

THE PROBLEM OF MULTICULTURALISM ON THE EXAMPLE OF BELARUSIAN, LITHUANIAN, JEWISH, SILESIA AND TATAR MINORITIES IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SECURITY OF POLICY IN THE SECOND POLISH REPUBLIC

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Abstract:

The article is an attempt to analyse the problem of multiculturalism on the example of the influence of the five minority communities listed in the title in the perspective of the security of Poland in the period between 1918 and 1939. The considerations presented in this article are an addendum to the issues related to the policy of the authorities of the Second Republic of Poland on national minorities and its influence on the internal security of the state. This subject was undertaken by the Author earlier when he analysed the activity of the representatives of the German and Ukrainian minority. The article presents potential factors which can destabilise internal security, especially at the social level, as a result of forces in the environments of the indicated national and ethnic minorities in the II RP. The presented arguments allow to conclude that during the whole interwar period the II RP authorities had to struggle with multiculturalism related to the presence of Belarusian, Lithuanian, Jewish and Silesian minorities because in their environment centrifugal forces were occurred many times and posed a threat to the internal security of the newly re-established Polish state. What is more, it turned out that the social and cultural policy of the II RP was not sufficiently wide-ranging for the above mentioned minorities. However, there were also other factors which constituted serious obstacles in pursuing the policy of efficient integration in the II RP society. It is possible to indicate here as an example the aversion of numerous representatives of these minorities to the social policy imposed by the Polish authorities, major discrepancies in the leading integration vision between significant political factions and also the influence of external propaganda and agitation influencing these minorities.

Keywords:

security, multiculturalism, Second Polish Republic (II RP), national minorities, social politics

INTRODUCTION

The article advanced the thesis that in the interwar period the problem of multiculturalism on the example of Belarusian, Lithuanian, Jewish, Silesian and Tatar minorities



posed a direct threat to the efficiency of the II RP security policy. In other words, one has to investigate the statement that the activity of numerous representatives and environments of the said minorities translated into weakening the potential of the social defence system in interwar Poland. One should also realize that the German and Ukrainian minorities, being especially active in interwar Poland, destabilized the internal security system. This type of influence was also observed in other national and ethnic minorities contributing to the wider context of multiculturalism in revived Poland. The goal of this article is an attempt to present examples of such destabilising influences on the II RP security between 1918 and 1939.

For the purpose of this work multiculturalism will be understood as simple concentration of various cultures at the same time and place, however, first of all it will mean creation of various interactions between national and ethnic cultures¹. Moreover, multiculturalism will refer to a set of various processes and principles of social cooperation, thanks to which various minorities can function next to each other and interact in cultural and ethnic pluralism². Such pluralism is one of the fundamentals of a democratic state and the II RP undoubtedly was one, at least until 1935. This was the year when the April Constitution of Poland came into force and made system in Poland similar to the presidential one and numerous circles blamed the ruling camp for denial of political pluralism and the introduction of a quasi-dictatorship. It should be noted that these issues influenced also the adopted model of social politics referring to multiculturalism in the II RP³.

Undoubtedly, it is hard not to agree with the view presented in primary sources according to which: "the entire elimination of tensions and conflicts is not possible, however, it is possible to limit the degree of disharmony among numerous cultures"⁴. An analogous claim should refer to the development of the II RP during which the coexistence of a large number of minorities had to lead to tensions and conflicts. Given all this, the interwar Polish authorities had to face this problem and take a systematic approach to the position and functioning of the Belarusian, Lithuanian, Jewish, Silesian and Tatar minorities in the society of revived Poland⁵.

¹ A. Śliz, *Wielokulturowość i jej socjologiczny sens. Festival Caravan czy wielokulturowe Street Party?*, "Studia Socjologiczne" 2011, No. 4, p. 9.

² H. Mamzer, *Tożsamość w podróży. Wielokulturowość a kształtowanie tożsamości jednostki*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2003, p. 33.

³ A. Kupczyk, *Z badań nad polityką państwa polskiego wobec mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych po odzyskaniu niepodległości 11 XI 1918 roku*, "Acta Erasmiana" 2014, No. 6, p. 159-160.

⁴ A. Śliz, *Wielokulturowość...*, op. cit., p. 10.

⁵ Poland was a multinational state in which nearly 30% of the whole society were various minorities with regard to which the Polish authorities made a number of more or less successful Polonization attempts. The Polonization policy aimed at minorities was a source of numerous tensions. Taking into account the rather unpopular at that time model of social and political integration and certain federal coexistence of nations and ethnic groups, such a policy had to result in a decrease in the defence potential of the internal security system. What is more, to justify this position, one can refer to the claim that just the struggle to re-establish the Polish statehood led to numerous nationalist conflicts. The best expression of these tensions were the Silesian Uprisings, the Wielkopolskie and the



It is worth adding, however, that the attitude of the Polish state to the said minorities changed in the years 1918-1926, 1926-1935 and 1935-1939. In the first of these periods the Polish authorities did not develop and consistent basis for the nationalist politics and the attitude of the majority of nationalists to administrative authorities was hostile, while in the period between 1926 and 1935 was the time of strengthening the political system of the state in the spirit of strong executive authority and an attempt to develop a particular vision of national integration. However, quite frequently the new order was introduced by force, the best example is the anti-Ukrainian pacification in Eastern Galicia in 1930. From the mid 30's of the 20th c., as a result of the democratic system crisis, repressions against minorities were intensified, especially in the case of minorities acting to the detriment of the state. Not infrequently it ended up with taking up radical measures in the ethnic policy to eliminate anti-Polish attitudes in the use of radical⁶.

1. THE SITUATION OF THE BELARUSIAN MINORITY IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE II RP SECURITY

The adoption of the Peace of Riga in 1921 carried significant implications for the Polish ethnic policy. Pursuant to this treaty the shape of the eastern border was similar to the one from the period following the Second Partition of Poland when, favourably for Poland, Volhynia and Polesie were its part⁷. The consequence of the said territorial changes in the East resulted in the presence of the Ukrainian and Belarusian minority within the administrative borders of Poland. According to the data in the First National Population Count in 1921, there were 1 035 000 Belarusians in Poland which made

Sejny Uprising, as well as the East Prussian Plebiscite. The polonization policy carried out on some of these territories was unsuccessful and during the whole interwar period social tensions and conflicts were very frequent. Comp. A. Kupczyk, *Z badań...*, op. cit., p. 160. It is worth adding that the first more consistent actions related to the nationalist policy were supposed to be taken by the Political Committee of Ministers, established in October 1921, which was responsible for the development of the main guidelines of the foreign and domestic politics. However, Poland struggled at that time with sabotage, especially the Ukrainian and Belarusian one in the Eastern Borderlands. As a result, Gen. Sikorski, who at that time was the Minister of the Military, postulated considering a legal instrument in the form of a prerogative for the voievods allowing them to displace people supporting anti-Polish sabotage from the Eastern Borderlands. Comp. the Report of the 88th Meeting of the Political Committee of the Council of Ministers (8 August, 1924), [in:] *O Niepodległą i granice. Protokoły Komitetu Politycznego Rady Ministrów 1921-1926*, ed. M. Jabłonowski, W. Janowski, University of Warsaw A. Gieysztor Academy of Humanities 2004, p. 17.

