how the Polish minority balances the preservation of cultural identity with effective participation in Lithuanian democratic processes, especially in light of the 2024 National Minorities Law. Although the Republic of Lithuania officially recognises the rights of national minorities, the Polish community is particularly active in the political life of the country, especially in south-eastern Lithuania. The Polish Electoral Action, representing Polish interests, has become an important political player, influencing not only regional but also national politics.

Historical Context

The Polish – Lithuanian Commonwealth, which existed from 1569 to 1795, was a pivotal period that shaped the cultural and political relations between Poles and Lithuanians. Following the dissolution of the Commonwealth, the territories that now comprise modern Lithuania experienced various

political shifts, but the Polish minority continued to be an integral part of the region's cultural fabric. During the interwar period, the Polish minority in Lithuania faced challenges, including political and social discrimination. After World War II, the Soviet regime's policies towards ethnic minorities had a considerable impact, but the Polish community managed to maintain its cultural and linguistic identity[1].

The problems caused by ethnic relations (national minorities, migrants) are becoming more and more relevant in today's world, so a comprehensive approach to these problems is necessary. In Europe, the political influence of nationalist and far-right movements is growing, which encourages the assessment of the relationship between ethnicity and politics in security contexts. This is illustrated by the events in France, Spain, Italy, Austria, the Netherlands, and Germany, where this problem is becoming more and more relevant and receiving evaluation from a security perspective. Any domestic or foreign policy problem (language, migration, "energy dependence on a single source", etc.) can become the object of securitization, but the nation and the state are considered the most important. The so-called "threats" are the securitization of otherness (another state, culture, nation, etc.), i.e. i.e. making difference a threat. De-securitization – returning a security issue to the sphere of public debate. It is also worth mentioning the essential, conditioning connection of the discourse of ethno-political identities with the discourse of statehood of national post-Soviet democracies – depending on the identity subject, statehood visions, models, value principles, etc. differ which actualizes this problem as a constituent part of the forms of democracy and their sustainability in our region.

In the modern world, it is difficult to find a state that consists of the population of only one ethnic group. In Europe, in the 20th century, there were two territorial transformations based on ethnic principles, and both times were accompanied by the collapse of empires. 20th century At the beginning of the 20th century, these events were caused by the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and the second major change occurred with the collapse of the communist regime of the Soviet Union. In the first case, as many as a dozen new states (including the Republic of Northern Turkish Cyprus) were formed after the collapse of the empire, and in the second case, states such as the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia disappeared after the collapse of the communist regime. The change of political borders, neither before

[1] D. Janušauskienė, *Identities of and Policies Towards the Polish National Minority in Lithuania*, "Ethnopolitics" 2021 (20), p. 136.

nor now, has not reduced the tension in the sphere of the national composition of the states. No matter how the territorial boundaries of states are drawn, there will always be ethnic groups living outside the borders of their national states.

After the Second World War, almost all the countries of Western Europe faced the wider consequences of the geopolitical and demographic changes in the states. This is also reflected in the collapse of the Soviet Union, which made this type of problem more prominent. According to Natalia Kasatkina and Tadas Leončikas, a researchers of the relationship between ethnicity and politics, "the new situation and new status forced Russians, Russian-speakers and others to decide whether to seek the status of a full-fledged citizen through ethnic adaptation, or to emigrate to countries that were on the territory of the Soviet Union or outside of it[2]. According to the research conducted in 1991, approximately 27 million inhabitants were separated from their homeland, and as a result, the population of the current CIS and Baltic countries includes not only representatives of nominal nationalities, but also residents of the former state[3]. About 14 percent in Lithuania the population consists of minorities[4]. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent re-establishment of the Baltic states[5], the minority of the society became the majority, and the former majority became the minority[6].

Since gaining independence, the topic of ethnic minorities in Lithuania has been discussed not only by representatives of social sciences, but also by politicians. The main political debate and research focus is on the internal politics of these countries and the relations between minorities and the dominant ethnic groups in the countries. Certain communities of ethnic minorities must be evaluated in the broader context of international relations, because the relations of countries with diasporas living in other countries are particularly important in shaping the political discourse, which includes return migration, dual citizenship and other issues. In assessing Lithuanian – Polish relations, the key document remains the 1994 Polish –

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[2] N. Kasatkina, T. Leončikas, *Lietuvos etninių grupių adaptacija: kontekstas ir eiga*, Vilnius 2003, p. 46.

[3] C. King, N. J. Melvin, *Diaspora Politics: Ethnic Linkages, Foreign Policy, and Security in Eurasia,* "International Security" 1999–2000, vol. 24, no. 3, p. 108.

[4] Tautinių mažumų departamentas prie LR Vyriausybės. https://tmde.lrv.lt/lt/tautiniu-mazumu-kulturos-centrai-ir-tautines-bendrijos/statistika (access: 12.06.2025)

[5] The Baltic countries are perceived as Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

[6] D. J. Galbreath, *From Nationalism to Nation-Building: Latvian Politics and Minority Policy*, "Nationalities Papers" 2006, vol. 34, no. 4, p. 4.

Lithuanian treaty, which defines the rights of minorities, although its provisions are often interpreted differently by both sides[7].

Presentation of research methodology

To identify polish ethnic minority in Lithuanian official discourse, qualitative content (documents and official institutional information) analysis will be used. Qualitative content analysis will be used, as it is more descriptive and allows making more profound analysis of the official discourse. Qualitative analysis will have 3 categories: 1. Formation of historical identity and memory (focus of analysis: how events are presented and interpreted in the Polish community and in Lithuanian political discourse. 2. Political representation and institutional participation (focus of analysis: how and to what extent the Polish national minority participates in politics (e.g., through the Lithuanian Polish Election Campaigns-Unions of Christian Families party, municipal councils, the Seimas). 3. Visions for the future and prospects for integration (focus of analysis: how political leaders, community representatives, or the media talk about the place of the Polish minority in Lithuanian society in the future).

Qualitative analysis will help to analyze how the image of polish ethnic minority in Lithuania is constructed by assigning it to different contexts, giving it some evaluations, connecting it to current situation. It also helps to identify which variables of each category are dominant. According to the results of content analysis, polish ethnic minority image will be created using phrases and quotations from the analyzed documents.

Period of analysis chosen for the research – 2021–2025. Several significant legal and administrative decisions concerning the rights of national minorities, the spelling of surnames, the restructuring of the school network, and the education of national minorities were made or are being made in 2021–2025. After 2021, bilateral relations between Poland and Lithuania have become significantly more active, especially in the areas of security, energy, and regional cooperation. Since 2021, the importance of information campaigns and identity politics in public discourse has grown significantly, providing an opportunity to observe how the image of the Polish minority is being shaped in the digital space.

[7] A. Eberhardt, B. Jundo-Kaliszewska, *Polacy na Litwie w świetle współczesnych przemian – szanse, wyzwania, zagrożenia. Analiza strategiczna*, Łódź 2024, p. 11, 18.

Overview of the situation of ethnic minorities in Lithuania

Lithuania is a relatively homogeneous country. According to the results of the 2021 general population and housing census of the Republic of Lithuania, in 2021, Lithuania had a population of 2,810,000, of which 432,000 identified themselves as representatives of national minorities. In such a homogeneous state, a clear division between the majority and the minority emerges.

Table no 1. Population by ethnicity in 2021.

Nationality	2021 Population	Percentage
Total	2,810,761	
Lithuanians	2,378,118	84.61%
Poles	183,421	6.53%
Russians	141,122	5.02%
Belarusians	28,183	1.00%
Ukrainians	14,168	0.50%
Jews	2,256	0.08%
Tatars	2,142	0.08%
Germans	1,977	0.07%
Roma	2,251	0.08%
Latvians	1,572	0.06%
Armenians	1,125	0.04%
Azerbaijanis	575	0.02%
Moldovans	451	0.02%
Georgians	333	0.01%
Estonians	233	0.01%
Karaims	192	0.01%
Others	3,009	0.11%
Not specified	49,633	1.77%

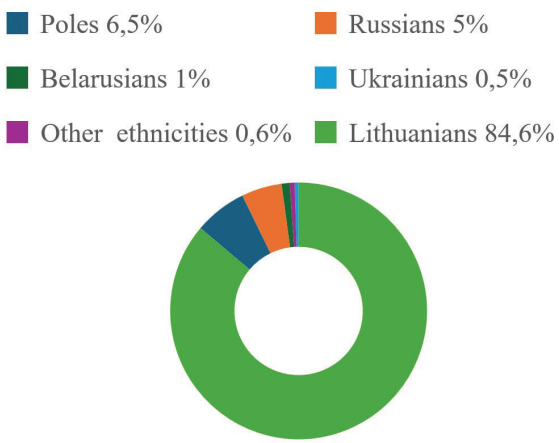
Source: chart prepared by the author of the work, based on the data of the Department of Statistics[8]

According to statistics, the largest ethnic communities in Lithuania in 2021, apart from the Lithuanian ethnic majority, were Poles and Russians, with population numbers shown in thousands and percentages beside. This

[8] Department of Statistics, Lithuania. Distribution of national minorities in Lithuania: data from January 2023.

indicates, that in general all other ethnic minorities do not have any effect on national political, cultural influence. From a historical perspective, the Russian ethnic group in Lithuania exerted a relatively greater influence on the country's political and cultural development, particularly during earlier periods of state formation and regional integration. Over time, however, this group was unable to sustain its collective political interests, experiencing gradual assimilation or, in some cases, integration into the Polish ethnic minority. The institutional trajectory of the Lithuanian Russian Union, established in 1995, subsequently weakened, and ultimately dissolved in 2021, illustrates this process of organizational decline and political marginalization. By contrast, the Polish ethnic minority, though numerically small, has demonstrated a more consistent capacity to preserve and advance its political interests. In articulating its own demands, the Polish community has simultaneously come to embody, at least symbolically, the broader concerns of Lithuania's ethnic minorities, thereby consolidating its role as a key representative actor within the country's multiethnic political landscape.

Table no 2. The largest ethnic communities in Lithuania



Source: chart prepared by the author of the work

The largest national minority in the country are Poles, they make up 6.5 percent of the population. Russians also make up a considerable part (5%). Jews, Latvians, Tatars, Germans, Romani and others in Lithuania comprise 0.6% each, for this reason they are presented in one group in the table.

As the Polish ethnic group is the largest minority in Lithuania, they make up a significant part of the Lithuanian population, especially in the south-eastern part of Lithuania, near the Polish border. The Polish ethnic minority in Lithuania faces various situations and challenges related to cultural identity, language, education and other issues. Aspects of culture and language become particularly emphasized in the state discourse, as Poles in Lithuania preserve their cultural heritage, language and traditions. There are Polish schools and cultural centres in the country, which promote the preservation of the Polish language and culture[9].

When assessing the aspect of education, which often becomes an actualized problem, it should be noted that there are Polish schools in Lithuania where citizens can receive education in Polish. However, sometimes these issues of funding and order of educational institutions raise disputes and challenges at the state level. Civil rights are becoming an increasingly relevant aspect when monitoring information in the public space, because even though the Polish national minority in Lithuania has civil rights, there are also disputes regarding the scope and assurance of certain rights. And this encourages the assessment of political relations with the representation of ethnic minorities in the country[10]. Various organizations of the Polish national minority operate in Lithuania, which aim to protect the interests of the Polish national minority and improve its situation. However, the most debates arise from the representation of national minorities in politics, because for a long time in this area this area has been concentrated in the prerogative of one political party, the Lithuanian Poles' Election Action – Union of Christian Families, when the political party, in order to be seen as a political force in the country, often escalates many problems, due to which the ethical behavior of Poles the minority falls into a threatened context in Lithuania.

Currently, various international legal acts are in force in Europe, but there is no single and specific definition of the concept of a national minority[11]. The theories formulated in legal provisions and doctrines allow us to conclude that a group of persons living in the territory of a specific state,

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[9] G. Hogan-Brun, M. Ramonienė, L. Grumadienė, *The language situation in Lithuania*, „Journal of Baltic Studies" 2005, 36 (3), pp. 345–49.

[10] A. Szafrańska, G. Čiuladienė, *Szkolnictwo w stanie zagrożenia? Polska i litewska perspektywa zmian a sytuacja w szkole w Litwie*. „Edukacja Międzykulturowa" 2023, nr 22(3), pp. 162–175.

