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Education of the German minority in Legnica in the period between 1951 and 1963 as an element of ethnic policy in “People’s Republic of Poland”

SUMMARY

The ethnic policy in the period of the so-called “People’s Republic of Poland”, i.e. from 1944 to 1989, was characterised by the lack of a uniform policy of conduct towards ethnic minorities. Despite the fact that its main assumption was to implement the vision of a nationally homogeneous country, at particular moments, however, ethnic fragmentation of the society was accepted. As a consequence, education of ethnic minorities, being the imminent part of the aforementioned policy, was also undergoing crucial fluctuations, comprising, among others, actions of ideological, organisational and programmatic character.

The primary aim of this paper is to characterise the education of the German minority in Legnica, in the context of the country’s policy of ethnicity in force at that time, including its educational policy.

Key words: ethnic policy, German minority, Polish People’s Republic, national minority education, Legnica

Introduction

The main aim of writing the present article is an attempt to reveal the activity of German education in Legnica against the background of the politics of ethnicity realized by the Polish State in the years 1944–1989, i.e. in the period of the so-called “People’s Poland” (later referred to as People’s Poland). Focusing the research problem on the appointed localisation is not accidental, because Lower Silesia, where the aforementioned town is situated, until the second half of the 50’s in the 20th century, was resided by the most numerous German social group in Poland and Legnica included a significant concentration of this minority¹.

¹ B. Ociepka, *Niemcy na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1970*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 1992, s. 25, 42, 46.

Additionally, the Legnica school, alongside with an analogous institution in Wrocław, was one of the two centres functioning for the longest period of time with the German language of instruction in People's Poland.

In the first part of the work, the concept of politics of ethnicity was explained, indicating the chosen aims, models and their connotations with other scientific categories. Then the ethnic structure of the country was presented after World War II and activities were characterised undertaken by the government authorities towards national minorities, including the ones related to the realization of educational policy. In the third fragment, the German social group after 1945 was presented, and in the fourth, education of the minorities in Legnica.

Among a wide range of research instruments and methods, the following ones, among others, were used: historical, comparative, statistical and literary critique. A research hypothesis was formulated according to which in realized by the state idea of uni-national society, at times liberalization of above-mentioned stand and recognition of society ethnic fragmentation can be noticed. Taking into consideration abovementioned accuracy, an attempt was made to formulate aims of pursued ethnic policy and to relate its particular stages to selected explanatory models.

Politics of ethnicity– introductory assumptions

The category of “politics of ethnicity” often functions in the literature of the subject alongside with such notions as: “nationality policy”, “policy towards national and ethnic minorities” and “minority policy”. Polish researchers assume the position of synonymy of the above definitions, indicating almost identical meaning of the concepts “nationality” and “ethnic” policy. They point to, however, slight differences between them, according to which the first specifies usually the historical aspect of the issue and the second – the contemporary one. Additionally, they believe that the research area of the “nationality policy” comprises a wider scope of state activity, including three elements: policy towards the titular nation (i.e. aimed at forming the proclamation of an own state, in which the rules are constituted by the majority), national and ethnic minorities as well as dispersions. The “ethnic policy” is characterized by a narrower conceptualization, focusing on detailed state policy towards national and ethnic minorities². For the needs of the present article, it was assumed, after Henryk Chałupczak³, that the term “ethnic policy” will indicate “the set of activities accepted and realized by the state and its organs for the sake of solving the problems related to the existence of national minorities on its territory”. These activities, according to Tomasz Browarek⁴, will be conditioned by six determinants, i.e. constitutional – institutional (including, among others: the state political system and the system of institutions responsible for the realization of its ethnic policy); legal (e.g. the system of internal law designating the status of national minorities); historical – social (among others, the historical heritage determining per-

² R. Zenderowski, H. Chałupczak, W. Baluk, *Polityka etniczna: próba teoretycznej konceptualizacji* [w:] red. R. Zenderowski, H. Chałupczak, W. Baluk, *Polityka etniczna współczesnych państw Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2015, s. 26.