⁶ W. Kozyra, *Polityka administracyjna ministrów spraw wewnętrznych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w latach 1918-1939*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 2009, p. 48.

⁷ These benefits resulted from the end of the earlier Polish-Soviet War whose important part were military actions conducted in territories inhabited by Belarusians. The essence and importance of these actions were emphasised even by Józef Piłsudski himself. In a letter to the commander of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Front, Gen. Stanisław Szeptycki, he wrote that it was necessary to support the Bolsheviks from the said territories so as to prepare eastern voievods to be incorporated to the II RP. See: *List Marszałka Piłsudskiego do gen. Szeptyckiego z dnia 15 maja 1919 roku*, Archives of the Józef Piłsudski Institute of America, file: 701/1/30 (Photographs and copies of letters to Gen. Szeptycki).



exactly 4% of the society of the II RP⁸. The Second National Population Count in 1931 showed that the number of Belarusians in Poland insignificantly decreased and was 990 000, which made 3.1% of the society of interwar Poland⁹. Hence it can be estimated that the representatives of the Belarusian minority in the whole interwar period were a significant social power which had to be respected by the authorities of the re-established Polish state¹⁰.

The primary sources quite rightly state that, for security reasons, the Polish eastern border was divided into two operational areas – Ukrainian and Belarusian. The latter was considered a strategic one, because it formed a corridor connecting Moscow, the Smilno Gate, the II RP and western Europe. It ran along the eastern border of the II RP, which later created various opportunities for the Soviets to destabilise the social situation in this region¹¹. Belarusians were numerous here and the role of the re-established Polish state authorities was easing social tensions and trying to include Belarusians in the Polonization process of the eastern part of Poland¹². However, this proved not be simple, given the resistance of Belarusians against the Polish authorities shown also during the Polish-Soviet War¹³.

⁸ *Rocznik statystyki Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1925-1926*, Central Statistical Office of Poland, Warszawa 1927, p. 26.

⁹ H. Chałupczak, T. Browarek, *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce 1918-1995*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 1999, p. 22.

¹⁰ The preserved archival materials prove that at the beginning of 1922 a new bill related to the Belarusian minority in Poland was proposed, it regulated the relations between this minority and the Polish state and also sanction the legality of the political, social and cultural-educational activity of Belarusians on the territory of the II RP. See: *Wyniki narad komisji międzyministerialnej w sprawie obywateli polskich narodowości białoruskiej z dnia 27 stycznia 1922 roku*, Archives of the Józef Piłsudski Institute of America, File: 701/2/42 (December 1921-February 1922).

¹¹ M. Wiśniewska, L. Wyszczelski, *Bezpieczeństwo narodowe Polski w latach 1918-1939. Teoria i praktyka*, Dom Wydawniczy Duet, Toruń 2009, p. 37.

¹² It is interesting that according to the primary sources the Polonization process in this part of the Eastern Borderlands was treated as a kind of social necessity. It was supposed to be carried out by the creation of a well-developed Polish educational system in the areas inhabited by the representatives of the Belarusian minority, the main priorities were to be determined by the Public Education Section established in October 1919 by Józef Piłsudski as part of the organisation called Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich [the Civilian Management of the Eastern Borderlands]. It was also written that: "The Polish school should dominate on the land which is so important for Poland". Z. Stankiewicz, *Działalność seminariów nauczycielskich na północno-wschodnich kresach Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1919-1939*, Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2006, p. 27. Hence, the Polonization process of the Belarusian minority should be interpreted as a natural part of the ethnic policy of the re-established Polish state because there were threats that the Soviets would attempt to take advantage of the situation and destabilise the social situation in the II RP.

¹³ During the Polish-Soviet war there were voices that Belarusian troops were formed in Minsk, they were supposed to be later used in fighting with Poland. Their organization was supported by Belarusian politicians unfavourably disposed to Poland who were planning to involve Belarusian soldiers in fights with Poland in the already probable at that time Polish-Lithuanian war. See: O. Łatyszonek, *Białoruskie formacje wojskowe 1917-1923*, Białoruskie Towarzystwo Historyczne, Białystok 1995, p. 239. It is worth adding here that the anti-Polish Belarusian underground army was being organized



The Polish authorities were very well informed about the attitudes of the Belarusian minority to the territorial-administrative authority in north-east voivodeships. The evidence of this is, for example, a study on Belarusians prepared by Mirosław Arciszewski, Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 1921 and also a paper written in 1922 by Ludwik Eckert, it was presented as part of the work of Ethnic Section of the of the Interim Commission Governing Central Lithuania¹⁴. The authorities of the II RP received information about the dissatisfaction of the Belarusian minority, which not only became a part of a foreign rule ship, but also struggled with its own economic problems and aspired to establish the foundations of its own independence movement¹⁵.

The representatives of this minority reacted violently to the concept of denationalization of the eastern lands and the Polonization of foreign minorities popularized among the supporters of Roman Dmowski¹⁶. An example of the activity of the Belarusian minority posing a threat to the internal security of the II RP is the fact that Belarusian peasants boycotted due tax payments to the Polish Treasury in 1924 and also caused a number of scuffling incidents with the police and military forces. Poor military protection near the lands bordering the areas inhabited by Belarusians fostered the development of the Belarusian partisan network acting against the II RP. In August 1924 the Minister for Military Affairs, Władysław Sikorski, even filed a motion to the Council of Ministers for handing over the power to the military with an option of placing this area under emergency rule¹⁷.

The main axis of the conflict between the Belarusians and the Polish authorities was the issue of limiting the potential of the Belarusian education, which sometimes was reduced to simple closing down of particular schools at various levels of education. There are some reports that some Belarusian teachers conducted anti-Polish activity, they were victimized and detained in central Poland from the autumn of 1919. The closed down Belarusian schools whose buildings were confiscated were replaced by

at that time until 1923 also on the territory of the Lithuanian Republic which was also hostile to Poland. Comp. Ibidem, p. 15 and 111.