[11] J. Wołkonowski, *Education in Polish and a level of higher education of Polish minority in Lithuania*, "Kultura i edukacja", 2017, nr 4, pp. 106–121.

constituting less than half of its population and distinguished from the majority by its objective and subjective features, is recognized as a national minority in international law. National states are given the discretion to define a national minority in their national legislation[12].

National minorities are also not precisely defined in Lithuanian legal acts. The Law on National Minorities, which regulated their rights and freedoms, has been was formally ratified in 1989. It emphasized that all citizens in Lithuania, regardless of their nationality, are guaranteed equal political, economic and social rights and freedoms, their national identity and cultural continuity are recognized, national self-awareness and its self-expression are encouraged. In the article, national minorities are mentioned as "people of various nationalities living in Lithuania, whose historical path is closely connected with the fate of the Lithuanian nation"[13].

However, in 2010, on January 1, the Law on National Minorities ceased to be valid, and currently there is no law in the state that determines the status of national minorities. Knut Vollebaek, the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, who visited Lithuania, said: "There is no obligation to have a law on national minorities and there are many countries that do not have it. In my opinion, the problem in your case is that you had a National Minorities Act that expired. Symbolically, this creates a different situation than if you had not had such a law. According to the Council of Europe report, there appears to be a legal vacuum after the law expires"[14]. A legal vacuum that persisted for 14 years was finally resolved with the adoption of the new National Minorities Law in November 2024, effectively addressing a significant legislative gap in Lithuania. The Equal Opportunities Law is designed to ensure the enforcement of Article 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, which guarantees equality and prohibits the restriction of human rights or granting of privileges based on gender, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, faith, beliefs, or views. Additionally, this law facilitates the implementation of relevant European Union legal acts, as well as other international legal instruments, as specified in its annex[15].

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[12] A. Szafrańska, G. Čiuladienė, op. cit., pp. 165–170.

[13] Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. Law on National Minorities http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=22150&p_query=&p_tr2=2 (access: 19.06.2025)

[14] Bns. Inf. *Tautinių mažumų įstatymo nebuvimas sukuria teisinį vakuumą*. http://www.diena.lt/naujienos/lietuva/tautiniu-mazumu-istatymo-nebuvimas-sukuria-teisini-vakuuma-389785 (access: 21.06.2025)

[15] J. Wołkonowski, op. cit., pp. 110–117.

On November 7, 2024, the Lithuanian Parliament adopted the Law on National Minorities, which formally defines the concepts of national minorities and persons belonging to national minorities, explicitly requiring Lithuanian citizenship as a prerequisite. This marks a departure from previous population censuses, which categorized all permanent residents not of Lithuanian nationality as national minorities regardless of citizenship status. Consequently, the current figures for persons classified as belonging to national minorities under this new law will need to be reassessed.

Political Representation

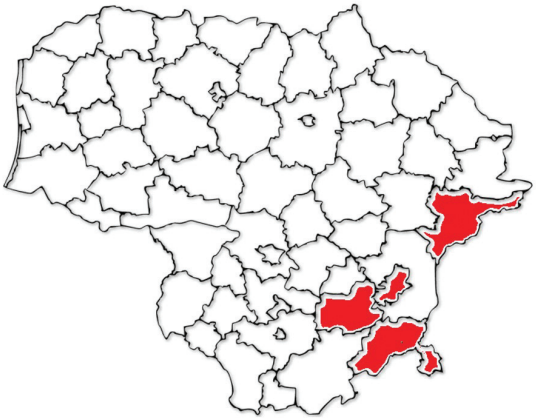
The main concentration of the Polish ethnic minority in contemporary Lithuania is in the Vilnius region, especially in the municipalities of Šalčininkai (76,3%), Vilnius (46.8%), Trakai (27.5%) and Švenčionys (24,3%). Their political weight is testified to by the presence of this minority in Lithuanian political life. The political party of the Lithuanian Polish Election Campaigns – Unions of Christian Families (EAPL)[16] in Lithuania has been active in articulating the rights of the Polish community. It has held seats in the Seimas, or the parliament of Lithuania and has consistently positioned itself as an advocate for national minorities. At the national level, one of the EAPL's greatest achievements was the 2019 parliamentary elections, when the party, together with the Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union and the Lithuanian Social Democratic Labor Party formed a coalition government and held two ministerial portfolios: the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Transport and Communications. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the party has not succeeded in addressing the most important issues affecting Polish minorities. Moreover, the much-desired Law on Minorities was adopted during a period later when the EAPL was not even in government.

According to Lijphart's consociational democracy framework, ethnic minorities can achieve political influence through proportional representation and segmental autonomy mechanisms, which is evident in EAPL's success in municipal elections[17].

[16] Lithuanian abbreviation LLRA-KŠS

[17] A. Lijphart, *Patterns of democracy: Government forms and performance in thirty-six countries*, New Haven 1999.

Table no. 3. The largest proportion of Polish nationals in municipalities



Source: chart prepared by the author of the work

At the beginning of 1994, the Law on Public Organizations came into force in Lithuania, according to which organizations had to reorganize into political parties or continue to remain public organizations by the end of the year. Until that time, the Lithuanian Polish Union was a public-political organization, which gave it the right to participate in public and political life. In May of the same year, the Seimas of Lithuania adopted a law according to which only political parties and political organizations could participate in the elections. The Polish community, which does not have its own party, faced a difficult task – how to maintain the Union and at the same time participate in the political life of Lithuania? Lithuanian Polish Election Campaigns – Unions of Christian Families (EAPL) – Lithuanian political party founded in 1994 October. This party claims to represent national minorities, but the majority are Polish and Russian national minorities[18].

EAPL implements the assumptions of the statute by participating in elections of various levels – from municipal and parliamentary to the European Parliament elections in 2004. The last 10 years The EAPL governs in districts with a large population of Polish: Vilnius (63 percent Polish) and Šalčininkai (80 percent Polish). In the municipal elections in these districts, EAPL consistently collects 60–70 percent of the votes. In several other districts, the EAPL belongs to the ruling majority and influences the decisions made. Throughout its existence, EAPL fought and defended the rights of the

[18] V. Sirutavičius, *Lietuviai ir Lietuvos lenkai, Lietuva ir Lenkija 1988–1994 metais*, Vilnius 2017.

Polish national minority in Lithuania. The party has been particularly active in defending bilingual signage rights, organizing numerous protests against restrictions on Polish-language public signs and advocating for the recognition of traditional Polish place names in areas with significant Polish populations. Not once organized the protest actions held in front of the Lithuanian Seimas in defence of Polish education, language and land. Together with the Polish Union of Lithuania and the Association of Polish Schools of Lithuania "Macierz Szkolna" conducted a campaign to collect signatures for projects favourable to the Polish community, laws on education and national minorities[19].

EAPL takes care of Polish schools in the Vilnius Region and the economic development of the region. 20 years of joint work ensured the strongest position in the world for the Polish community of Lithuania, compared to other Polish communities outside the homeland. EAPL currently has more the 2000 membe rs.At the congress of the Lithuanian Polish election campaign held on May 7, 2016, it was decided to expand and supplement the name of the party. On June 16, 2016, the extended name of the party was officially registered at the Ministry of Justice. Since then, the official name of the party is the Lithuanian Polish Election Campaigns – Unions of Christian Families. It should be noted that the chairman of the party Mr. Waldemar Tomaszewski has been a member of the European Parliament of Lithuania since 2009.

Table no 4. EAPL participation in municipal, Seimas and European Parliament elections.

Year	Elections	Received mandates
1996	Seimas elections of the Republic of Lithuania	1 mandate
2000	Seimas elections of the Republic of Lithuania	2 mandates
2004	European Parliament elections	0 mandate
2004	Seimas elections of the Republic of Lithuania	2 mandates
2007	Elections of Lithuanian municipal councils	53 mandates
2008	Seimas elections of the Republic of Lithuania	3 mandates
2009	European Parliament elections	1 mandate
2011	Elections of Lithuanian municipal councils	65 mandates
2012	Seimas elections of the Republic of Lithuania	8 mandates
2014	European Parliament elections	1 mandate
2015	Elections of Lithuanian municipal councils	67 mandates
2016	Seimas elections of the Republic of Lithuania	8 mandates

[19] A. Szafrańska, G. Čiuladienė, op. cit, pp. 167–173.

Year	Elections	Received mandates
2019	European Parliament elections	1 mandate
2019	Elections of Lithuanian municipal councils	56 mandates
2020	Seimas elections of the Republic of Lithuania	3 mandates
2023	Elections of Lithuanian municipal councils	57 mandates
2024	European Parliament elections	1 mandate

Sourse: compiled by the author

The party has strong performance in local municipal council elections, demonstrating a robust local support base. This shows a big influence in Eastern Lithuanian part municipalities. While the Seimas elections show variability, indicating changing levels of national support or shifts in political strategy. Although the persistent low representation in the European Parliament suggests challenges in gaining a foothold at the European level, but this indicates a strong EAPL party leadership influence as Mr. Waldemar Tomaszewski is the only EU member who got a mandate in European Parliament elections 4 times in a row. The Polish ethnic minorities researcher Paweł Sobik evaluates the political achievements of ethnic Poles very highly, noting that nowhere else in Europe did Poles attain such success[20].

Despite the presence of Polish political parties in Lithuania, there is a discernible global trend impacting ethnic minorities, illustrating that it is not imperative for representatives of ethnic groups to align exclusively with parties representing their specific ethnic constituencies. This trend is evident in recent electoral outcomes and governmental appointments. For instance, in the latest elections, Social Democrat Robert Duchnevič was elected as the mayor of Vilnius District Municipality, while member of the liberal party Ewelina Dobrowolska was appointed as Minister of Justice in 2020. These appointments reflect a broader, inclusive political dynamic where ethnic minority representatives engage in various political platforms beyond those traditionally associated with their ethnic groups.

Future Implications, Challenges and Contributions

Kymlicka's distinction between polyethnic rights and national minority rights offers a valuable analytical framework for examining the aspirations

[20] P. Sobik, *Nowhere in Europe did Poles achieve such success*, https://media.efhr.eu/2017/06/02/pawel-sobik-nowhere-europe-poles-achieve-success/ (19.06.2025)

of the Polish minority in Lithuania, as their demands encompass both cultural recognition and sustained political representation[21]. From this perspective, the Polish community seeks not merely the accommodation of cultural practices, but also territorially embedded rights connected to long-standing historical presence. The media landscape plays a critical role in supporting these claims. Polish-language outlets such as *Kurier Wileński*, as well as radio and television programmes produced in cooperation with Poland's public media, function as key mechanisms of cultural reproduction and linguistic continuity Through these platforms, the community maintains access to public discourse in the mother tongue, reinforcing the symbolic boundaries that sustain minority identity[22]. Looking toward the future, the trajectory of cultural representation of the Polish minority may generate multiple political, social, and cultural consequences: both for Lithuania as a nation-state and for the internal dynamics of the Polish community. These developments will likely interact with broader processes including globalization, digital communication, and evolving European norms regarding minority protection. Politically, the Lithuanian Poles' Electoral Action (EAPL) may continue to secure strong electoral support in southeastern regions, enabling the party to shape debates around education, bilingual signage, and funding of cultural institutions[23]. Sustained political representation through EAPL or through increasingly diversified participation in mainstream parties could further institutionalize minority concerns within national policymaking.

One of the most persistent long-term challenges remains the issue of language policy. As noted by Sirutavičius, demands for Polish to obtain co-official status in majority-Polish districts date back to the founding congress of Lithuanian Poles in 1989[24]. These claims reflect deeper historical currents: Polish national consciousness has traditionally been more pronounced in southeastern Lithuania, shaped by complex legacies of statehood, regional identity, and interwar border politics[25]Whether bilingualism evolves into a sustainable, state-supported model will depend on the balance between

[21] W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural citizenship: A liberal theory of minority rights*, Oxford 1995.

[22] G. Hogan-Brun, M. Ramonienė, L. Grumadienė, *The language situation in Lithuania*, „Journal of Baltic Studies" 2005, 36 (3), pp. 345–368.

[23] D. J. Smith, J, Hiden, *Ethnic Diversity and the Nation State: National Cultural Autonomy Revisited*, London 2012; D. Budrytė, *Taming Nationalism? Political Community Building in the Post-Soviet Baltic States*, Aldershot 2005.

[24] V. Sirutavičius, *Lietuviai ir Lietuvos lenkai, Lietuva ir Lenkija 1988–1994 metais*, Vilnius 2017.

[25] A. E. Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, Los Angeles 1990.

national language consolidation policies and European standards promoting the protection of regional or minority languages[26].