³ H. Chałupczak, *Problemy metodologiczne badania polityki etnicznej państw Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* [w:] red. H. Chałupczak, M. Pietraś, E. Pogorzała, *Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia w procesie transformacji i integracji. Wymiar społeczny*, Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa im. Szymona Szymonowicza w Zamościu, Wydawnictwo Oficyna Simonidis, Zamość 2013, s. 403–406.

⁴ T. Browarek, *Determinanty polityki etnicznej państwa polskiego po 1989 roku*, „Studia Śląskie” 2015, LXXVII, s. 15–35

ception of minority issues), ethnodemographic and geographic (including the state ethnic structure and territorial distribution of minorities); ideological and political (e.g. position of the ethnic issue in the political thought of the ruling political party) and economic (among others, the ways of financing minorities by the state).

Policy defined in this way by Radosław Zenderowski i Jakub Pieńkowski⁵, may be characterized by three varied goals:

“a) acceptance of multiethnicity and multicultural represented by the political organization of the state and in specific policies;

b) excluding minorities [...] from the mainstream social, political and economic life, and preventing their integration with the titular nation;

c) striving for “ethnic absoluteness” (from assimilation to physical extermination and exile)”.

Depending on the chosen strategy, three different (although often infiltrating) models can be distinguished of the realized ethnic policy: pluralistic, in which the country, among others, recognizes and supports financially the activity of the minority, allowing autonomy and bilingualism of the regions dominated by them; integrative – the state acknowledges individual equality of citizens emphasizing ethnic variety of the society, in which, however, it does not support and exclude additional preferences for the minority and segregation – based on the assumption of ethnic inequality, in which not only creation of minority institutions is forbidden but also the civil rights of its members are limited⁶.

National minorities in People’s Poland

General census dated 14th February 1946, presented the following data regarding the society national structure:

Total	The Poles	People towards whom verification or rehabilitation action was being conducted	The Germans	The others
23 929 757	20 520 178	417 431	2 288 300	399 526

Source: Own study based on S. Szulc⁷.

Majority of the Germans (2036439 people) lived in “Recovered Territories” (i.e. lands remained until 1945 within the boundaries of the Third Reich), where also almost half (188 002) of people towards whom verification or rehabilitation action was being conducted⁸. Mentioned

⁵ R. Zenderowski, J. Pieńkowski, *Kwestie narodowościowe w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej*. Tom 1. *Zagadnienia teoretyczne*, Instytut Politologii UKSW, Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, Warszawa 2014, s. 203.

⁶ T. Browarek, *Uwarunkowania polityki etnicznej państwa polskiego po 1989 roku*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2018, s. 38–40.

⁷ S. Szulc, *Powszechny sumaryczny spis ludności z 14 II 1946 r.*, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Warszawa 1947, s. XVI.

⁸ Ibidem.

verification consisted in separating indigenous population from former Reich citizens, also known as autochthonous, and recognized them as ethnic Polish. Presence of this group on lands included within new country borders was to legitimize Polishness of “Recovered Territories”⁹.

Credibility of the first, which also turned out to be the last General Census in the history of People’s Poland, including the question concerning nationality of the interviewees raises crucial doubts, especially in the context of population migration progressing at the same time. In the opinion of Grzegorz Janusz¹⁰, the percentage of people with non-Polish ethnic origin could have been much higher, reaching even up to 1.5 million people (not counting the Germans being evicted successively). In the next years information about the number of national minorities was based exclusively on estimates. For instance, in 1960, the Ministry of the Interior (later referred to as MSW) denoted the presence in Polish society of 459 700 minority representatives (including around three thousand Germans), but in the opinion of Leszek Olejnik¹¹, these were low rates, because population of different than Polish nationality was at that time, between 486 000 and 521 000 people. The later findings, dated at the turn of the eighties and nineties of the 20th century, show that between around 900 000 and one million people of different ethnic origin live in Poland¹², but indicating precise data became possible only thanks to the results of the National Census of Population and Flats carried out in 2002, specifying the participation of non-Polish nationality citizens as 471 500 people¹³.