¹⁴ APAN, Materiały Ludwika Eckerta, No. III-180, vol. 23-24, after: W. Śleszyński, *Bezpieczeństwo wewnętrzne w polityce państwa polskiego na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej*, Rytm, Warszawa 2007, p. 171.

¹⁵ On the other hand, at that time the Polish authorities represented a view that the Belarusians did not have any national past of their own, neither did they have their own culture, hence their rights should not be extended in the eastern lands of the II RP. See: W. Śleszyński, *Polityka władz polskich w stosunku do mniejszości białoruskiej w latach 1920–1939*, [in:] *Udział mniejszości narodowych w różnych formacjach wojskowych w czasie kampanii wrześniowej 1939 r.*, ed. T. Miś, Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, Warszawa 2009, p. 26.

¹⁶ In the primary sources one can even come across a view that allegedly Roman Dmowski's supporters "pursued a path against ethnic minorities" and influencing the Belarusian and Ukrainian minorities was exactly the axis of the Polonization policy. J. Surdykowski, *Duch Rzeczypospolitej*, PWN, Warszawa 2001, p. 53.

¹⁷ Protocol of the 87th meeting of the Political Committee of the Council of Ministers (5 August 1924), [in:] A. Chojnowski, *Mniejszości narodowe w polityce rządów polskich w latach 1921-1926*, "Przegląd Historyczny" 1976, No. 67, p. 608.



new Polish schools in the Eastern Borderlands¹⁸. The permit to open the Belarusian School Council did not contribute in the least to strengthening the position of Belarusian education, because from the very beginning of its activity the authorities limited the subsidy for the minority education system¹⁹. In the late 30's of the 20th c. the repressive politics of Poland in the matter of the Belarusian education system was additionally intensified, a clear sign confirming this fact is the closing down of the Belarusian Teachers' Association²⁰. Hence, it is hard to disagree with the statement that the social unrest caused by the Belarusian minority to a large extent were the consequence of the limited access to education in their native language.

Another issue to be discussed is the influence of the Soviets on the representatives of the Belarusian minority over the whole interwar period. It definitely had a destabilising influence on the internal security in Poland and especially on the subsystem of social security. The difficult economic situation of Belarusians, large concentrations of Belarusians near the borders of the II RP, repressions suffered from the Polish authorities (especially education) and the closeness of the Belarusian enclave in the territory of the II RP to the Soviet Union were the main three factors which contributed to the susceptibility of the described minority to the Soviet agitation and propaganda²¹. There are interesting works on this subject in the primary sources from the beginnings of the 90's of the 20th c., namely: "Russification, not only the ostentatious, superficial one, but also the one which reaches further into the depths of the Belarusian soul – certainly takes place. Maybe it should be called Sovietization"²².

¹⁸ M. Siemakowicz, *Polityka władz rosyjskich, niemieckich i polskich wobec szkolnictwa białoruskiego w latach 1903-1922*, "Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne" 1997, No. 7, p. 32.

¹⁹ It was emphasised at that time that the dependence of the minority education on the administrative authorities of the II RP was high enough to allow the authorities to decide on the form of the real educational policy in relation to particular minorities in north-east and eastern Poland. Comp. M. Gałędek, *Ustrój administracji ogólnej na Wileńszczyźnie w okresie międzywojennym*, Wydawnictwo Historyczne Tabularium, Gdańsk 2012, p. 60-61.

²⁰ M. Moroz, *Krynica. Ideologia i przywódcy białoruskiego katolicyzmu*, Białoruskie Towarzystwo Historyczne, Białystok 2001, p. 206.

²¹ This difficult situation of the Belarusian minority was taken advantage of by particular political factions representing anti-Polish views. An example of such an activity destabilising the internal security of the II RP was the activity of the Belarusian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries, which managed to conclude an agreement with the Bolsheviks. Comp. O. Łatyszonek, *Białoruskie formacje...*, op. cit., p. 208-209.

²² B. Skaradzinski, *Białorusini, Litwini, Ukraińcy*, Zakłady Wydawnicze Versus, Białystok 1990, p. 19. It seems, however, that one can answer the question asked by the quoted author can be answered in the affirmative, if one realizes what the origin of the Belarusian susceptibility to propaganda. Namely, the main factor was the fact that a large majority of the Belarusian minority in Poland was peasantry which was easily susceptible to the Soviet influence, and hence also the social and political propaganda of the Soviet Union. To support this thesis, it is worth indicating some preserved data according to which as many as 94% Belarusians in the II RP were peasants. Comp. J. Żarnowski, *Społeczeństwo Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej 1918-1939*, PWN, Warszawa 1973, p. 386.



At the same time, one should remember about the Philo-Soviet policy developed in some social and political circles in north-east Poland in the years 1918-1939²³. Mainly these were the people who even during the 1st World War agitated for the establishment of the Belarusian People's Republic and later focused on the left-leaning Belarusian Peasants and Workers' Union whose revolutionary slogans urged the Polish authorities to dissolve this organization in 1927²⁴. A clearly anti-Polish attitude – with the significant influence and support of Soviet circles – was also declared by the members of the Communist Party of Western Belarus, which was considered an illegal political party by the Polish authorities. Its members conducted propaganda and agitation activity directed especially against the Polish borderland interests, but also against workers, farmers and the soldiers of the Polish Military Forces. They also used such means as protests undermining the security and public order as well as sabotage actions in Polish industrial enterprises²⁵.

It should be added that the primary sources practically ignores the influence of the Third Reich on the intensification of the anti-Polish attitudes in the Belarusian minority, however, such an influence could be observed especially from the spring of 1939. This was the time a specially trained group of Gestapo agents was sent to the north-east part of Poland. It was composed of four agents: M. Budziński, H. Müller, E. Reiter and H. Seeber who were entrusted with the task of organising and developing anti-Polish sabotage among the representatives of the Belarusian minority²⁶. Thus the influence of foreign countries and their services was an important factor in the destabilisation of the II RP security as a result of the support for anti-Polish sabotage in the Belarusian minority.