If current domains of Polish language use, education, public signage, media, and religious life, remain stable or expand, bilingualism may become a durable feature of southeastern Lithuania's sociolinguistic landscape. Such an outcome would allow the Polish minority to maintain linguistic and cultural continuity while participating actively in Lithuania's political and civic life. Conversely, restrictive interpretations of language laws or inconsistent implementation of minority rights risk generating alienation, particularly among younger generations who confront competing linguistic identities and differential opportunities tied to language proficiency[27]. A successful model of integration – one that acknowledges minority cultural heritage while promoting civic inclusion – could enhance social cohesion and strengthen interethnic cooperation. This scenario would reinforce both internal solidarity within the Polish minority and its ties with other ethnic communities, enriching Lithuania's overall cultural landscape.

Comparative regional analyses support the view that the Polish minority in Lithuania constitutes a relatively successful case of minority political integration in the Baltic region. Galbreath's examination of Latvian minority policies indicates that Lithuanian approaches, despite periodic tensions and legal inconsistencies, remain comparatively more effective in incorporating minority claims into democratic processes[28]Furthermore, as Agarin and Dambraska argue, the success of the ideologically distinct EAPL demonstrates that in nationalizing states symbolic representation often outweighs substantive policy delivery: it is sufficient for a minority party to articulate shared grievances rooted in contested nation-state building[29].In this context, the political mobilization of the Polish minority relies significantly on identity-based narratives and historical memory, even as new trends indicate gradual diversification of political engagement.

Overall, future challenges and opportunities for the Polish minority in Lithuania will hinge on the complex interplay between national legislation, European minority-rights norms, local community initiatives, and broader

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[26] F. Palermo, J. Woelk, *Diritto costituzionale comparato dei gruppi e delle minoranze*, Milano 2021.

[27] N. Kasatkina, V. Beresnevičiūtė, *Ethnic structure, inequality and governance of the public sector in Lithuania*. „Etniškumo studijos/Ethnicity Studies", 2010, no. 1–2, pp. 7–25.

[28] D. J. Galbreath, *The role of the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the EU in the promotion of minority rights in the Baltic states*. In: J. Joachim, B. Reinalda & B. Verbeek (eds.) 2006. *International organizations and effective policy implementation*, London 2006, p. 161–173.

[29] T. Agarin, K. Dambrauskas, *Pork Barrel and Identity Politics: Explaining a Minority Party's Electoral Success in Lithuania*, "Nationalities Papers" 2024, vol. 53, no. 4, p. 1–20.

political developments in the Baltic region. If managed constructively, these dynamics may consolidate a model of minority integration that balances cultural vitality with active civic participation.

Conclusions

The political presence of the Polish minority in Lithuania, despite its relatively small demographic share, constitutes a notable case of minority agency within a nationalizing state. Concentrated primarily in the Vilnius and Šalčininkai regions, this community continues to draw on historically rooted identities shaped by the legacy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which informs both its collective self-perception and patterns of political participation. Contemporary political influence has long been articulated through the Lithuanian Poles' Election Action (EAPL), a party that has served as the primary platform for mobilizing minority interests at the local and national levels. While traditionally associated with education, language rights, and cultural protection, the party's role has also extended to broader debates on minority policy frameworks in Lithuania.

Recent developments, however, indicate a gradual reconfiguration of representation dynamics. Increasing numbers of politicians of Polish origin, such as Robert Duchnevič or Ewelina Dobrowolska, have attained prominent positions within mainstream political parties, suggesting an ongoing diversification of political avenues beyond ethnically defined platforms. This shift reflects a broader trend towards more inclusive, civic-oriented modes of political integration and demonstrates that ethnic affiliation no longer exclusively determines political alignment or opportunities for political advancement. Such diversification may signal an emerging model of minority participation in which symbolic representation intersects with substantive engagement across various segments of the political system.

Nevertheless, these positive tendencies coexist with persistent challenges related to cultural and linguistic continuity. Ensuring the long-term vitality of Polish educational institutions, media, and cultural organizations remains central to the community's ability to preserve its identity while navigating the pressures of integration. The adoption of the National Minorities Law in 2024, after a 14-year legislative hiatus, marks a significant institutional step: it strengthens legal protections, clarifies rights linked to citizenship, and reinforces the normative framework governing minority–state relations. Yet its effective implementation will be critical in determining whether it

can meaningfully support both cultural preservation and equitable participation.

The future trajectory of the Polish minority's integration hinges on the extent to which bilingualism, cultural resilience, and civic engagement can be reconciled within Lithuania's democratic environment. Successful integration may foster deeper mutual understanding and cooperation between the majority and minority populations, whereas insufficient or uneven integration – especially among younger generations – risks reinforcing feelings of marginalization or cultural dislocation.

In sum, the Polish minority in Lithuania represents a comparatively successful example of political integration in the Baltic context. Its evolving forms of representation, sustained cultural vitality, and increasing presence in diverse political arenas contribute to the pluralistic character of Lithuanian democracy, even as ongoing debates over language policy, identity maintenance, and minority rights continue to shape the contours of this integration process.

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II

MISCELLANEA: WSPOMNIENIA I MATERIAŁY DODATKOWE

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Karl Cordell

Memories of Julian Chruszczewski (1924–2010)

My father, Julian Chruszczewski was born on 31 August 1924, in the village of Kąty, a constituent part the parish of Szumsk, which in turn lay in the province of Wołyń. His father was Karol Chruszczewski, born in the same location in 1899. In 1924 my grandfather married my grandmother, Michalina Paszkowska, who was born in the Wołyńian village of Lubomirka on 11 March 1897. The parish records show that at his wedding my grandfather gave his mother's name as Antonia Chruszczewski, but his father's name was left blank. Subsequent to his arrest by the NKVD On 10 February 1940, my grandfather gave his father's name as Pawel Chruszczewski. Although incomplete, the parish and overlapping census records for Kąty and Szumsk show no indication of a Paweł who could possibly have been parents to my grandfather. As for Antonina Chruszczewski, the closest I can get is the marriage of Antonina Gabruk to Ignacy Chruszczewski in Kąty in 1878. On the other hand, the wedding data show that Michalina Chruszczewski was the daughter of Jozef and Antonia Paszkowski. How my grandparents met is unknown to me. However, I know that my grandfather at one time worked in a sawmill and that there was a sawmill in Lubomirka. It is not unreasonable to assume that it was in Lubomirka that they first encountered one another.

At the age of 18, my grandfather enlisted in the Polish Legions and eventually joined the 21 st Uhlans, where he learned how to fight with a lance, sabre and pistol. He was a superb horseman, as surviving witnesses told me in Ukraine in the early-2000s. In terms of combat, he saw action towards the end of World War One, in Hungary fighting against Bela Kun's short-lived communist regime and most especially in the war against the Soviet Union of 1920–21. On returning to civilian life, he returned to Kąty, where, as mentioned he married my grandmother. At some point in either 1926 or 1927the family moved to Załuże also in Wołyń. Poverty had clearly been

a problem. My father had a younger brother named Dionizy who died at the age of nine months in 1926. My mother once told me that my father had told her that his brother died because his mother was so under-nourished that she was unable to produce enough milk to feed him with. Breast milk substitutes were unknown. Either way, life in Załuże was infinitely more preferable. My grandfather's former commanding officer, Count Stefan Ittar employed my grandfather as a gamekeeper, a post that meant the family was considerably better off than most of their peers.

Although technically part of Załżuże, the nearest village to the forest clearing in which the house stood, was Hradki. The village consisted of 118 Ukrainian families, one Czech family and two Polish families (Including that of my grandfather). For most, living conditions were basic at best. The Hradki school photo of 1937 shows a series of boys with grim expressions: shaven heads (against the lice) and in many cases no shoes. There was neither gas nor electricity. Water had to be drawn from the nearest well. In the case of my father's family the well lay at the bottom of a steep slope; approximately 30 metres from the house. At least the Chruszczewskis had ready access to an orchard containing apples and pears: the remnants of which were still visible to me during my visits.

Family life was governed by my grandfather. My grandmother was rarely seen in the village and even then, only under escort. On Sundays they generally went to church in Lubomirka, which incidentally was so poor that in winter the villagers sometimes had to rely on handouts from neighbouring Ukrainian villages. Sometimes the family also visited Kąty. My grandfather's relations with the local Ukrainians seem in general to have been good. Having said that, elderly Ukrainian women told me that as children they were wary of him and that he was always asking to know what if anything was going on that he might want to know about. He habitually carried a pistol: either a Colt 45 or his old army issue Mauser. In addition, he possessed two rifles: one of which was a Winchester. He clearly was both strong and inclined towards violence. My father remembered an incident at Lubomirka when my grandfather managed to lift a wooden bench off the ground whilst my father and two adults were still sitting on the bench. My father also remembers shopping in Dubno market with my grandfather, when my grandfather spotted a guy on the run from the police and opened fire causing my father and assorted shoppers and stall holders to dive my cover. He also once opened fire on the boyfriend of one of my grandmother's numerous sisters. Said boyfriend (a communist) was on the run and for some reason decided to pay my grandmother a visit. Unfortunately,

my grandfather turned up unexpectedly and taking exception to his putative brother-in-law opened fire on him as he was fleeing the house. As a gamekeeper my grandfather worked closely with the local police, who were particularly anxious about Ukrainian nationalist activity. For example, celebration in May of the Ukrainian national hero Taras Bulba was expressly banned by the Polish authorities. This formal ban had little impact upon the local Ukrainians who simply melted into the surrounding forest to hold their festivities: until, of course, the Polish authorities caught up with them. Neither was my grandfather afraid of using his fists. He and my grandfather were once waylaid by some Ukrainians whilst on their way home from a local dance. Apparently, the would-be assailants were left in a heap. Similarly, my father remembered going to a wedding with his parents. During the celebrations my father got something in his eye and started to cry. When another guest asked my grandfather to stop my father's whining he responded by knocking him out. My father also remembered the same treatment being meted out to a couple of guys who were sidling around my grandfather's six beehives. A final incident worth noting is this: one day my father came home from the village school complaining that a Ukrainian boy's father had given him a slap in order to break up a fight between him and the Ukrainian man's son. My grandfather's response was to saddle up one of his three horses and ride into Hradki. He went into the Ukrainian's house, sat down at the table, took out his Mauser and informed his host that if he ever touched any of his three children again, he would blow his brains out with said weapon.

As mentioned earlier, life in Hradki was generally good. My grandmother gave birth to two more sons, Wacław (Bob) in 1928 and Czesław (Cesiek) in 1929. Interestingly enough, although my father, who by the age of around eleven had learned how to catch fish in the river Ikwa by tickling them, was fluent in both Polish and Ukrainian (after all nearly all the children in the villages were Ukrainian), neither of his brothers had much knowledge of the language. At some point, my father had a lucky escape having been bitten by a rabid dog. He was loaded onto a horse and cart and driven to Dubno railway station: a good hour away. From there he was taken by train to Lwów and from there to a hospital where the doctors administered 14 injections. As for the dog: one of the villagers shot it dead. Suddenly, in the late summer of 1937, family fortunes took a turn for the worse. Count Ittar like all landowners enjoyed a life of luxury and employed both full time retainers, such as my grandfather, supplemented by casual labour as and when needed. During harvest time, hewould employ day labourers at 20 groszy a day, plus food. I once showed my parents a five Zloty piece from

the period of Piłsudski's rule. My mother said she had never seen one before and my father remarked that he had maybe one or twice. That gives you some idea of how little these people were paid. The day labourers were on occasion supplemented by the inmates of Dubno prison. One of the newest prisons in Poland it primarily housed political prisoners, mostly Ukrainian nationalists. One day during the harvest of 1937, a piece of agricultural machinery jammed. My father sought to rectify the problem and in the process lost his right arm. No one was ever able to determine whether or not it was an accident. However, there was a lingering suspicion that one or more of the Ukrainian prisoners had sabotaged the machinery. In the wake of the accident, my grandfather kept his job and learned to shoot with his left hand. I think it's fair to say though, that things were never quite the same. In 1938, my father obtained entry to a grammar school in Dubno, about twenty miles from Hradki. From what I have discovered on my visits to Hradki, my father disliked school and rarely did his homework, preferring to copy it from a Ukrainian friend on the way into school of a morning. Despite that he was naturally bright and according to my mother, it was sponsorship from Count Ittar that enabled him to take up the place. Given the distance between Dubno and Hradki and the lack of public transport, a daily commute was out of the question. So my father stayed with one of his mother's siblings in Dubno. Although he had visited the town on many occasions, this was a whole new way of life, which as far as I can make out my father eagerly accepted. He would go home at weekends and holidays, but he was now free of his father, with whom he was increasingly at odds.