Throughout the whole period of People’s Poland, the real, however not exposed, institution designating the directions of the politics of ethnicity was the Polish Workers’ Party which was formed in 1942 (further referred to as PPR), transformed in 1948 into Polish United Workers’ Party (further referred to as PZPR). The following institutions implementing the party’s assumptions were, among others: Nationality Department of the Ministry of Public Administration (further called MAP); Department of Religion MAP; Ministry of Public Security; MSW, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the State Repatriate Office¹⁴. Similarly, in the case of creating the education policy towards the national minorities which was a complementary part of the ethnic policy, and understood by Ewa Pogorzała¹⁵ as “the activity of state authorities regulating the position of these groups in education by normative acts and constituting decisions of the authorized authorities”, a dominating influence of PPR/PZPR can be noticed, as well as (although to a lesser degree) of the Parliament and State Council. While the executive function was performed by, among oth-

⁹ T. Browarek, *Ludność niemiecka w polityce państwa polskiego w latach 1945–1989*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 1015, s. 60.

¹⁰ G. Janusz, *Usytuowanie mniejszości narodowych w społeczeństwie i polityce państwa polskiego po 1945 r.* [w:] red. J. Jachymek, *Mniejszości narodowe w polskiej myśli politycznej XX wieku*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 1992, s. 229–230.

¹¹ L. Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa Polski w latach 1944–1960*, Wydawnictwo UŁ, Łódź 2003, s. 63–64.

¹² S. Łodziński, *Polityka państwa polskiego wobec mniejszości narodowych w latach 1989–1993 (Na tle rozwiązań prawnych obowiązujących w państwach europejskich i regulacji przygotowywanych w ramach prac Rady Europy)*, Raport Nr 22, Kancelaria Sejmu Biuro Studiów i Ekspertyz, Warszawa 1994, s. 1.

¹³ G. Gudaszewski, *Struktura narodowo-etniczna, językowa i wyznaniowa ludności Polski. Narodowy Spis Powszechny Ludności i Mieszkań 2011*, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Warszawa 2015, s. 39.

¹⁴ L. Olejnik, op. cit, s. 17–23.

¹⁵ E. Pogorzała, *Mniejszości narodowe i etniczne w polityce oświatowej państwa polskiego w latach 1944–1966*, Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa w Zamościu, Zamość 2009, s. 9.

ers: the Council of Ministers, Planning Committee at the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Education, as well as field (local) departments of education administration, e.g. boards of education in school districts and faculties of education at national council presidencies¹⁶.

The politics of ethnicity since the beginning of People's Poland has constituted a set of policies towards particular minorities, performed with the use of distinct instruments and means. For instance, according to the guidelines of the Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation dated 22nd July 1944, equality of all citizens was postulated irrespectively of their nationality (which was to be confirmed by, for example, opening of schools for Belarusian and Ukrainian minorities which were soon closed), but at the same time, they were aiming at realizing the idea of mono-national state¹⁷. The above assumption was fulfilled in the years 1945–1947, among others, by the action of compulsory displacements of the German population – mainly to the Soviet and British occupation zone – and expatriation of the Ukrainian community, initially to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (further referred to as ZSRR), and then to the north and west territory of Poland, within the framework of the “the Vistula” Action. Simultaneously, no repressive activity was applied towards the remaining minorities, and some of them (especially the Jews, and, to a lesser degree, the Czechs and Slovaks) enjoyed relative autonomy. In the period between 1948–1955, along with the convergence of the Polish political system with the Russian one and realizing the slogan of “proletarian internationalism”, the implementation of the idea of state homogeneity was abandoned. Minorities gained at that time, the possibility of nurturing their own culture, revitalizing education, limited earlier, and participating in the social – political life. A change in the attitude of the authorities to some nationalities also occurred, which was exemplified by relaxation of the course in relation to the Germans, with simultaneous introduction of restrictions towards the Jews. However, the turn most significant in consequences in the politics of ethnicity in operation until then was related to the political situation prevailing in ZSRR (manifesting itself, among others, in limiting repressions after the death of Joseph Stalin) and it was fully observable in October 1956, during the so-called, “relaxation”, i.e. limited liberalization of the Polish political system. This is when the minority groups achieved the possibility of forming their own cultural – social societies, having newspapers in their mother tongue, and also participating in local administration and party structures¹⁸. *Status quo* turned out to be short lasting and already since the sixties, along with the undergoing process of levelling the reforms introduced previously, the licensed autonomy of minorities was gradually being restricted, exploiting for this purpose the societies founded several years earlier, which were used from that time to indoctrinate the non-Polish population, and then to their assimilation based on decisions from above. A significant symbol of the turn taken in the activities of the group in power, was the anti-Semitic campaign in the years 1967–1968 (initiated by severing the diplomatic relations between the Polish People's Republic, later referred to as PRL, and Israel under pressure of ZSRR), which resulted in mass emigration of the Jews. At the same time there was a return to the concept of a mono-national state, the idea determining policy in terms of minorities until the end of the eighties¹⁹.