2. THE IMPACT OF THE LITHUANIAN MINORITY ON THE SECURITY IN THE II RP

The attitude of the Lithuanian minority living in Poland in the years 1918-1939 was rather inimical or even hostile to the Polish administrative authority. According to the

²³ J. Tomaszewski, *Ojczyzna nie tylko Polaków*, Młodzieżowa Agencja Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1985, p. 84-85. An example of the Philo-Soviet attitude represented by a part the Belarusian minority was some the organisation of the staff of insurgent forces in Merkine, which started in the spring of 1922 in cooperation with Bolshevik Russia. It was the beginning of the organisation of an intelligence and sabotage network acting against the Polish state. Belarusian saboteurs conducted at that time such actions as blowing up a bridge and disassembling parts of a rail track in Merkine, they also set fire to Polish state forests. Comp. Report of II SG WP Department on sabotage actions in north-east Borderlands – as of 15 March 1923 (March-April 1923), [in:] W. Śleszyński, *Walka instytucji państwowych z białoruską działalnością dywersyjną 1920-1925*, Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne, Białystok 2005, p. 55.

²⁴ A. Bergman, *Sprawy białoruskie w II Rzeczypospolitej*, Białostockie Towarzystwo Naukowe - PWN, Warszawa 1984, p. 113-118.

²⁵ For more information about such sabotage and propaganda-agitation influence of the Soviets on the Belarusian minority in the perspective of the destabilisation of the II RP internal security see S. Łukaszewicz, *Zdrada stanu. Działalność Komunistycznej Partii Zachodniej Białorusi w Wilnie w latach 1930-1935*, "Ogrody Nauk i Sztuk" 2012, No. 2, p. 77-80.

²⁶ Z. Koszyła, *Wrzesień 1939 roku na Białostoczczyźnie*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe - Białostockie Towarzystwo Naukowe, Warszawa-Białystok 1968, p. 25.



primary sources, the conflict between Poland and Lithuania was still developing during the German occupation of Lithuania and during World War I²⁷. On the other hand, the incorporation of the Vilnius Region into the Polish state in 1920 was a serious disappointment for Lithuania re-establishing its statehood in the spirit of independence²⁸. The sentiments among the Lithuanians living in Central Lithuania, politically and militarily depending on Poland, could not be positive for the new authorities.

The signs of the threat posed by the Lithuanians to the internal security of the Polish state were very serious in the described period. A good example was the organisation of an anti-Polish sabotage network developed in case of a military conflict, because for the Lithuanian minority the contemporary situation, i.e. the then Polish authority of the II RP was considered temporary. With the support of the headquarters of the Lithuanian intelligence service, some efforts were made to establish secret sabotage organisations whose members came from such minority organisations as the "Rytas" Association, St. Casimir Association or the Temporary Committee of Vilnius Lithuanians. Junior secondary school buildings were used to conduct conspiratorial meetings of saboteurs. Another manifestation of this Lithuanian minority threat was participation in the establishment of illegal organisations, mainly the Vilnius Liberation Association. The Lithuanian minority, supported by political centres in Kaunas, organised talks, published anti-Polish newspapers, brochures and leaflets, it also propagated the idea of the so called Vilnius myth among its representatives in Poland. It was presented as a national myth uniting all Lithuanians²⁹. The Polish authorities observed also contacts between the Lithuanian minority and the representatives of foreign countries, mainly with France. The goal of these meetings was the propagation of the idea of the Vilnius Land autonomy at the cost of its possible Polonization. The Lithuanians finally managed to persuade the French that their claims were legitimate³⁰.

After the May Coup d'État the attitude of the Polish authorities to the Lithuanian minority temporarily improved mainly as a result of Józef Piłsudski's dissent, he was against exacerbating the political conflict between the II RP and the Lithuanian Republic. On the other hand, the military coup from December 1926, which allowed the anti-Polish and pro-German government to take over the rule, contributed to fuelling the anti-Polish attitudes among the members of the Lithuanian minority in the II RP. The financial support for the organisation of this minority was very often received using anti-Polish slogans. Moreover, after 1926 the activity of the Vilnius Liberation Association,

²⁷ W.B. Łach, *Polska północna w systemie obronnym kraju w latach 1918-1926*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, Olsztyn 1990, p. 90.

²⁸ The incorporation act of the Vilnius Region into Poland reads: "legal and state claims to the Vilnius Region made by the Lithuanian Republic (...) and any other claims are rejected and shall always be dismissed". Protocol of the 17th meeting of the Political Committee of the Council of Ministers (28 February 1922), [in:] *O Niepodległą i granice...*, op. cit., p. 62.

²⁹ K. Buchowski, *Szkice polsko-litewskie czyli o niełatwym sąsiedztwie w pierwszej połowie XX wieku*, Grado, Toruń 2005, p. 97-98.

³⁰ Protocol of the 17th meeting of the Political Committee of the Council of Ministers (28 February 1922), [in:] *O Niepodległą i granice...*, op. cit., p. 61.



with which the Polish authorities had grapple many times, intensified. At the peak of the development of its structures the organisation counted 27 thousand members and was supported by nearly 600 thousand Lithuanians. The main postulate on the mission of the Vilnius Liberation Association was the preparation of the Lithuanians to a military action aimed at regaining Vilnius by the Lithuanian Republic³¹.

In the 30's of the 20th c. the representatives of the Lithuanian minority in Poland willingly cooperated both with the Lithuanian and German intelligence against Poland. Information of Lithuanian espionage was gained by both the Agency of the 2nd Department of the General Staff No 1 in Vilnius and an intelligence outpost of the Border Protection Corps "Grodno". Most often the recruited informers transmitted messages related to the stationing of the Polish Armed Forces in the border belt and the staff of the Polish security services³². The espionage activity of the representatives of the Lithuanian minority was aimed directly against the internal security of the II RP.

After 1935 the Polish policy on the Lithuanian minority – analogically to the policy on other minorities – was clearly tightened. The fact that an officer of the 2nd Department of the Polish General Staff, Ludwik Bociański was appointed Vilnius Voivode contributed to the radicalization of the attitudes represented by the regional government administration to the Lithuanian minority. On the initiative of this voivode the process of the delegalization of the Temporary Committee of Vilnius Lithuanians structures and other organizations of this minority started and apart from this the process of closing down the Lithuanian national school system was completed. This anti-Lithuanian action was also conducted by the Border Protection Corps troops³³. One should conclude that although shortly before the outbreak of the war, the Polish administrative in the Vilnius Region managed to weaken the potential of the anti-Polish activity of the Lithuanian minority, it did not lead to the weakening of mutual antagonisms between the Polish and the Lithuanians. Hence, the Polonization and national integration of the Lithuanian minority process was not successfully performed.