Then on 1 September,1939, one day after my father's 15th birthday Germany invaded Poland and having within six days had all but defeated the Polish armed forces that opposed them suddenly halted their advance. The details of the German-Soviet alliance were unknown to all but a tiny number of people privy to secret intelligence. However, most adult Poles must have realised that some kind of deal had been done with an increasingly belligerent Soviet Union, whose propaganda machine made great play of the oppression by the 'Polish landlords' of Ukrainians and Belarusians in eastern Poland. According to my Uncle Cesiek, my grandfather heard news of the Russian invasion of the 17 September on the radio whilst at work. Given the decision by General Sikorski to withdraw as many units as possible to Romania (I have stood on the bridge where they crossed), resistance quickly crumbled. My grandfather immediately withdrew my father from school and brought him back home. He also took steps to hide his military service, rightly convinced that the NKVD would be searching for former

Polish soldiers. At some point he and my father disassembled his guns, greased the parts and buried them. They remained hidden until the1960s when locals armed with a metal detector unearthed them. Of greater importance to the locals was the real object of their search, Count Ittar's hoard of coins, which had presumably been buried by my grandfather and his employer and which thirty odd years later were unearthed alongside the guns, which so as I was told, were donated to a local museum. Incidentally, Count Ittar, unlike his wife, managed to evade the NKVD. At some point however, he returned and managed to flee together with the Countess who had become a servant to the Soviet forces in what had been her own home. In the village contact with the occupying forces was occasional. My Uncle Bob recalled a Soviet soldier asking my grandfather how he had come to lose an arm. My father recalled having seen Red Army 'wives' parading around in Dubno wearing nightdresses during the day, presumably thinking they were the latest fashionable item in terms of ladies' fashion. He also never forgot an encounter with a Red Army officer who informed my father that the Red Army would go wherever the revolution took them, be it Warsaw, Berlin, Paris or London. He also recounted how his father told a visiting Soviet official that my father would not be going back to school as he was needed in the house and on the estate. All in all, it was an uncertain time. Then at 4.00 AM on 10 February 1940, their world and that of tens of thousands of others was completely and irrevocably shattered.

In one night, the NKVD rounded up approximately 220,000 people. Planning had begun within hours of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact being signed in Moscow on 24 July 1939. By early February 1940 the machinery of deportation was in place and so the NKVD struck. My father's family were ordered to pack warm clothes and nothing else. For reasons unknown to me, one of the NKVD men shot dead the family's pet Alsatian, Oskar. They were then herded into a truck and driven to Dubno railway station. From there they and hundreds of others were herded into trains comprised largely of dozens of cattle trucks. The trucks contained makeshift bunks, straw, some fuel that for a heater that emitted more smoke than heat and a hole in the corner that served as a latrine. My uncle Bob recalled how the train pulled into Równe station heading north-east. The doors were opened to a sea of humanity that was pushed into the trucks by the NKVD men, whose regard for human life was pretty much near zero. As a guard once told my father: 'Your life is worth seven kopeks'. Seven kopeks being the price of a bullet.

The train then zig-zagged its way in a northerly direction. The adult men quickly realized that they had something in common. They were largely

ex-servicemen who had fought in the war of 1920–21. Stalin was now exacting his revenge, for a having lost a war, in large part due to his incompetence as a military strategist. Conditions in the trucks were abysmal. Unless the train was stationary in the middle of nowhere, the doors were opened only once a day for a change of straw and a supply of rations. In exchange the old straw and the dead were taken out. Invariably the corpses were doused in petrol and burned by the side of the railway tracks. The train seemed to meander as if it had no fixed destination. In all probability this was due to the fact that the GULAGS were unable to cope with such a massive influx of prisoners. My father and his family all survived, although my father was lucky to escape with his life in Smolensk. The train pulled into a station and someone noticed a stall selling bread on the opposite platform. Somehow (presumably by wriggling through the latrine) he managed to get out of the truck. He ran onto the platform, grabbed as much bread as he could and headed back to the train. In the meantime, the train had started to roll and the station militia had opened fire on him. Despite everything he made it back onto the train.

In March the train reached Kotlas station in northern Russia. The distance travelled was approximately 2,374 kilometres or 1,475 miles. My father's family were ordered off the train and eventually onto sledges. The last two or three days were covered by these sledges, heading northward into the bitter cold. Eventually they arrived at their destination: an all but nameless village that was part of the Kotlas GULAG 113 complex. Although they did not know it, the entire family had been sentenced to 10 years exile in a 'Special Resettlement Colony'. The charge? No doubt the Soviet legal code had something that fitted. At first the family slept under tarpaulins, whilst they and other prisoners set about building the makeshift cabin that passed for home. The camp wasn't a closed institution, but there was an armed NKVD detachment. Besides which there was nowhere to run to. My father was set to work lumberjacking. The prisoners were a mixture of Soviet citizens, Balts and Poles. According to my uncle Cesiek, at first rations were passable but were one day arbitrarily cut. This may have been due to the fact that both Bob and Cesiek refused to attend the makeshift school after the teacher told the children that there was no God, but that Stalin could provide them all with sweets: at which point some goon in the roof space opened a trapdoor showering the baffled children with sweets. Either way, my grandfather was only able to perform light duties and my grandmother was exempt from working. This in turn put enormous pressure on my father, who at 15 was all that stood between starvation and survival. If he

went under: the rest of the family was liable to go with him. The work was relentless at six days a week. At one point my father worked his horse so hard that it died on him. Luckily the overseer was so impressed with my father's efforts that he simply congratulated him for his endeavours and told him not to worry: he'd get him a replacement. As for recreation there wasn't much. The camp's political commissar presided over a 'Red Corner' at which he tried to convince anyone who was interested that the Soviet Union was destined to lead humanity towards a better, just world based on equality as opposed to the selfish capitalist model. My father went along a few times. Partly because he was interested in politics and was seeking an explanation as to why his life lay in ruins. In part, given the strain he was under, I suspect he also wanted to get away from his family, particularly his father. My father's relations with some of the NKVD men were quite cordial. He was even once invited to the sauna but fled on seeing the naked flesh of the 'wives' of some of the camp guards. The camp commandant was apparently a fairly reasonable man, unlike his deputy, who my father described as a 'bastard'. In fact, the commandant once offered to release my father. He told him he could fix him up with a place at a party school in Moscow. My father refused saying that he couldn't abandon his family. As I learned on my first visit to Hradki, my father once managed to send news to his friend Dennis on a birch bark letter. It read: 'I am in Russia. I have to work hard to get bread. Julek'. Sundays provided some respite. My father and his brothers would sometimes forage for berries. My father would always warn his brother Cesiek, who was 10/11 years old:' Whatever you do, don't sit down and start eating your berries. There are bears around and they are hungry too'. Sure enough one Sunday uncle Cesiek cracked and a bear came bounding out of the forest. Cesiek fled leaving his berries to the bear. My dad and uncle Bob just stood there and laughed. It remained a sore point for the rest of their lives.

On 22 June 1941, The Germans and their allies launched Operation Barbarossa and invaded the Soviet Union. Or as my father put it: 'Adolf Hitler saved my life'. A day or so later, instead of being ordered to work, my father and the other prisoners were summoned to a piece of cleared ground that served as a muster point. As soon as the camp commandant appeared that it was obvious from the look on his face that something serious had happened. As he gave the news, the overwhelming reaction was one of grim satisfaction.

As yet, they had no idea of exactly how the news might affect them. What they did not know

was that several hundred miles to the south east in Moscow, General Anders had been dragged out of his cell in the Lubyanka prison and had begun direct talks (whilst still wearing his pyjamas) with the Soviet authorities with regard to the fate of surviving Polish prisoners, whose numbers now totalled anything up to one million. The subsequent 'Anders Agreement' was signed on 30 July 1941. It allowed for the release of men of fighting age (18) together with their families. The freed prisoners were to be given safe conduct passes and allowed to head for Tashkent in Uzbekistan. From there a Polish army was to be formed and the released civilians were to be allowed to leave the Soviet Union. As for the army itself, its eventual site of operations was left open. Stalin wanted the army to operate from within the Soviet Union. Anders refused. He rightly assumed that the only reason Stalin had made any concessions at all, was because he was desperate for help from any quarter. Anders demanded that when the army was ready that it be transferred from the Soviet Union to a safe third country and then to the western front. Of course, the Agreement was never honoured in full. Some prisoners never received word of it and others were refused release. Many died en route and others arrived in Tashkent after the Anders army had left. They together with others who doubted the feasibility of Anders plan, later formed the nucleus of the Berling army, which operated alongside the Red Army.

A few days after the Anders Agreement was signed, the news got through to the Poles in GULAG 113. My grandfather elected to head for Tashkent, some 2,914 kilometres (1,811) miles from Kotlas. In order to facilitate the release of the entire family, my father suddenly added a year to his age. He and a handful of other young men plus one young woman were released on 21 September 1941. They were given safe conduct passes and told to head for the River Dvina by way of forest roads. From there they were told to start hitching lifts. At first by boat, then by train, truck, horse and cart and if no transport was available then on foot. They were told that their families would follow, which in my father's case was true. By and large the journey passed without any major hitches, although on one barge he came across a group of Korean prisoners in chains. Food was scarce, but whenever they teamed-up with Soviet security personnel or other released prisoners it was usually forthcoming. On at least one occasion my father ate donkey and camel meat. His opinion of both was low, but remarked that of the two, donkey was marginally better. At some point my father was once again given the option of heading for Moscow and enrolling in a party school, once again he refused. Unsurprisingly washing facilities were primitive at best,

although in one puzzling incident the group of ex-prisoners my father was with were herded into some kind of base, given proper food and allowed to use the bathing facilities. They were then sent on their way. On another occasion, somewhere in Kazakhstan my father's group spotted a local herders camp. They noticed that the herders seemed to be drying pumpkins above the smoke holes at the top of their yurts. Hungry as ever, they decided to wait until nightfall. My father being the youngest was given the job of shinning to the top of the yurt in order to start throwing the pumpkins down to the remainder of the group. He reached the smoke hole ok and then promptly fell through it onto the floor of the yurt. He spotted the opening and rushed through it past the astonished residents. The group ran for it as the herders took pot shots at them in the dark. Luckily, they survived intact. The cold was also a regular problem. One night as they were crossing the Ural Mountains, the temperature hit minus 50 Celsius (according to a detachment of Red Army men they were with). Everyone just walked through the night. If you stopped you would die of hypothermia within minutes. No-one stopped.

My father and his family were reunited at some unknown point before they reached Tashkent. The journey from northern Russia to north-east Uzbekistan via western Kazakhstan, had taken the best part of six months. Problems quickly arose between him and my grandfather. My father was deeply suspicious of the Soviet regime and didn't trust them to keep their word. One day he and some other young men decided to make a break for Iran. After all, they had got this far, so why not try it? They were quickly caught and taken back to the ever-growing convoy. My father was drafted into the Anders army on 15 April 1942. In Tashkent life was better than in Kotlas, which isn't saying much. Food was still scarce and my father was always on the lookout for anything he might be able to steal or scavenge. One day he went on an expedition with my uncle Bob to a large market. For some reason they decided to steal a sheep. My father told his brother to distract the vendor whilst he snuck up from behind and stole a sheep. The plan went wrong and my uncle ended up punching the Uzbek in the face. All hell them broke lose, but the two of them made it to safety carrying what turned out to be a ram. They took it back to the temporary camp in which they were resident. My grandfather slaughtered the animal, which they promptly cooked and ate. Shortly after that both my grandfather and father fell ill and were admitted into hospital. Although my father recovered my grandfather dis not. Kidney failure was -given as the cause of death. He was buried in Tashkent. All attempts by me to trace his grave have failed.