¹⁶ B. Techmańska, *Szkolnictwo mniejszości narodowych na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1989*, Wydawnictwo LTW, Łomianki 2019, s. 79–80.

¹⁷ L. Olejnik, op. cit, s. 17–29.

¹⁸ S. Łodziński, *Polityka wobec mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych w Polsce w latach 1945–2008* [w:] red., S. Dudra, B. Nitschke, *Mniejszości narodowe i etniczne w Polsce po II wojnie światowej. Wybrane elementy polityki państwa*, NOMOS, Kraków 2010, s. 17–20.

¹⁹ E. Mironowicz, *Polityka narodowościowa PRL*, Białoruskie Towarzystwo Historyczne, Białystok 2000, s. 261–266.

The characteristics of the politics of ethnicity of the Polish People's Republic presented above, allows for the observation that in the years 1944–1989 it did not constitute a permanent value (invariable), but it underwent fluctuation determined by the internal and external situation of the country. Also in the case of education policy, lack of a uniform strategy can be observed. For instance, the schools for Belarusians and the Ukrainians created in the years 1944–1945, mentioned earlier, were soon closed down. Together with the withdrawal of the assumption of ethnic homogeneity of the society, at the turn of the forties and the fifties, state education for national minorities was initiated to be organized (at the primary and secondary levels), and then teacher training centres were started. The fullest engagement of the authorities in the education of the aforementioned groups is dated to the period of political “thaw” in 1956, when their education was substantially financed by the state. The next decade brought about another change of conduct strategy towards non-Polish national groups and it was characterized, among others, by a reduction of interest in their education and intensification of nationalist accents in rhetoric and works of PZPR. There was a return to realization of the thesis of nationally uniform character of the state and its exemplification was the acceptance of the resolution of Central Committee (later referred to as KC) PZPR in 1976 “about the moral – political unity of the Polish nation”. In effect until the end of the eighties, the importance of the minorities and the education owned by them, became a marginal problem in the state politics²⁰.

German population after World War II

According to the estimated data there were between 3.5 and 4.5 million Germans within Poland's borders in 1945²¹. They were in extremely difficult situation during first months after the end of the war, since they found themselves in lower position in social ranking, i.e. as they were deprived of citizen rights, including right to private property (for instance flats and houses), as well as enforcing ban on participating in all sorts of public events (also going to the cinemas and theatres, even restaurants). Furthermore, many Germans were taken into camps and forced to work, at first in places created by Soviet Army, then subordinated to Polish administration²². German children experienced change in hitherto situation especially painfully, often suffering from hunger, undergoing chicaneries from milieu. Polish settlers blamed the children for crime and sufferance caused to Polish people by the Germans during the war. Orphans were in definitely the worst position, often left in their fate or placed in orphanages where they were waiting for deportation to Germany²³.