³¹ Z. Kiaupa, *Litwa w dwudziestym wieku. Republika Litewska w latach 1918-1940*, p. 9, [online] [access: 2.12.2015] Available on the Internet: <http://www.iesw.lublin.pl/projekty/pliki/IESW-121-02-10pl.pdf>.

³² The latter one uncovered for example an espionage scandal in 1935. A Lithuanian citizen living in Puńsk, Jerzy Wierzbiło, who was involved in the scandal, among others disclosed information about Infantry Regiment No. 71. and the Administrative Company of the Polish Reserve Officer Cadet School stationed in Zambrów to the Lithuanian Border Police Headquarters in Łódzkie. The Grodno Border Protection Corps managed to expose informers working for the Lithuanian or German military intelligence, who came from the Lithuanian minority, they were involved in such espionage scandals as "Laposa and comrades" and "Szczęsnulewicz and comrades". A. Ochwał, *Placówka Wywiadowcza KOP No. 1 "Suwałki"/"Grodno" (1929-1939)*, [in:] *Wywiad i kontrwywiad wojskowy II RP. Studia i materiały z działalności Oddziału II SG WP, Vol. 1*, ed. T. Dubicki, Wydawnictwo LTW, Łomianki 2010, p. 226-232.

³³ W. Śleszyński, *Świat pogranicza. Stosunki społeczno-polityczne na pograniczu polsko-litewsko-białoruskim w XX i XXI wieku. Wykłady, cz. 1*, Instytut Historii Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, Białystok 2009, p. 63.



3. JEWS IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SECURITY POLICY OF THE II RP

According to the National Population Census conducted in 1921 within the borders of the re-established Polish state there were 2 million Jews, and at the beginning of the 30's of the 20th c. the number grew to 2.7 million. At that time Jews were a substantial social group as they made 8-8.6% of the whole II RP society³⁴. One could even state that the functioning of this minority had a stabilising effect on the Polish economy in the difficult period of reconstruction after war devastations. It resulted from the fact that nearly 4/5 of all Jews living in the territory of the II RP were involved in trade or worked in industry. Next 6% worked as civil servants³⁵. If one also considers very good organisation of numerous Jewish organisations facilitating business activity which, in turn, was taxed in Poland, one can easily understand the motifs of the Polish authorities willing to maintain religious tolerance and economic freedom with regard to such an important minority, so as to guarantee development opportunities for Jews in the conditions of the re-established Polish state³⁶.

On the other hand, Jews were not always loyal to the Polish authorities, even though in principle they had a positive attitude to the establishment of the Polish state, which was expressed especially in the Jewish circles previously subordinate to the Russian partition area. An aspect which has to be emphasised is communist propaganda and agitation, especially in the bourgeois environment of the minority in the II RP. The pogroms of Jews which took place in 1918 in Lviv and a year later in Pińsk were supposed to be an explicit and at the same time afflictive response of the Polish society to the cooperation between some representatives of the Jewish minority with pro-communist and pro-Ukrainian circles³⁷. Jews were accused of collaboration with the Red Army during the Polish-Soviet war³⁸. At the beginning of 1924 some Jewish MPs

³⁴ *Rocznik statystyki Rzeczypospolitej...*, op. cit., p. 26.

³⁵ J. Żarnowski, *Spółeczeństwo Drugiej...*, op. cit., p. 390.

³⁶ According to the literature even as many as 800 thousand of all Jews living in Poland could belong to craftsmen's organisations and associations. Comp. *Ibidem*, p. 391.

³⁷ P. Różański, *Stany Zjednoczone wobec kwestii żydowskiej w Polsce 1918-1921*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk 2007, p. 155.

³⁸ It is hard to disagree with the statement that the number of Jews who actually collaborated with the Red Army during the war with the Soviets, which was such a difficult period in terms of Polish security, was definitely lower than the number of Jews hostile to the new regime which tried to dominate the newly established Polish state. Comp. J. Walicki, *Położenie Żydów polskich podczas kampanii 1920 r.*, "Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis. Folia Historica" 1995, No. 52, p. 116. The fears of the Polish authorities that the connections between Jewish circles and the foreign, anti-Polish inspiration manifested, among others, by the Minister of Interior Władysław Kiernik, who during one of the meetings of the Political Committee of the Council of Ministers at the end of November 1923 tabled a motion to ban the inflow of new Jews to Poland and gradually expel people suspected of anti-Polish activity. At the same time according to the assessment of the Political Committee of the Council of Ministers, Jews maintained rich, international connections which guaranteed the inflow of funds for possible anti-Polish actions. This situation required to undertake a self-defence action against such danger, and, hence, a special interministerial commission for this purpose. Comp. Protocol of the 62nd meeting of Political Committee of the Council of Ministers (29 November 1923), [in:] *O Niepodległą i granice...*, op. cit., p. 196. In his report the already mentioned minister of interior wrote also about anti-



expressed their anti-government views in the parliament, which destabilised the work of this organ³⁹.

The Polish state monitored the activity of leftist, subversive groups which recruited also Jews. In the 30's of the 20th c. a clear increase in communist influences among Jewish masses was observed, it found fertile soil because of the increasingly popular social trend among the members of this minority. Jews were members of both the Communist Party of Poland, the Young Communist League of Poland and the International Organisation for Aid to Revolutionaries⁴⁰. The participation of Jews in the latter organisation was at the level of 88% in agricultural areas and 92% in the industrial ones⁴¹. It can be estimated that it was an important source from which the communist ideology so harmful for Polish security could spread. The membership of large Jewish groups in the said organisations must have been critically assessed by the Polish authorities.

After the May Coup and the subsequent parliamentary elections in 1928 and 1930 a new trend appeared among Jewish political factions led by Bund, they started to depart from the ideas of assimilation with the Polish society⁴². Bund's left wing gained advantage over the right and centre factions and already during their convention in 1919 it set the ideological tone for the whole political faction in the years that follo-

Polish, aggressive Jewish policy which was observed already in the Jewish intervention when the Treaty of Versailles was concluded. This intervention was related to extending the rights of minorities in the II RP, and the same policy was continued later in numerous appeals to the League of Nations. As it was reported by the said minister: "Jewish actions largely contributed to the exacerbation of the ethnic relations between the government and the society". Ibidem, p. 207.

³⁹ The Political Committee of the Council of Ministers was also afraid that Jews might use their connections with foreign Zionist centres to lobby for a pact between West European states and Germany. Comp. Protocol of 69th meeting of Political Committee of the Council of Ministers (7 February 1924), [in:] A. Chojnowski, *Mniejszości narodowe...*, op. cit., p. 613.