Eventually in May 1942 the word came that the army (such as it was), was to head for the UK. The route across Iran to Turkey and then the Mediterranean was deemed to be too dangerous, by Stalin, if no-one else. Civilians were to follow the army by an extremely circuitous route. My father headed towards the Caspian Sea by way of Samarkand, where he visited the Blue Mosque. On reaching the Uzbek coast they boarded a ship headed for Iran. Prior to reaching Iran my father fell ill with typhus. The ship landed at the port of Pahlavi. From the Iranian shore they headed for Tehran. By this time my father was seriously ill and had at times to be carried on a stretcher. In Tehran he was admitted to a disused factory that had been converted into a makeshift field hospital. Whilst lying there, somehow his mother tacked him down. Even more strange was the fact that she managed to produce a bottle of homemade Żubrówka vodka, which she gave to him as a present. It was the last time they saw one another. From Iran the embryonic army made its way to Iraq. Whilst in Baghdad, my father had an encounter with my uncle Cesiek. My father discovered his brother in a tent housing boy refugees. The meeting did not go well. Just prior to my father's arrival in the tent. My uncle got into a fight with a Jewish boy who accused my uncle of having made a cross of sand on his kit. My uncle always denied the allegation. Either way, in the midst of the fight my father walked into the tent. The fighting stopped. My father announced to the group of boys, whilst pointing at his brother: 'That's my brother. He's always getting into trouble. Cesiek, I'm headed to London. I'll be in touch'. They didn't see one another for the best part of ten years. From Iraq my father crossed into Syria and then Palestine and Egypt. For amusement they would sometimes catch scorpions and place them into sealed bottles. The next stage would be to get hold of some fuel and pour it into a horseshoe shape in the sand. They would then set it alight and take bets on whether the scorpion would escape alive. In Palestine a number of Jewish soldiers, simply disappeared, and headed for Jewish settlements. Among their number was Menachim Begin who would later become prime minister of Israel. From Egypt they were taken to South Africa, where enticed by the local Boers, further desertions took place. The next port of call was the British colony of Sierra Leone. Finally on the ship my father was on reached the UK on 27 August 1942. The sea journey all the way around Africa from Egypt was very approximately 21,300 kilometres or 13,200 miles. The overland journey from Tehran to Alexandria in Egypt was 2,700 kilometres or 1,677 miles. In total since leaving Hradki he had travelled approximately 29,300 kilometres or 18,200 miles in conditions that killed many and left many more

ruined. Given that he was part of the Anders army, the Eighth Regiment of the light artillery to be precise, he was sent for further basic training in an army base in Auchtertool, Fife in Scotland. He hated it. He had tried to enlist in the paratroopers but had been turned down on account of his health problems. A life in the infantry beckoned, until one day a recruiting officer for the Polish navy arrived at the camp. My father needed little persuading and by 9 September was in Plymouth in south-west England undergoing his basic training. In fact, a total of 695 men located at the camp volunteered to transfer to the navy. On 16 November my father was officially sworn in. His first ship was the ORP Garland, a destroyer. The ship was stationed in Greenock just outside Glasgow. He and a group of other recruits were to travel by train direct from Plymouth to Glasgow and then take a local train to Greenock. The journey to Glasgow should have taken around nine hours. Owing to German air raids it took 48 hours. Having arrived at Glasgow Central, the next task was to find a train to Greenock. As my father had already picked up some English, he got the job of gathering the information which he duly did. On his return he found his shipmates engaged in a game of cards with some locals. Luckily for all concerned not much money had changed hands, so the game was broken up with a minimum of fuss. Having eventually arrived in Greenock they somehow made their way to the naval base and proceeded to look for their ship, which they eventually found. Once on board my father received a surprise. He told me the crew resembled a bunch of pirates. On top of that he was surprised that the ordinary sailors didn't salute their officers and that as a rule neither did the officers expect it. As he learned the point was that they were a unit that worked on the basis of mutual aid and respect.

His second ship was a cruiser, the ORP Dragon, which he joined on 8 June 1943. He was promoted to Able Seaman on 1 May 1944. Exactly 13 months to the day of his original embarkation on the Dragon, whilst off the coast of Normandy, the ship was hit by a mine planted by a German torpedo boat crewed by a single sailor. On the night of 12/13 July my father was supposed to stand watch. He had been awake for 48 hours and was exhausted. A shipmate of his agreed to swap watches on condition that my father rolled out his mattress on the deck so that if trouble broke out, he'd be right there. At approximately 4.00 AM on the 13th, my father awoke having felt a shudder. He noticed that his shipmate was lying on the deck. My father called out to him but got no response. He noticed a trickle of blood coming from the man's mouth, so my father went to pick him up. He told me that it was like picking up a piece of jelly. Every bone in the dead man's body seemed to

have been broken. By this time, it was clear that the ship had been hit and was in serious trouble. Eventually the captain ordered the crew to abandon the sinking vessel. The survivors left 37 of their shipmates dead in the wreck. Some 50 years later in Brighton at my uncle Bob's house, my father met up with one of his old shipmates who had been on the Dragon that night. It turned out that when this guy had been demobbed, he was fined for having lost his kit on the Dragon and wanted to know if my father had encountered the same problem. My father confirmed that he hadn't and they both had a good laugh about it. Having to inform wives and girlfriends of the death of the loved ones hadn't been as amusing to put it mildly. It was also whilst serving on the Dragon that my father received the news that his mother had died (5 March 1944). At some point in Iran, she had been separated from Bob and Cesiek. She together with other women, very young children and the elderly were transported by land to Karachi, today part of Pakistan; then part of British ruled India. From there she had been transported to Mombasa in today's Kenya and then to Masindi in the vicinity of Lake Albert in modern-day Uganda. Quite why the British made this decision is beyond me. I can only assume it was because they didn't know what to do with people who were of no potential military value, so they were simply shunted around the empire. The cause of my grandmother's death is unknown to me. As for the effect it had on my father it was difficult to judge. All I know is that talk of my mother could change his mood instantly, so I generally avoided it. He joined his third ship the ORP Conrad, which was also a cruiser on 4 October 1944. With the naval war in Europe winding down, life was less eventful than it had been on his previous two ships. When the German surrender came through on 8 May 1945, my father was in the cells for having sworn at the British liaison officer who was annoyed that my father and his shipmates had returned said officer's rowing boat to the ship later than had been agreed. My father blamed fog: but the officer wasn't having it. Around the time of the German surrender the Conrad became involved in what is now referred to as a 'friendly fire' incident. All ships were warned to be on maximum alert in case of kamikaze attacks by German U- Boats and a series of passwords and signals was given to all officers on all the ships based at Scapa Flow. A couple of days later, a submarine suddenly surfaced nearby the Conrad without giving any signals or passwords. The Conrad opened fire and by the time it was realised that it was a British submarine, two of its crew lay dead. After war the ship was based in Bremerhaven for a short while, where my father witnessed Soviet citizens, some of whom had switched sides and fought with the Germans, being herded onto trains

headed towards the Soviet Occupation Zone, where for the most part all that awaited them was a bullet.

It was whilst serving on the Conrad that my father inadvertently almost ended up on a flight to Warsaw. After hostilities had ended, the Conrad made a number of runs to Norway. On one such occasion my father bought a bottle of hooch from a street hawker. The next thing he knew was that he was in a cell in a Norwegian police station. At some point a Norwegian policeman walked into the cell accompanied by a Soviet military attaché. Said Red Army man then offered to fly my father to Warsaw. In response my father told the Norwegian policeman to get hold of the British military attaché and refused to speak to the Soviet officer. Eventually the British attaché arrived, heard my father's story and arranged for his release. Moreover, he informed my father that a plane was due to fly to Edinburgh later that day, so he should actually be back in port before the Conrad. However, owing to adverse weather conditions, the plane could not leave. So instead, he was flown to Copenhagen and then to Brussels, where he stayed in the famously upmarket Europa Hotel. At no point did he have to worry about money. Wherever he went drinks and food were on the house and the British government paid his hotel bill. Eventually he was flown back to The UK and landed at Croydon airport in London. When passing through immigration control he gave his date of birth as 31 August 1924, forgetting that in his pass book it was given as 31 August 1923. My father explained the discrepancy and the official accepted his explanation. However, it was only when my father was approaching retirement did the British authorities finally straighten out the dates. As for the journey to Edinburgh from London, it was pretty uneventful. When he walked up the gangplank almost two weeks late, his shipmates gave him a series of ironic cheers. The captain didn't see the funny side of it. He told my father that had the war still been on he would have been facing a charge of desertion. As it was, he gave him 28 days in the cells. My father spent some time on Mediterranean convoys running to Malta. On one occasion he was manning a Lewis gun as was one of his shipmates and somehow one of them managed to bring down a Stuka dive bomber. No-one could be sure of which sailor did it, so it was credited to them jointly. As far as I'm aware this is the only known occasion when a Stuka was brought down by a Lewis gun. He also spent time as part of the range finder crew, either gauging the distance to shore for the gunners or trying to gauge where a U-Boat might be lurking. In addition to the Mediterranean, he also spent time on Murmansk convoys, the irony of which was not lost on either him or his shipmates, many of whom like him had survived deportation

to the Soviet Union. Finally, within this context, he also served on Atlantic convoys. One particular incident in the North Atlantic never left him. One night whilst crossing the Atlantic, a wolfpack got right in among the convoy. So many ships were on fire that it was almost like daylight. On top of that here and there you could see small pockets of flame on the sea, which were emitting screams. My father realised that the pockets of flame were in fact men who had jumped off sinking ships and now awaited death. As my father learned on his first North Atlantic convoy, when two men were swept overboard: you never slowed down or turned round. If a man fell overboard their only chance was that a passing ship would throw them a line, which my father's ship once did to a merchant seaman, who, it was discovered had been left adrift twice. Inevitably my father and his shipmates got involved in the usual scrapes for which sailors are notorious. In once incident in Plymouth the local vicar complained to the captain about my father's relationship with his (under-age) daughter. My father claimed that she had told him she was 16 and that he had no reason to doubt here. The captain sided with my father. In another incident in Govan, the startled crew were taken aback at the sight of two half naked crewmen running towards the ship being pursued by a group of irate Glaswegians of both sexes. The sailors made it up the gangplank, followed by the Scots. Some sailors held them off until the captain arrived and threatened to shoot the first man who attempted to board his ship. At that point the mob slinked away. Quite what had happened to have caused this incident was unclear, but the fact the two sailors were only partially clothed offers a clue. He once got involved in a mass brawl with miners in Newcastle and another in St John's in Newfoundland. Despite notionally being on the same side, the Scotch-Irish locals, who were descended from people forced into migration by the British government, had no time for Crown forces. This even extended to trying to bar thirsty sailors from bars. The result was that eventually on one run the sailors lost their patience and instigated a mass brawl that involved a few hundred sailors, the Canadian Mounties and sundry civilians.

The Polish Navy was wound up in 1946 and my father was enlisted into the Polish Resettlement Corps in March 1947. Throughout the latter stages of 1945 and into early 1946, he was in and out of the naval hospital in Plymouth and the Polish naval camp in Okehampton with lung problems. His days in the navy had effectively ended in December 1946, when whilst on another Norwegian run he was diagnosed as having tuberculosis, from which he recovered as much as anyone can from the disease. He was discharged from the Resettlement Corps in November 1948. His records show

that all the captains under whom he served regarded him as a good sailor, who was particularly skilled with regards to artillery.

Shortly after the war he married a woman from Brighton in southern England, with whom he had a daughter. I have no idea of my sister's name and have no desire to discover it. I simply hope that she and her mother had happy lives. As for his brothers, a few years after the war they both made it to the UK. Bob spent some time in South Africa where he was in enrolled into the army cadet corps. He was transferred to North Africa and then to Italy, by which time he was a regular soldier. The Germans surrendered as Bob's unit was heading towards the front. He eventually settled in Brighton in southern England, after having transferred into the British army when the Anders army was wound up. As for my uncle Cesiek, he got stuck in Palestine, where the British conscripted him into the military police. He was part of the detachment that found the hanged British sergeants killed by the Irgun in Netanya in July 1947. He settled in Northumberland in the north of England after having been sent to a displaced persons camp located near the Scottish border. My father's subsequent relations with Bob (who died in 2013) were closer than with Cesiek, who himself died in 2006. Relations between the three were volatile and fist fights were not unknown.