By virtue of the Big Three conference findings in Potsdam (in July 1945) German popu-

²⁰ B. Techmańska, *Szkolnictwo mniejszości narodowych na Dolnym Śląsku...*, s. 57–67.

²¹ P. Madajczyk, *Niemcy polscy 1944–1989*, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2001, s. 18.

²² S. Jankowiak, *Wysiedlenie i emigracja ludności niemieckiej w polityce władz polskich w latach 1945–1970*, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni Przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Warszawa 2005, s. 35–41.

²³ B. Halicka, *The everyday life of children in Polish-German Borderlands during the early postwar period* [in:] ed. M. Venken, *Borderland Studies Meets Child Studies*, Peter Lang Edition, Frankfurt AM Mein 2017, s. 135–136.

lation remaining within the borders of Poland was to be evicted. It was established then, that the transports will be carried out in an organised and humanitarian manner, contrary to the activities undertaken since June 1945 by the Polish army, which aimed at “ethnic cleansing” of the border belt from the “undesirable element”. Mass deportations started since autumn 1945, reaching the widest range in 1946, when over 1.6 million people were expatriated. In the next years, due to the deficit of workers indispensable for proper functioning of the state economy, the number of evicted was significantly reduced – to around 500 000 in 1947 and around 100 000 between 1948 and 1949. In 1950 in Poland remained around 200 000 “acclaimed” Germans, i.e. people of unquestionably German national affiliation, as well as close to 1.1 million native inhabitants, who as a result of the conducted verification action, received a confirmation of the Polish nationality and Polish citizenship (they inhabited, first of all, Upper Silesia, Warmia and Mazury). This population in the next decades declared, however, a German nationality option and dominated among the people applying for the permission to leave Poland and depart to its western neighbor²⁴.

In the second half of the forties, the politics of ethnicity realized towards the Germans was marked by two basic aims: their total removal from Poland and maximum exploitation, both as a qualified work force, as well as unqualified farm workers. Not working people were subjected to deportation first, as so-called, “burdensome element” (including war refugees from other areas), clergy and teachers. People active professionally, especially specialists indispensable for the industry, were excluded from the transports, by providing them appropriate regulating certificates²⁵. The main change in the situation of the German population occurred in the beginning of the fifties and it was related to the following events: formation of the German Democratic Republic (further referred to NRD) in 1949, signing of the Zgorzelec treaty in 1950 about establishment of the Polish – German border and passing the Constitution of Polish People’s Republic on the 22nd July 1952. The document gave all the residents civil rights irrespectively of nationality, thanks to which the process of normalization and stabilisation of the situation of Germans in Poland became possible. Activities were then undertaken related, among others, to equalization of the living situation of this population and the Polish one, establishing conditions for its participation in the social – political life (e.g. through membership in PZPR and trade unions), and also its aiming at gaining by it PRL citizenship²⁶. Then, under the power of the agreement concluded between the Polish and the German Red Cross on the 5th of December 1955, legal trips to Germany became possible, within the framework of, so called, “family bonding action” (first of all, to the German Federal Republic, further referred to as RFN). A day later, i.e. on the 6th of December KC PZPR passed a special resolution postulating full equality and creating conditions for permanent existence of the German population which was determined to remain in Poland. For the same purpose, German Social-Cultural Society was called to life in 1957, but the decision turned out to be too late, because as a result of mass emigration, a predominant majority of potentially “interesting” people

²⁴ A. Szczepański, *Wyjazdy etnicznych i autochtonicznych przedstawicieli mniejszości niemieckiej z terenu Polski po II wojnie światowej* [w:] red. M. Kulesza, *Geografia historyczna jako determinanta rozwoju nauk humanistycznych*, PWSZ im. Witelona w Legnicy, Katedra Geografii Politycznej i Studiów Regionalnych UŁ, Legnica–Łódź 2009, s. 145–150.