⁴⁰ Hence, it is difficult to agree with J. Tomaszewski who claims that "in reality not many Jews were members of the communist party". J. Tomaszewski, *Ojczyzna...*, op. cit., p. 169. This statement is too general and does not show the real influence of Jews on pursuing the interests of the Communist Party of Poland, especially in particular regions of the II RP. For instance, in 1934 in the Częstochowa County about 30% of the Communist party of Poland was Jewish. In Kielce region their participation in the structures of this party exceeded even 51%, and in Radom region it was slightly above 19%. Comp. J. Ławnik, *Komunistyczna Partia Polski w woj. kieleckim 1918-1938. Liczebność, baza społeczna i zasięg wpływów*, Wydawnictwo Szumacher, Kielce 1994, p. 173. Additionally, Jews actively participated in the structures of the Communist Party of Western Belarus in north-east Poland whose slogans denied the idea of territorial and administrative integrity of the II RP, thus they posed a threat to the national security. The participation of Jews in the structures of this organisation was estimated at the level of 10-12% for particular north-east voivodehips. Comp. J. Kowalski, *Komunistyczna Partia Polski 1935-1938. Studium historyczne*, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1975, p. 90.

⁴¹ It is hard to disagree with one of the theses appearing in the latest primary sources, according to which "Jews played a dominant role in the communist movement in Poland in the interwar period". H. Cimek, *Żydzi w ruchu komunistycznym w Polsce w latach 1918-1937*, "Polityka i Społeczeństwo" 2012, No. 9, p. 27.

⁴² Assimilation slogans were popular at that time practically only in the Jewish intelligentsia which, however, was not a numerically strong force in the whole structure of the described minority in the II RP. Comp. J. Żarnowski, *Społeczeństwo Drugiej...*, op. cit., p. 393.



wed. In 1922 the Jewish Communist Labour Bund, the so called Kombund, was developed in Poland, it strengthened the impact of the communist fraction in Bund in the Jewish minority, hence posing a threat to the internal security of the II RP⁴³.

In the primary sources one can find even the information that allegedly from 1933 Bund conducted secret negotiations with communists in Poland supported by the soviets, which were to lead to the creation of a common anti-Polish ideological-social front in the II RP⁴⁴. The radicalisation of Jewish attitudes supported by the soviet Union in terms of propaganda, resulted in the accommodation anti-Polish ideas also in the youth branch of Bund, i.e. Tsukunft (Social-Democratic Youth Organisation – Future⁴⁵. The said radicalisation was also partly caused by the Polish society which organized attacks on Jewish students at Polish universities requesting stronger restrictions in the area of public higher education⁴⁶. It has to be estimated that the said conditions undoubtedly resulted in increased potential threat to the stabilisation of internal security – including also social security – in the II RP and required the counteroffensive of the Polish authorities.

4. SEPARATENESS OF THE SILESIA IN THE CONTEXT OF STRENGTHENING THE INTERNAL SECURITY OF THE II RP

The plebiscite conducted in Upper Silesia in March 1921 showed that nearly 60% of the inhabitants of this region supported joining Germany. As a result of the implementation of plebiscite decisions and the division of Upper Silesia between Poland and Germany, the major part of industry and capital was left in German hands, which clearly hampered the economic development of the II RP and also polarised sentiments in this region leading to pro-Polish and pro-German options. The very Silesian Voivodeship gained wide autonomy with its own Silesian Parliament, and people living in this area started to use the term “Silesian nationality” when referring to themselves to emphasise their separate identity with regard to the assimilation with Poland and simultaneously with Germany. As a result the term “Silesians” was coined very quickly to emphasise that they are a special group requesting autonomy from Poland and Germany, civic rights and liberties⁴⁷.

⁴³ Kombund was relatively quickly absorbed by the Communist Party of Poland structures. Comp. J. Holzer, *Dwa stulecia Polski i Europy. Teksty pisane w różnych porach wieku*, Wydawnictwo PTPN, Poznań 2004, p. 499.

⁴⁴ J. Policha, *Aktywność polityczna mniejszości żydowskiej w II Rzeczypospolitej*, p. 7, [online] [access: 2.12.2015] Available on the Internet: <http://zs1hrubieszow.ehost.pl/publknaucz/partiezydowskie.pdf>

⁴⁵ H. Cimek, *Żydzi...*, op. cit., p. 31-33.

⁴⁶ For more information on the subject, including the case of the University of Warsaw, see J. Tomaszewski, *Dokumenty o zaburzeniach antysemickich na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim*, “Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego” 1997, No. 2, p. 79-85.

⁴⁷ A. Kupczyk, *Z badań...*, op. cit., p. 161 and 167. It is essential that numerous Silesians lived in various counties of the Silesian Voivodeship, which as a result of plebiscite decisions was divided between political-administrative and social-cultural Polish and German influences. This did not in the least facilitate the complex situation of this special minority which had to face both Polish and German attempts to assimilate them in the conditions of shaping the national idea in the interwar period. However, the representatives of this minority were closer to Germans than Polish in numerous aspects.



It should be mentioned that the problem of Silesians as a minority group certainly did not match the rhetoric of the Polish authorities which wanted to implement the Polonization of the part of Upper Silesia left in Poland after the plebiscite so as to prevent the rebirth of German revisionism in this part of the country. The political agitation accompanying the plebiscite revealed some essential differences in the worldview separating social masses living in Upper Silesia and the newly arrived officials encouraging the inhabitants to join Poland⁴⁸.

The Silesian population size changed in the interwar period, however, it did not exceed 1.5 million people. It is characteristic that in 1925 the number of Upper Silesia inhabitants who declared that Polish was their native language was over 151 thousand and the number of people claiming that German was their native language exceeded 810 thousand, while in 1933 the numbers were 91 thousand for Polish speaking people and nearly one million one hundred thousand for German speaking inhabitants. It is worth emphasising that the percentage of people speaking only German grew from over 59% in 1925 to 74.5% eight years later⁴⁹. The situation in Katowice county is especially interesting in this respect. In so far as in rural counties the number of Poles was about 150 thousand and while the number of Germans was over 65 thousand, in urban counties the number of Poles hardly exceeded 6 thousand, while the number of Germans was nearly 37 thousand⁵⁰. What is more, when Hitler came to power in the Third Reich the policy of "giving Silesia a German expression" became popular⁵¹. It must have additionally intensified difficulties in the Polonization of Upper Silesia, and hence, increased tensions in this region which resulted in the threat of the destabilisation of the re-established Polish state security.