My father eventually started to work in engineering and after a few years became a qualified inspector of precision aircraft parts. His health never fully recovered from the effects of having to cut and haul lumber in sub--zero temperatures whilst clad in flimsy clothing. No doubt, his encounter with tuberculosis, alongside his encounters with pleurisy and typhus, not forgetting the snow blindness could all be put down to the regime he endured. Either way, in 1954, the tuberculosis returned and he was admitted to a special hospital unit in Godalming in Surrey, south of London. There he met my mother, a trainee nurse and herself a refugee from Poland but under circumstances although different to those of my father, were no less harrowing. They married in July 1955 and settled in Greater London. I was born in June 1956 and my sister Julie in October 1964. My father changed the family name to Cordell in 1967, partly in recognition of the fact that the path back to Hradki had been closed to him. As of the time of writing (June 2025), my 95 year old mother is still with us. As for returning to Poland, my father didn't express much interest in the idea. In part, I think it was because he despised the regime of the Colonels, whose incompetence, he (in my opinion) rightly felt had contributed to his own personal tragedy and that of millions of his compatriots. He returned only once, in the late 1990s for his then -sister -in law's 80th (?) birthday in Rzeszów. He didn't

have much to say about it afterwards. Anyway, where was he supposed to have returned to? The villages that he knew as a boy? Luckily for him, it was I who, after my father's death, discovered the grim reality of what had occurred after he was deported to Kotlas. Hradki and Załuże still exist. In 2010/11 there was still a handful of elderly Ukrainians in both villages who to various degrees expressed their total astonishment upon realising who I was. Two old ladies I met in Załuże, told me that they had assumed that when my father's family disappeared, they had been taken to the local NKVD killing field, known as ''The Well', and murdered. As for the house in which my father had been brought up, it was gone. What remained in the vicinity was a network of trenches built by the UPA, who had used the house as a command centre. It was a logical choice given the commanding views from the hilltop on which the house stood. Lubomirka where the Paszkowski's lived on 17 April 1943 as part of the Wołyń Uprising, which was supposed to create the fundament for an ethnically pure Ukrainian state, a UPA unit from Galicia approached the village and slaughtered all 147 inhabitants. As for Kąty on 2 May 1943 as part of the same operation a UPA detachment attacked the village. The Polish defenders managed to hold them off until the following morning. As the UPA resumed the attack a passing Wehrmacht unit heard the gunfire and headed towards the village. They fought off the UPA and then herded the survivors onto trucks and deported them to Germany as slave labour. Neither village exists today. In Lubomirka, as I have seen all that remains are the stone footings of the Catholic Church and one house in which the village's sole Ukrainian family resided in before the night of the massacre. My father died in July 2010. He never bothered to collect the four medals that he had won, two of which are with bar. In July 2011 at my bidding, he received a military funeral at the naval church in Gdynia. I made this request because I took and still take the view that successive Polish governments owed him at least that.

Bóg, Honor, Ojczyzna!

Karl Cordell, born Karl Chruszczewski, Plymouth, June 2025.

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Aldona Jaworska

The Case of the Second Polish Army Corps and Its Veterans Who Made Calgary, Alberta, Canada Their Home after They Finished Farm Work Contracts in the Late 1940s – Part I[1]

Introduction

This article examines aspects of World War II and postwar political and economic factors, as well as immigration policies, that influenced the situation of the Polish 2nd Army Corps and its Lieutenant-General Władysław Anders. It examines diplomatic documents and relations between the Soviet Union, the United States of America, Great Britain, Poland, and Canada. It also draws on press, biographical sources, and firsthand accounts from interviews with Polish war veterans in Calgary, conducted for my Master's degrees in Communication and Culture and Drama, and for my 2019 book, "*Polish War Veterans in Alberta: Four Recent Stories*". At the core of this article are three issues: *Rewriting History in Poland after World War II to Conform to the Pro-Soviet Narrative and its Impact on the Second Polish Army Corps.* Part two, *Post-War Geopolitical Make-Up of Europe, and the Anders Army* and part three, *After the War: Starting a New Life in Canada*, which will be published in a future issue of this journal.

The Anders' Army Veterans' Perspective on the World Events

The author endeavours to present the situation of Anders' Army veterans, utilising information available to those veterans during and immediately

[1] The next parts of the article will be published in future issues of "Polonia Inter Gentes."

after the war, including newspapers, bulletins, brochures, and other internal and external channels of communication that influenced their decisions. In presenting the lives of these veterans, the author strives to avoid the contemporary perspective that dominated the years and decades that followed, focusing instead on their daily lives and struggles, as the contemporary worldview was not available to them.

The Sources Used

The following article refers to primary source materials little known in Poland. One of the primary sources is *An Army in Exile: The Story of the Second Polish Corps*, written by Lt.-General Władysław Anders in English and published in London in 1949. Anders offers a first-person account of his involvement in WWII. The following article uses the name of the army General Anders was in charge of, as he refers to it in his book, namely the Second Polish Army Corps[2].

This article also refers to the primary source material compiled and published by the *Department of State of the United States of America, Office of the Historian, Historical Documents, Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1941, General, The Soviet Union, Volume I*[3]. It also refers to information from the *Documents on Canadian external relations / Department of External Affairs: Vol. 12* (1946), which has proven to be of great value to understand better the issue of Polish Resettlement Corps in relation to Canada's immigration policies, economic and political aspects of bringing 4,527 Anders Army war veterans to Canada to work on farms for two years, replacing the German POWs who worked there during the war[4].

Moreover, it uses the archived newspapers, such as *The Times* (1946) London, the United Kingdom, *The Lethbridge Herald* (1946), Alberta, Canada, *The Calgary Herlad* (1940s) *The Edmonton Journal* (1940s) and the archival photographs from the *Galt Museum and Archives* in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, as well as the text of the Polish Resettlement Act[5]. It also uses sources from

[2] W. Anders, *An Army in Exile: The Story of the Second Polish Corps*. London 1949, pp. 157, 161, 163.

[3] Noble et al., *Historical Documents, Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1941, General, The Soviet Union, Volume I*. Washington: Department of State, 1959.

[4] Department of External Affairs. *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, vol. 12. Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1946.

[5] Polish Resettlement Act, 1947.io & ii GEO. 6. CH. 19. (1947). Printed by Sir Norman Gibe Scorgie, C.V.O., C.B.E., Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office and King's Printer of Acts of Parliament. Retrieved from http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1947/19/pdfs/ukpga_19470019_en.pdf

the Poles Abroad Digital Library (*Polonijna Biblioteka Cyfrowa*), namely the Polish-language newspaper *Lud* (1920–1999).

These sources have proven valuable for my research, as they provide important historical information about the Second Polish Army Corps, the circumstances related to its creation and evacuation to the Middle East, and how the Canadian government handled the case of these veterans. These sources also allowed me to understand how the post-war, Soviet sourced propaganda in Poland seeped into the history schoolbooks that painted the Second Polish Army Corps as traitors. General Anders and the veterans of this army were depicted as taking advantage of the Soviet Union's government, which supplied them with necessities. They were portrayed as having escaped to the Middle East and as refusing to return to fight alongside the Red Army to liberate Poland and Europe. These accusations were part of the history lessons I took while attending primary school and the gymnasium in the 1970s.

Rewriting History in Poland after World War II to Conform to the Pro-Soviet Narrative and its Impact on the Second Polish Army Corps

The 2010 Zbigniew Osiński*'s Nauczanie Historii W Szkołach Podstawowych W Polsce W Latach 1944–1989. Uwarunkowania Organizacyjne Oraz Ideologiczno-Polityczne*, is a monograph examining "the place of history in the curriculum" in primary schools in Poland between 1944 and 1989[6]. Osiński highlights that after WWII, in the Polish People's Republic, the government used primary school education as a venue to promote Marxist-Leninist communist ideology[7]. History was taught using altered accounts of the past to promote friendship between Poland, which had become part of the Eastern Bloc, and the Soviet Union, which led it. The Polish government made every effort to erase information about the September 17, 1939, attacks of the USSR's Red Army on Poland's eastern territories after the German Army's invasion on September 1, 1939. The post-war Polish government depicted the country's defeat as the result of the pre-war government's anti-Soviet foreign policy. Moreover, Poland's liberation by the Red Army in 1945 was presented

[6] Z. Osiński, *Nauczanie Historii w Szkołach Podstawowych w Polsce w Latach 1944–1989. Uwarunkowania Organizacyjne oraz Ideologiczno-Polityczne*, Warszawa 2010, p. 7.

[7] Ibid.

from the perspective of Polish-Soviet brotherhood[8]. This version of historical events became the official, government-imposed history of Poland and was reflected in every aspect of education and culture. Such a manufactured history of WWII was taught in Polish schools until the fall of communism in the Soviet Union in 1990.

It wasn't until after several decades of moving to Canada that I learned many historical facts involving Soviet-Polish relations were erased from Poland's history. This realisation prompted me to search for factual information about the Red Army's attack on Poland on September 17, 1939, which contributed to the military exhaustion of the country, and which ultimately brought about the partition of Poland between Germany and the USSR. These events paved the way for the control of Poland by a Soviet-based, politically rooted totalitarianism. The post-war, pro-Soviet government of Poland erased this information from the country's history. Zbigniew Osiński states that for the first time, 1985–1986 history elementary school textbooks contained information on "the formation of General Anders' army in the USSR, the severing of Polish-Soviet relations, the emergence of pro-Soviet partisans in Poland, the activities of Polish communists in the USSR, the creation of a front in Italy and France, the Warsaw Uprising, the liberation of Polish lands, and the communist takeover of power in Poland"[9]. This change came too late for tens of thousands of Poles who left the country during the oppressive pro-Soviet government ruling Poland until 1990. Addressing misinformation and disinformation is vital to me, as I was educated in the post-war school system in Poland, which distorted the history of the formation of the Second Polish Army Corps and its role in the fight for freedom.

Growing up in Post-War Pro-Soviet Poland – Personal Experience

As a teenager, I read many books and regularly visited the only municipal library in one of the major voivodeship cities in Poland after appointing myself the family's book-borrower, in charge of bringing home two books per person, as allowed. Each visit to the library was a celebration during which I strolled among the rows of tall bookshelves tightly packed with books. I touched the spines of every book on every shelf, read the title, and

[8] Ibid., p. 110.
[9] Ibid., p. 218.

skimmed the pages before making my choice. I repeated this ritual every two weeks. Many books described how Nazi Germany had invaded Poland, how they had killed millions of people in concentration camps, how the Red Army had defeated Hitler's army and liberated the world, and how Poland was rebuilt after the war with the help of the Soviet Union. Some books described the heroism of the Polish soldiers fighting alongside the Red Army to defeat the Nazi regime. The state-run television with only one channel showed WWII documentaries several times a week, bringing images of the battlefields home and highlighting the sacrifices made by the Red Army in liberating Poland.

With the new order in Europe, the pro-Soviet regime in power in Poland created a fabricated version of World War II history, reflecting Soviet guidelines. This history was to be taught to those born and living in postwar Poland, which was strictly isolated from the rest of the world.

Zbigniew Osiński emphasizes that in postwar Poland, "didactic and educational goals of an ideological nature were established, implemented throughout the school and in the teaching of individual subjects. History became the subject with the greatest number of such goals"[10]. He adds that many teachers in postwar Poland were "new educators" trained in the Soviet Union and from the so-called "socially advanced"[11].

There were no books about the invasion of Poland by the Soviet Union that I later found out took place on September 17, 1939, or about the annexation of the eastern part of Poland by the USSR, and about the forced deportation of the Polish population to Siberia or Kazakhstan. While walking through that library, strolling among the bookcases, I never found any books or information about the II Polish Army Corps, the Battle of Monte Cassino, or General Władysław Anders. We were not taught at school about those soldiers or the events they were involved in. As a teenager, I only learned of the II Polish Army Corps when I overheard some whispering. None of this part of Poland's history was part of the school curriculum. Sharing any knowledge of Anders' soldiers was forbidden. If someone did talk about these soldiers, then that person risked being prosecuted for enticing anti-Communist propaganda, spreading false information, or treason against the country's political interests[12].

[10] Ibid., p. 210.

[11] Ibid.

[12] A. Jaworska, *Polish War Veterans in Alberta: The Last Four Stories,* Edmonton 2019, pp. 139–140.

Lieutenant-General Władysław Anders – Books

In post-war Poland, the government imposed silence on the contribution of General Anders and his troops in the fight for democracy and freedom in Poland. I learned decades later that books about General Anders and the Second Polish Army Corps did exist. However, these publications were not available in post-war Poland, where I was growing up. General Władysław Anders's 1949 book "*An Army in Exile - The Story of the Second Polish Corps*" was published in English in London, and, in the Polish language, in 1959, also in London. The Polish version was titled "*Bez Ostatniego Rozdziału. Wspomnienia z lat 1939–1945*" (Without the Final Chapter. Memories from 1939–1945). Not until 1989 was this book published in Poland. General Anders did not intend his book to be a memoir, but rather to tell the story of the Second Polish Corps.