²⁵ T. Browarek, *Ludność niemiecka w polityce państwa polskiego...*, s. 99–116.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, 153–160

left Poland²⁷. In accordance with official figures, between 1955 and 1959, 253 733 people left Poland, out of which 209 725 people being impressed by “economic miracle” and by prospect of civic liberties chose Federal Republic of Germany as destination of migration²⁸. When the emigration action was completed in 1959 the authorities recognized that almost all the Germans left the country (in fact around three thousands of them still stayed), and consequently, the problem of minorities’ existence was considered marginal and so it remained till the end of the eighties. In turn, more and more frequent cases of declaring German nationality by representatives of the autochthon population were solved by massive departures of these groups²⁹.

The unstable situation of the German minority in the Polish People’s Republic, was also determined by the changing education policy of the state conducted towards it. Directly after the end of the war, not only organizing education for the Germans was opposed to, but also teaching of the German language was forbidden in the area of west and north lands. Nevertheless, the Germans carried out secret teaching and founded illegal schools, often covered by care of the Soviet Army. Certain liberalization of the activities of the Polish authorities with respect to the forbidden teaching was observed since 1947, which was evident in, for instance, tolerating the existence of forbidden education³⁰. A turn in the so far realized education policy happened after signing a treaty in Zgorzelec, and its exemplification were the following ordinances of the Minister of Education dated 26th July 1950 concerning opening of kindergartens and schools with teaching in the German language (supplemented with a suitable instruction dated the 3rd of August 1950) as well as dated the 20th of August 1950 related to the programme of study and the official language in high schools with tuition conducted in the German language. The first document indicated that children whose legal guardians declared the will to be educated in the mother tongue, can attend the above mentioned centres. The second mentioned that the same rules (e.g. organization and programme) are to uncton in them as in the Polish institutions. A reservation was also made that since the first grade German would be the language of instruction, however teaching Polish would be introduced from grade two and the following classes will be delivered, additionally, in it: study of the constitution, physical education and military training. From the candidates for future teachers, professional qualifications were required and good command of the Polish language, however staff recruitment was also allowed from the “progressive” workers and other employees with competence in the German language³¹. Basic didactic aim defined by Polish authorities for German speaking education was to bring up youth in “socialistic internationalism” spirit and shape representative of youth to “active conscious builders of Polish People’s Republic”³².

²⁷ T. Browarek, *Szkolnictwo dla ludności niemieckiej w polityce władz polskich w latach 1945–1989* [w:] red. G. Schiller, *Edukacja mniejszościowa w Polsce. Wczoraj, dziś i jutro*, Dom Współpracy Polsko-Niemieckiej, Gliwice–Opole 2015, s. 21–22.

²⁸ D. Matelski, *Niemcy w Polsce w XX wieku*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa–Poznań 1999, s. 238.

²⁹ T. Browarek, *Szkolnictwo dla ludności niemieckiej w polityce władz polskich...*, s. 22.

³⁰ Ibidem, s. 19.

³¹ B. Ociepka, op. cit., s. 105–106.

³² T. Browarek, *Szkolnictwo mniejszości niemieckiej w Polsce po II wojnie światowej*, „Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy” 2002, nr 3–4, s. 195.

Primary schools with the German language of instruction were opened in September 1950 in three voivodships: Wrocław, Koszalin and Szczecin. The initial number of 40 institutions in which 4264 learners started their education, was increasing quickly and two years later, 134 centres were functioning with 7760 students. Since 1950 two basic vocational schools started their activity (of the mining profile in Wałbrzych and the electro-technical one in Boguszów), and since 1952 the Secondary School in Wałbrzych and a class with German language instruction in Pedagogical High School in Świdnica (all of the institutions were carrying out their activities in Lower Silesia, in the Wrocław voivodship). Additionally, evening schools for working people were being set up (the first of them was created in 1952 in Wrocław), as well as – due to a common deficit of the didactic staff also – pedagogical and professional development courses were organized for teachers (among others, in Miedzeszyn, Falenica and Warszawa as well as in the pedagogical high school in Słupsk and Świdnica). Lack of qualified educators, replaced by workers without appropriate education, was not the only problem of German schooling in the beginning of its functioning. Between 1950 and 1952 it suffered from permanent underfunding, insufficient number of teaching aids, coursebooks (initially there were attempts to fill this gap by importing books from NRD), and even suitable buildings adapted to educational needs. In the following years, in particular since the mid fifties, the above weaknesses were gradually eliminated devoting increased financial expenses to the education of minorities³³.