German propaganda fought fiercely for ethnic Silesians after 1918 and these efforts were continued also after the division of this region following the plebiscite. In the preserved archival materials it is possible to find an interesting expression of German propaganda among disabled war veterans in Upper Silesia. The Germans wanted to recruit them to newly created, numerous "Heimatstreue Oberschlesier" organisations whose members participated in propaganda talks emphasising the superiority of joining Germany versus Poland. According to Polish sources the number of people susceptible to German propaganda was about 100 thousand of disabled war veterans

This situation was influenced by fuelling national antagonisms in the II RP by German propaganda which used the fact that numerous Silesians were people of German descent, who arrived at the Polish land over centuries and after 1918 and fell into the influence zone of the II RP.

⁴⁸ What is more, no real basis for social communication was developed between the parties, and the primary sources state that: "The situation was becoming even worse due to the propaganda errors of the Polish class of possessors, which made an impression that Poland accepted historical forms of social stratification, while the inhabitants of Upper Silesia expected that they would be overthrown". E. Kopeć, *My i oni na polskim Śląsku (1918-1939)*, Śląsk, Katowice 1986, p. 33.

⁴⁹ M. Szmeja, *Czy zmiana identyfikacji? Ślązacy we współczesnym społeczeństwie polskim*, "Studia Mi-gracyjne - Przegląd Polonijny" 2013, No. 39, p. 180.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, p. 179.

⁵¹ It was supposed to encompass increased pro-German propaganda and agitation efforts among Silesians and propagation of anti-Polish slogans in regional press. Ibidem, p. 180.



and over 32 thousand Silesian widows whose husbands died during World War I⁵². The activity of "Heimatstreue Oberschlesier" weakened the feeling of belonging to the Polish state among Silesians and so it hampered ethnic integration processes in the II RP.

The clash of Polish, German and Czech cultures in Upper Silesia contributed to the development of a special ethnic awareness of the Silesians, typical of cultural cross-border regions. The regional identity of this minority group additionally emphasised the problem of multiculturalism in the II RP, because the Silesians opposed both forced Polonization and the attempts to subordinate them to Germany⁵³.

Moreover, one should remember that Upper Silesia was not only the goal of propaganda rivalry between Warsaw and Berlin, but also the fights of various ideological and political as well as social orientations, which additionally hampered stabilisation in the spirit of internal security and Polonization in this region. Although many Silesians felt ties with Poland, they were convinced that there was "a special value in their culture being a particular variation of the Polish national culture"⁵⁴. It can be said that in such conditions granting autonomy to the Silesian Voivodeship was the only possibility provided that Poland wanted to maintain territorial integrity and superiority over this important part of the country inhabited by the Silesian community. On the eve of the outbreak of World War II, a practical example of the threat to the security of the II RP was a German initiative to organise special volunteer formations, recruiting also Silesians, on the future Silesian front⁵⁵.

5. THE TATAR MINORITY AND THE SAFETY OF POLAND IN THE YEARS 1918-1939

On the basis of the conducted query, it is possible to state that the analysis of the influence of the Tatar minority on the ethnic and security policy of the II RP is definitely not a popular subject in primary sources. Thus the explanation of and how the activity of Tatars determined the internal security state in the Polish state becomes even more significant. In neither of the National Population Censuses in the interwar period were Tatars distinguished, they were included in a collective category called "Other", thus, in principle, it is difficult to present the actual number of people in this minority in the period of 1918-1939 which would not lead to any doubts. The number of Tatars was estimated to be about 5 thousand and most certainly this number oscillates aro-

⁵² *List w sprawie akcji plebiscytowej na Górnym Śląsku z dnia 11 sierpnia 1920 roku*, Archives of the Józef Piłsudski Institute of America, file: 701/1/58 (Minister for military Affairs' Study decrees, records, reports, protocols).

⁵³ Hence, Upper Silesia was a special case in the history of the II RP, it tipped the balance of the Polish internal security in the south of Poland. Comp. M. Bieda, *Naród czy polityczna gra? Kształtowanie się tożsamości regionalnej na przykładzie Górnego Śląska*, I Konferencja Koła Naukowego Socjologów - Regiony pogranicza w perspektywie socjologicznej of 26 October 2002, [online] [access: 2.12.2015] Available on the Internet: http://www.socjologia.ath.bielsko.pl/prace/mbieda_slask.pdf.

⁵⁴ M. Błaszczak-Waławik, W. Błasiak, T. Nawrocki, *Górny Śląsk. Szczególny przypadek kulturowy*, Uniwersytet Warszawski-Wydawnictwo Naukowe Jan Szumacher, Warszawa-Kielce 1990, p. 21.

⁵⁵ M. Cygański, *Mniejszość niemiecka w Polsce centralnej w latach 1919-1939*, Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, Łódź 1962, p. 111.



und the actual composition of population in the II RP⁵⁶. It is also known that Tatars lived nearly only in the Vilnius, Nowogród and Białystok Voivodeships, they were mainly the descendants of the I RP period⁵⁷.

When it comes to the Tatar question, the Polish authorities intended to conduct quick and effective Polonization, similarly as in the case of Armenians and Crimean Karaites. The subversive potential of these three ethnic groups was considered low in comparison with, for example, anti-Polish activity initiated in the circles of the Ukrainian, Belarusian and Russian minorities circles in the Eastern Borderlands in the II RP. As a result, Tatars could count on in principle favourable attitude of the authorities and even financial and organisational support for education in the ethnic-cultural spirit. Intelligentsia developed in the said minority and its efforts contributed to the rebirth of religious and cultural life of these people. Muslim parishes were also reactivated, the person who had a great influence on this was Lviv Professor Stefan Bazarewski. Such activities, however, were closely observed by the Polish authorities⁵⁸.

The threat of social destabilisation caused by the Muslim environment in the II RP can be considered insignificant and very limited territorially. The actual population potential of the Tatar minority was too small to form any basis for a real threat for the stabilisation of north-east voivodeships. On the other hand, the fact that Tatars focused nearly only on the organisation of their religious and cultural life – consciously resigning from political activity, which was different from, for example, the Ukrainian or Belarusian minority at least from the 20's of the 29th c. – was the reason why Polish authorities were inclined to support their freedom of assembly and organisation of minority education movement rather than to restrict such activities⁵⁹.