Melchior Wańkowicz, War Correspondent of the Second Corps, chronicled the battles in which the Second Corps troops participated during the Italian Campaign. His work resulted in a three-volume Polish-language "*Bitwa o Monte Cassino*" (The Battle of Monte Cassino), featuring around a thousand photographs, hundreds of illustrations, and maps. The first volume of Wańkowicz's "*Bitwa o Monte Cassino*" was published in 1945 in Rome[13]. The second volume was published in 1946[14]. The final volume was published in 1947[15]. In 1957, this book was published in Poland in a single volume after extensive editing, with many chapters entirely excluded (Wańkowicz, 1957). The book's publisher, the Publishing House of the Ministry of National Defence (Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej), printed 30,000 copies. From around a thousand photographs and several hundred illustrations and maps in the original three volumes of Wańkowicz's book, only a fraction made it into this edited version. In my bi-weekly trips to the library, I have never come across books by Anders or Wańkowicz.

Even though the pro-Soviet Polish government treated General Anders and the Second Polish Army Corps as enemies, even traitors, for fighting for freedom and democracy in Poland, the fate of independent, free, and democratic Poland was of great importance to the Polish diaspora around the world. Starting in 1920, in Curitiba, Brazil, a weekly newspaper called

[13] M. Wańkowicz, *Bitwa o Monte Cassino*, vol. 1. Rome, 1945.
[14] M. Wańkowicz, *Bitwa o Monte Cassino*, vol. 2. Rome, 1946.
[15] M. Wańkowicz, *Bitwa o Monte Cassino*, vol. 3. Rome, 1947.

"Lud" (People) was published to promote unity and patriotism among the Polish Diaspora, at a time when World War I was raging in Europe, and the Bolshevik aggressor invaded Poland[16]. At that time, Poland was also fighting for its independence, and Brazil was the first country to recognise Poland's independence[17]. This newspaper was published in Curitiba until 1999, with the support of the Polish Diaspora in Brazil, which dated back to the 19th century.

On June 29, 1949, the "Lud" newspaper began printing weekly instalments of General Anders' book "*Bez Ostatniego Rozdziału. Wspomnienia z lat 1939–1945*"[18]. Three years later, on July 23, 1952, "Lud" printed the last chapter of Anders' book[19]. On December 24, 1952, a note in the "Lud" informed that Anders' book had also been translated into Japanese, English, French, Spanish, Italian, Estonian, and Dutch, and was being prepared for publication in Latvian[20]. The books by Anders and Wańkowicz that I acquired for my research came from various antiquarians in Great Britain, Germany and the United States.

Lieutenant-General Władysław Anders: An Overview

My research indicates that Lieutenant-General Władysław Anders participated in the 1939 Polish Defensive War and fought against two neighbouring belligerent aggressors, Germany and the Soviet Union. Hitler's Army's unprovoked and highly coordinated military attack on Poland's northern, western and southern borders on September 1, 1939, was enabled by the August 23, 1939, Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of non-aggression between Germany and the Soviet Union. The German Army swiftly progressed to Warsaw and continued towards the country's eastern border[21]. The German-Soviet secret agreement "had come as a great shock to us", General Anders emphasised in his 1949 book *An Army in Exile – The Story of the Second Polish Corps*, published in London, where he stayed in exile[22].

[16] *Lud*, Curitiba, Brazil, 1920, p. 1.

[17] Ibid.

[18] W. Anders, *Bez ostatniego rozdziału…*, p. 5.

[19] W. Anders, *Bez Ostatniego Rozdziału: Wspomnienia z Lat 1939–1945*. In W. Anders, *Bez Ostatniego Rozdziału: Wspomnienia z Lat 1939–1945*, 1952, p. 5, Curitiba: Lud. Retrieved from https://pbc.uw.edu.pl/id/eprint/6412/1/Lud_1952_30.pdf

[20] *Lud*, Curitiba, Brazil, 1952, p. 10.

[21] W. Anders, *An Army in Exile….*, p. 3–6.

[22] Ibid., p. 8.

General Anders pointed out that his book "relates a part only of the vast flood of events which I, as a commander of a major formation of the Polish Armed Forces, was able to witness; in which I played a part, and about which I have retained not only personal recollections but also documentary evidence", drawing attention to the importance of his book as a firsthand account of historical events.

On September 10, 1939, General J. Rommel, who commanded the defence of Warsaw, tasked General Anders and his troops with defending the Vistula River south of Warsaw, the capital city of Poland[23]. On September 17, 1939, the Soviet Red Army invaded Poland's eastern border, which General Anders describes as "violating the Polish-Soviet pact of non-aggression at the most critical moment," and attacking "the defenceless rear of the fighting and bleeding Polish army"[24]. Anders describes the Soviet Army's action as a heinous attack[25]. The military aggression Poland experienced from two neighbouring countries sealed the fate of the country. On September 28, 1939, Warsaw surrendered, no longer able to fight the German Army's massive military attack. Germany and the Soviet Union partitioned Poland's territory, demarcating the German-Soviet border along the Curzon Line. In the post-war education system in Poland, which I attended, information about the Soviet Army's invasion and the partition of Poland was absent from history textbooks, distorting the history of World War II and erasing the Soviets' imperialistic intentions to annexe Polish territory.

Harold Macmillan, a British statesman and Conservative politician who served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1957 to 1963, wrote the introduction to Anders' book. He stated that General Anders was not only a great commander but also a great patriot[26]. Macmillan saw the story of Anders and his troops through the lens of patriotism, perseverance, and struggles: "This Polish force, starting from the prison camps of Eastern Europe, traversed Asia, Africa, and Western Europe, only to find, at the end of so much heroism, disillusion and despair". In 1949, Macmillan wrote, "The Polish army is still in exile"[27]. While reflecting on Poland's independence, Macmillan saw it undermined and destroyed by a combination of

[23] Ibid., p. 5.
[24] Ibid., p. 8.
[25] Ibid., p. 8.
[26] The Rt. M.P. Hon. Macmillan, H., Introduction. In W. Anders, *An Army in Exile: The story of the Second Polish Corps*, London 1949, p. XIII.
[27] Ibid.

Nazism and Communism[28]. However, despite those challenges, Macmillan believed that Poland would regain its freedom.

Lieutenant-General Władysław Anders Arrest

On September 29, 1939, Lieutenant General Władysław Anders and his troops began evacuating to "Romania and Hungary, with which Poland had a treaty of alliance", and once there, they were to "fight again for Poland, on the foreign soil, but on the Allied side", Anders recalled[29]. However, their evacuation route had already been overtaken by the Soviet detachment, "specially detailed with the capture of the Polish troops"[30]. During the evacuation, General Anders was wounded twice in a military exchange with "a gang of soldiers and partisans", which turned into "a shooting at point-blank range and ruthless hand-to-hand fighting"[31]. General Anders suffered debilitating wounds and was captured in the village of Jesionka Stasiowa by overwhelmingly large Soviet troops already on the territory of Poland[32]. Anders was taken to the headquarters of the Soviet Army in Stary Sambor[33]. There, one of the Soviet officers told General Anders the premise behind the Soviet attack on Poland, saying, "We are the good friends of the Germans, together we will fight international capitalism," and that Poland, as an Ally of England, had to perish for that, concluding "There will never again be a Poland"[34]. The movements of the Polish troops trying to escape toward Hungary or Romania were being closely monitored to prevent such a plan[35]. The N.K.V.D. officers (The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) took General Anders a prisoner, and subjected him to extensive interrogations, starvation, and inhumane living conditions[36]. Later, Anders was moved to the Soviet Lubyanka prison, where he was under strict surveillance and not allowed to communicate with other prisoners as the identity of the prisoners was kept a secret[37].

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[28] Ibid., pp. XIII-XIV.
[29] W. Anders, *An Army in Exile…*, p. 8–9.
[30] Ibid., p. 11
[31] Ibid., p. 12.
[32] W. Anders, *An Army in Exile*… p. 12–13.
[33] Ibid., p. 13.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., pp. 13, 24–26.
[37] Ibid., pp. 25–37.

Lieutenant-General Władysław Anders' Appointment as the Commander of the Polish Army

On August 4, 1941, a prison guard opened a cell in the Soviet Lubyanka prison, calling out those, "whose name here starts with the letter A? Quick, quick, come to be examined" in a manner of concealing the identities of the prisoners[38]. General Anders noticed that outside the cell, the assistant prison commander and the guards waited for him and even helped him walk up the stairs. Surprisingly, Anders noted, "nobody tripped me up or threw me down steps," recalling the change in treatment[39]. The prison commander took General Anders to "a beautiful furnished study, full of carpets and soft armchairs." There, Anders met Laurenti Beria, the Chief of the Soviet N.K.V.D., who informed him that a new Polish-Soviet agreement had been signed[40]. Under this agreement, "there would be an amnesty for all Poles, and a Polish army would be formed." General Anders "had been appointed by the Polish authorities, with the consent of the Soviet Government, to be Commander of this army", Beria added that he was "the most popular man amongst the Poles in Russia". Under this Polish-Soviet agreement, Polish soldiers were subject to Polish law and military regulations, which could be seen as evidence of Poland's self-governance. These changes in the relations between the USSR and Poland took place soon after the German Army had invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, and Joseph Stalin started looking for an ally who would help the Soviet Union to fight against the Germans. Thousands of Polish POWs taken prisoners in September 1939, and imprisoned in heavy labour camps and gulags in the remote location of the USSR, where they were working in inhumane conditions, were to be released with the intent to be drafted into the newly formed Polish army.

The Formation of the Polish Army on the Territory of the USSR

The Second Polish Army Corps (August 1941 – 1947), also known as the Anders Army, was established on Soviet territory under the August 14, 1941, Polish-Russian Military Agreement. The Army took its name from the commanding Lieutenant General Władysław Anders. The newly formed

[38] Ibid., p. 43.
[39] Ibid., p. 44.
[40] Ibid., pp. 34–44.

Polish army comprised volunteers, most of them Polish POWs, captured during the invasion of Poland by the Soviet Red Army that started on September 17, 1939, following on the heels of the German Army's military aggression on September 1, 1939.

On August 22, 1941, General Anders was informed that the headquarters of the new Polish Army was set in Buzuluk, Orenburg Oblast, Russia; the 5th Division was stationed in Tatishchevo, Russia; and the 6th Division and the Reserve Regiment were established in Totskoye, Orenburg Oblast, Russia. The army was to be ready for battle as of October 1, 1941, just forty days after its establishment, a date General Anders saw as unlikely, given the realities. The Soviet authorities authorised an Enrollment Commission to be sent to three Polish POW camps to seek army recruits, especially Polish officers, for whom General Anders was seeking to fill upper-rank positions, as the majority of volunteers reporting to the army were lower-ranking soldiers[41]. General Anders stated that all new arrivals into the army were received at the Army's headquarters in Buzuluk[42]. When the newly released from the Soviet labour camps and prisons Polish POWs heard the news that a new Polish army was being formed to fight the Germans, thousands rushed to join. On September 14, 1941, General Anders arrived at the Totskoye camp, where the 6th Infantry Division was being formed, and he received 17,000 recruits who paraded his arrival[43]. General Anders saw that the Polish prisoners released from the Soviet detention camps were severely emaciated, suffered from illnesses, and had little clothing when they reported to the camps[44]. Yet they were eager to fight the enemy and regain Poland's freedom.

The Reconditioning of the Newly Formed Polish Troops

Considering the challenges of reconditioning and arming the newly formed Polish Army Corps, the Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union, Steinhardt, in a telegram intended for Stalin, dated Washington, November 7, 1941, P.M., noted, "From Harriman for Mr Stalin. The problem of the most efficacious method of employing unarmed Polish troops now on Russian soil is one that has had deep attention and after consultation with the President and at his suggestion," stated the following,

[41] Ibid., p. 54.
[42] Ibid., p. 63.
[43] Ibid., p. 64.
[44] Ibid., p. 60–70.

> Our suggestion is that these Polish forces, not only with the agreement of but likewise with the assistance of the U. S. S. R. Government be assembled and withdrawn to a designated area in Iran. There, with American and British aid, these Polish nationals might be most quickly reconditioned, uniformed, and armed to the end that with the greatest possible expedition they become a part of the fighting forces in the expectation they be returned to the Soviet Russian front[45].

The message clearly states the intentions of the governments of the United States and Great Britain in lending a helping hand to the newly formed Polish troops on Soviet territory. It needs to be noted that this telegram bore all hallmarks of the best intentions to follow through on them as it was approved "by the Under Secretary of State, Mr. Welles; the Lend-Lease Administrator, Edward R. Stettinius, Jr.; the Special Representative of the President, W. Averell Harriman; the Executive Officer, Division of Defense Aid Reports, Office for Emergency Management, Maj. Gen. James H. Burns, and by the British Embassy after cabling the text to Prime Minister Churchill"[46].