The II RP authority kept things in perspective in their attitudes to the strenuous efforts made to maintain autonomy from Polish people in the three above mentioned north-west voivodeships at the very beginning of the 20's of the 20th c. At that time the II RP did not have any precisely identified postulates of its ethnic policy, and particular minorities wanted to take advantage of this using social unrest to strengthen the legitimacy of their own cultural and educational separateness, and in the case of many other ethnic minorities also political or even administrative. The adoption of the assimilation and Polonization direction made the Culture and Education Association of Tatars in RP (ZKOTRP), established in 1925, subordinate to the idea of assimilation,

⁵⁶ U. Wróblewska, *Polityka oświatowa państwa polskiego wobec mniejszości narodowych, grup etnicznych i wyznaniowych zamieszkujących Kresy Wschodnie w II RP*, "Nauka" 2011, No. 2, p. 109.

⁵⁷ J. Tomaszewski, *Ojczyzna...*, op. cit., p. 169.

⁵⁸ K. Jasiewicz, *Europa nie prowincjonalna. Przemiany na ziemiach wschodnich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej (Białoruś, Litwa, Łotwa, Ukraina, wschodnie pogranicze III Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej) w latach 1772-1999*, Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Warszawa 1999, p. 546.

⁵⁹ One would think that because of this the II RP authorities gave their consent to establish the Muslim Religious Association in 1925 in the territory of Poland. See H. Chałupczak, T. Browarek, *Mniejszości...*, op. cit., p. 232.



especially in terms of state education, it was done for the price of the defence of cultural, ethnic and first and foremost religious independence⁶⁰.

It has to be mentioned that the Tatar group identity in Poland was preserved during the interwar period nearly only thanks to the fact that Tatars adhered to their Muslim faith, and only to a limited degree thanks to education since education in Tatar schools was conducted in Polish although it encompassed to a large extent also Qur'anic studies⁶¹. Due to this for the Tatar minority in the II RP it was very important to maintain the status of religious freedom for the price of linguistic assimilation, especially in the state education implemented after the May Coup. As a result, without any opposition the said community accepted the postulate of loyalty to the Polish state in return for the guarantee of unrestricted cultural development in which, in the case of Tatars, religion was the most important element⁶².

The primary sources indicate three main reasons why Tatars so easily accepted the assimilation policy propagated in Poland in the years 1918-1939, which could be easily observed especially after 1926. The first reason was the sufficient degree of assimilation with the Polish society, which was the consequence of the loss of the ability to communicate in their native Tatar language already in the 16th c. in Poland. Another reason for this situation was the clearly loyal attitude to the Polish authorities resulting from the awareness that only in an independent and democratic state it would be possible for them preserve their cultural separateness based on Islamic faith. Finally, Tatars supported the Polish assimilation policy in north-east voivodehips without any hesitation because their population was very small in comparison with other minorities and consequently practically there were no other chances to develop sufficiently strongly manifested community-creative needs⁶³.

The attitude of the Polish state to the Tatar activity was characterised far-reaching pragmatism. There were attempts to demonstrate exemplary relations with the Muslim minority for the purpose of maintaining trade and diplomatic contacts with the Middle East. What is more the cultural and religious activity of the Tatar minority was controlled by the state and regional police because the organisation of some events required the consent of the police chief and Vilnius Voivode⁶⁴. On the other hand the support for the Tatar minority was used by the Polish authorities as an additional tool to implement the idea of Prometheism expressed in the support for the independence

⁶⁰ W. Janicki, *Tatarzy w Polsce - naród, grupa etniczna czy ludzie pogranicza?*, "Czasopismo Geograficzne" 2000, vol. 71, Brochure 2, p. 175-176.

⁶¹ Ibidem, p. 178.

⁶² A. Miśkiewicz, *Tatarzy polscy, 1918-1939. Życie społeczno-kulturalne i religijne*, PIW, Warszawa 2006, p. 159.

⁶³ U. Wróblewska, *Źródła wychowania państwowego Tatarów polskich w latach 1918-1939*, [in:] *Etniczność i obywatelskość w Nowej Europie. Konteksty edukacji międzykulturowej*, ed. D. Misiejuk, J. Nikitorowicz, M. Sobecki, Trans Humana, Białystok 2007, p. 137.

⁶⁴ Ibidem, p. 138.



of nations earlier dependent on the Soviets⁶⁵. This why one can conclude that the actions of Tatars did not generate any serious threats from the perspective of the security of the II RP and the Polish security policy in the said period.

SUMMARY

To sum up the material presented in this article, it should be stated that in the years 1918-1939 the problem of multi-culturalism, taking into account the examples of the Belarusian, Lithuanian, Jewish and Silesian minorities, posed a direct threat to the effectiveness of the security policy of the II RP. On the other hand the functioning of the Tatar minority was not dangerous for the security of the Polish state. The activity of the Belarusian, Lithuanian, Jewish and Silesian minorities became in turn the subject of various attempts made to destabilize the already tense situation in the multi-cultural Poland of the interwar period.

The conclusion drawn on the basis of the conducted analysis is also an indication that there were intensive attempts, made by the services of foreign states led by Germany and the Soviet Union, to use the four mentioned minority groups to destabilize social security in the re-established Polish state. Thus, the vulnerability of Belarusians and Jews to the Soviet agitation and propaganda in the years 1918-1939 can be estimated as complementary with the ethnic policy of Germany in Upper Silesia and support for the Lithuanian minority offered by Lithuania.

It can be state that the assimilation policy of Poland in the described period did not bring the expected results in the case of the minorities referred to in this article. The lack of danger form the Tatar activity was an assimilation achievement whose development started much earlier than after 1918. In the case of Belarusians, Lithuanians, Jews and Silesians, Polish assimilation policy encountered a number of difficulties resulting in an increase in internal threats to the security of the state in the described period.

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⁶⁵ For instance, the preserved archival materials prove that the Polish military authorities monitored the activity of the Crimean Tatars struggling with intensified Soviet repressions in the years 1918-1939. See Maj. K. Świtalski, *Referat dotyczący ludności tatarskiej zamieszkałej na Krymie z dnia 3 grudnia 1920 roku*, Archives of the Józef Piłsudski Institute of America, file: 701/2/32 (November-December 1920); *Przyczynek do historii ruchu tatarskiego na Krymie (1920)*, Archives of the Józef Piłsudski Institute of America, file: 701/2/21 (January-February 1920). The evidence of the implementation of the idea of Prometheism supported by Tatars in Poland was for example recruiting many officers from this minority after 1926. See A. Kołodziejczyk, *Józef Piłsudski a polscy Tatarzy (1997)*, Archives of the Józef Piłsudski Institute of America, file: 709/1/16 (Articles, papers, studies and talks related to Józef Piłsudski).



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