When I was growing up in pro-Soviet Poland, a government-backed propagandist view claimed that General Anders intended to use funds provided by Stalin in the form of a loan to equip and move the army to the Middle East, but to never return to the Soviet Union. Thus, pointing out that General Anders and the Polish Government-in-Exile betrayed their previous military commitments, refusing to fight on the Soviet front to support the Red Army in the fight against the Nazis, and also refused to honour their financial commitments, not only leaving the post-war Polish government to pay off its debts but also putting the nation in hardship.

A November 17, 1941, Memorandum by the Polish Ambassador Ciechanowski, based on information from the Polish Ambassador in the Soviet Union, was sent to the Polish Foreign Office in London. The note outlined the challenges faced by those seeking to join the Polish army. Ciechanowski noted that thousands were still "held in prisons, concentration camps and camps of compulsory labour" although Stalin declared an amnesty on July 30, 1941[47]. Ambassador Ciechanowski informed that the Polish government

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[45] Steinhardt (1941, November 7). 860C.20/90a: Telegram The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Steinhardt). Retrieved from The Office of the Historian: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1941v01/d270

[46] Ibid.

[47] A. Ciechanowski (1941, November 17). *760C.61/976 Memorandum by the Polish Ambassador (Ciechanowski).* Retrieved from https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1941v01/d275

had no funds to finance the transportation of so many people, "who have been deported to Russia against their will by the Soviet Government," adding that "the Polish authorities suggested that an appropriate credit or loan to that effect be granted to the Polish Government by the Soviet Government." However, "So far, no answer has been received to this suggestion." Despite these challenges, the Polish people's will and resolve to join the army were strong. Ciechanowski added that "As a result of recent war developments in Russia, a new migration of Polish people is taking place southward. All these Poles are completely destitute, without any means of subsistence and receive no assistance from the Soviet authorities"[48]. The memorandum was sent to President Roosevelt as requested by the Polish Ambassador in the Soviet Union. Despite the hardships these men endured, they remained in good spirits and were willing to fight for the freedom of their homeland, General Anders noted. Over time, the Polish army grew to its highest number, with over 110,000 volunteers answering the call of Lieutenant General Władysław Anders to fight for Poland's freedom.

Having conducted personal research and interviews with soldiers of the Polish II Corps who joined Anders' Army, formed on the territory of the Soviet Union, and who later evacuated to the Middle East and took part in the Battle of Monte Cassino and the Italian Campaign, I do not doubt that these soldiers were motivated by fighting for the highest good of the country and regaining independence.

The Hardships of Winter 1941

In December 1941, the temperature fell to minus 52 degrees centigrade[49]. The challenges of harsh winter conditions caused many Poles who joined the Anders Army stationed near Kuybyshev and Buzuluk to fall ill or die from cold, malnutrition, illnesses, and the lack of clothing, which caused many to freeze to death in their tents in the forest camps. General Anders reported to Commander-in-Chief Władysław Sikorski that the troops were "accommodated under very bad conditions, that food was inadequate and that the Soviets demanded that the army be reduced to 30,000". General Anders was concerned that Stalin's request to reduce the size of the army

[48] Ibid.

[49] W. Anders, *An Army in Exile…*, p. 94.

"would mean the death by starvation for the rest," as they would not be eligible for the food rations[50].

Request to Move the Polish Army to the Middle East for Recuperation

Facing the growing challenges of creating an army that was expected to be ready for combat in a short time, General Anders suggested to General Władysław Sikorski, "moving the army and the masses of refugees to the Middle East"[51]. Despite initial objection to this idea, General Sikorski presented this proposal to Joseph Stalin during a meeting on December 3, 1941, in which General Anders also participated[52]. During the meeting, General Sikorski raised the issue of opening the second front and the challenges posed by the transfer of a large army across the channel[53]. Sikorski also brought forth the issue of the 4000 Polish officers still missing despite the amnesty and the release of Poles from the labour camps and prisons, and the need for increasing the supplies for the Polish army[54]. While discussing the issue of inadequate supplies for the army hinderring the efforts to prepare it for the military operations, General Anders recalled General Władysław Sikorski, saying to Stalin, "I propose that the whole Army and all men fit for service be moved, for example, to Persia, where the climate and the promised British assistance will make it possible for the men to recover in a comparatively short time. A strong army could be formed, which could then return to Russia to take up the Russian front"[55].

Furthermore, General Sikorski affirmed to Stalin, "For my part, I wish to declare that the army would return to the Russian front and that some British divisions might even reinforce it" General Anders recalled him saying[56]. General Sikorski's proposal to Stalin reflected an earlier correspondence between the Special Representative of the President of the United

[50] Ibid., p. 83.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., p. 83–87.
[53] Ibid., p. 84.
[54] Ibid., pp. 84–88.
[55] Ibid., pp. 86–87.
[56] Ibid., p. 87.

States and the US Ambassador to the Soviet Union[57]. In his brief to Laurence A. Steinhardt, the Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union, Hull refers to a communique from Harriman that was to be passed to Mr. Stalin, addressing the challenges, suggesting,

> that these Polish forces not only with the agreement of but likewise with the assistance of the USSR Government be assembled and withdrawn to a designated area in Iran. There, with American and British aid, these Polish nationals might be most quickly reconditioned, uniformed, and armed to the end that with the greatest possible expedition they become a part of the fighting forces in the expectation they be returned to the Soviet Russian front"[58].

This meeting resulted in the signing of the Stalin-Sikorski Declaration of December 04, 1941[59]. The Meeting's Declaration stated that

> 'German Hitlerite Imperialism' was the worst enemy of humanity, and both countries would fight until final victory; each country would give the other full military support and that the Polish armed forces in Soviet territory would fight side by side with the Soviet Army; that peace-time relations would be based on peaceful neighbourly co-operation and the observance of mutual obligations"[60].

Henderson, the Assistant Chief of the Division of European Affairs, noted in a memorandum to Washington that "The Polish Government for its part was doing everything which it honourably could do to improve its relations with the Soviet Union"[61]. Henderson also noted that the Polish government was concerned with Stalin's "endeavour to extract territorial and other concessions, some of which, if given, would probably be at the expense of Poland". The December 4, 1941, Declaration was published in the Soviet Union's *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* newspapers on December 5, as noted in

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[57] Hull. (1941, November 7). *860C.20/90a: Telegram The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Steinhardt).* Retrieved June 15, 2017, from Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1941, General, The Soviet Union, Volume I: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1941v01/d270

[58] Ibid.

[59] W. Anders, *An Army in Exile…*, p. 90.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Henderson. (1941, December 29). *740.0011 European War 1939/18567; Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Chief of the Division of European Affairs (Henderson)* . Retrieved from The Office of the Historian: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1941v01/d283

a telegram by the Chargé in the Soviet Union, Thurston, to the Secretary of State[62].

The Evacuation of the Polish Army to the Middle East

After long drawn negotiations, on July 8, 1942, General Anders received a letter from General Zubov stating, "The Government of the USSR agrees to the request of the Commander-in-Chief Polish Army in USSR, Lt.-Gen. Anders, concerning the evacuation of Polish units from USSR to the Middle East and does not intend to put any obstacles in the way of the immediate carrying out of that evacuation," General Anders cites an urgent message from Moscow Ref. 2651/1224 in his book[63]. Under this agreement, 70,000 Poles were to be evacuated from Russia to the Middle East. However, "the Russians wanted to exclude from those allowed to leave the Ukrainians, White Ruthenians, and, especially, the Jews in our ranks", Anders highlighted[64]. Though General Anders' intervention resulted in changing the decision of the Soviet government, allowing those Jewish families that had members in active service in the Polish Army to evacuate. As a result, "about 4000 Jews left Russia with the Polish army"[65].

The evacuation of the Polish Army from the USSR to Persia, where they were to recuperate and undergo military training, was underway[66]. General Anders noted that about 115,000 left Russia for the Middle East; however, according to his estimates, those deported and detained by Russia at the beginning of the war amounted to about half a million, and he was concerned about the fate of those left behind. Anders considered that half of them died, and those who survived "survived by a miracle"[67]. General Anders saw the challenges the Soviet Union mounted against thousands of Poles who wanted to join the Polish army, where they were to be prepared for the front where they were to fight against the Germans, as expectations that "the for-

[62] Thurston. (1941, December 6). *760C.61/977: Telegram; The Chargé in the Soviet Union (Thurston) to the Secretary of State.* Retrieved from The Office of the Historian: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1941v01/pg_266

[63] W. Anders, *An Army in Exile…,* p. 112.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid., p. 116

[67] Ibid.

mer inmates of concentration camps would lose their faith in God and in the resurrection of their country"[68].

Listening firsthand to the accounts of Anders Army veterans, I witnessed their strong faith in God, which not only drove them to fight for Poland's freedom but also to continue supporting this cause while exiled in Canada[69].

The Deterioration of the Relationship between the Soviet and Polish Governments

September 1, 1942, proved to be the last transport of the Polish Army to the Middle East, leaving behind thousands of Poles stranded in the Soviet Union. The relationship between the Soviet and Polish governments continued to deteriorate when in October 1942, the Soviet Union sent a note to the Polish Government-in-Exile, Foreign Minister, Count E. Raczynski that they are "definitively refusing to allow any further enlistment in the Polish army of Poles remining in the Soviet Union" accusing Poland of "having purposedly and without reason refused to send Polish troops to the front, thus breaking the military agreement of August 14, 1941"[70]. On January 16, 1943, the Soviet government communicated to the Polish Government-in-Exile that "all Poles remaining in the Soviet Union and originating from the provinces under Soviet occupation would be considered Soviet subjects"[71].

The Breaking of the Polish-Soviet Relationship over the Katyń Discovery

On April 25, 1943, Joseph Stalin broke off diplomatic relations with the Polish Government-in-Exile over Poland's request that the Red Cross investigate mass graves of the Polish officers murdered in Katyń[72]. Stalin's decision was related to the Germans' claim of April 13, 1943, "that they'd found a mass grave with the bodies of thousands of Polish officers in Katyn (Katyń), near Smolensk, an area they'd occupied only from October 1941

[68] Ibid, p. 117.
[69] A. Jaworska, op. cit., pp. 100, 116.
[70] W. Anders, *An Army in Exile…*, p. 134.
[71] Ibid., p. 135.
[72] Ibid., p. 140.

until March 1943, and so did not want to take responsibility for such atrocities". Polish Government-in-Exile appealed for a Red Cross investigation, as according to General Anders, Poland had reasons to believe the information about the mass graves discovered by the Germans because Polish representatives in the Soviet Union had been unable to locate a large number of the high-ranking Polish officers captured during the Soviet invasion in September 1939[73].

With no viable possibility to return to the Soviet Union, the II Polish Army Corps, under the command of General Władysław Anders, became a part of the Polish armed forces supporting the Allies in the West.

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INSTYTUT IM. GEN.
WŁADYSŁAWA ANDERSA

W wydanym w czerwcu 1947 roku pierwszym numerze „Kultury" jej redaktorzy napisali, że celem tego pisma jest z jednej strony uprzytomnienie Polakom na emigracji, że krąg kulturalny, w którym żyją, nie jest wymarły, z drugiej zaś podtrzymanie w rodakach w kraju wiary w to, że wartości im bliskie nie zawaliły się pod obuchem nagiej siły. Dziś, w realiach tak odległych od ówczesnych, wydawać by się mogło, że cele te nie są już aktualne. Warto jednak zadać sobie pytanie, w jakim stopniu w Polsce upowszechniona jest wiedza o ogromnym dorobku Emigracji, Polonii i Polaków za granicą? Na ile nasza świadomość społeczna i polityczna ukształtowana jest przez pryzmat schematów, narzuconych Polakom przez lata tzw. Polski Ludowej, a na ile przez myśl tych przedstawicieli elity, którzy uniknęli zagłady w dobie totalitaryzmów, a następnie żyli i działali na uchodźstwie? W jaki sposób ta niezwykła i bogata spuścizna została zaabsorbowana w Polsce w ciągu ostatnich 30 lat, dzielących nas od upadku systemu komunistycznego? Niestety, w wielu aspektach ten dorobek jest kompletnie nieznany i świadomie (bądź nie) pomijany. Celem niniejszego pisma jest wypełnienie istotnej luki w polskiej świadomości narodowej poprzez ukazanie roli wychodźstwa, Polonii i emigracji na przestrzeni lat.

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