Beginning of mass departures of the German population since 1956 resulted in a fall of its education, most acutely observable in the year 1957/1958. The above situation is illustrated by the fact that, as long as in September 1957, 2101 learners started education in 69 institutions, then in June 1958 only 580 pupils attended classes in 18 schools. Simultaneously, secondary schools also terminated their activity: the previously mentioned Lower Silesian institutions, as well as German classes at Pedagogical High School constituted in 1956 in Słupsk and basic vocational school in Koszalin. In the year 1958/1959 12 schools functioned with 285 learners and they were: one in Szczecin, three in the Koszalin voivodship and eight in the Wrocław voivodship. Since the year 1961/1962 only two were carrying on their activities – the one in Wrocław and in Legnica, They were closed down since the 1st September 1963 due to a too small number of pupils. In this way ended the thirteen year period of German education functioning in People's Poland³⁴.

German education in Legnica

In February 1946, 2 288 300 Germans lived in Poland, out of which 1 234 425 in Lower Silesia (among others in the following counties and townships: Wałbrzych and its county, Wrocław and its county, Jelenia Góra and its county and Kłodzko county). This population unit 1949 was subjected to compulsory evictions to the British and Soviet occupation zone. In 1950, hence already after the end of deportation, around 52 thousands people remained in the area described above, mainly professionals indispensable for functioning of the economy (they were e.g. miners from the Wałbrzych coal basin) and their families. Mass exodus of the above community occurred after 1955 and, therefore, in 1957 the number of Germans

³³ Ibidem, s. 194–199.

³⁴ Ibidem, s. 200–202.

in the Wrocław voivodship was estimated to be 16 thousands, and in 1961 – only about 3 thousand representatives. In the Legnica county there lived 25 541 Germans in 1946, and within the town borders – 12 846³⁵.

Jürgen Gretschel, born in German Liegnitz (this is the name of the town before the war) later activist of the minority, mentioned that since April 1945, i.e. since taking over by the new administration: Soviet (military) and Polish (civil), the locals could count on favour of the former. Germans inhabited at that time mainly districts and landed estates occupied by the Russians, they had a newspaper issued in the mother tongue, as well as – with the consent of the Soviet authorities, and against the Polish – they participated in services held by German clergymen. Additionally, in the companies working for the needs of the Russians, only German workers were employed, and their children were granted education in the school in Franciszkańska street since November 1946 (Lydia Kaubisch was in the function of headmaster), which was closed down soon afterwards by the Polish education institutions. In 1949 the Russian administration started two new schools: in Jaworzyńska street 60 and Sejmowa street 7. Children of the workers employed in the Opel factory attended the first one, in which there were two teachers – performing the function of the headmaster – pastor Helmut Steckel and Wolfgang Meissler. In the second, designed for the offsprings of the military personnel, housing administration, storehouses and supplies (so-called KECZ and WOJNTORK), there were the following teachers: Hedwig Hübner, Lydia Kaubisch (the headmaster) and pastor H. Steckel. In 1950 the Soviet authorities merged the two schools, establishing as the premises of the centre, the building in Sejmowa street, entrusting, at the same time, the position of the headmaster to H. Steckel³⁶.

In March 1951 the Local Education Authority in Wrocław received an order from the central authorities to take over the school in Legnica from the Russians. 155 learners attended it at that time and there were three teachers: H. Steckel, H. Hübner and a former baker – Wolfgang Meissler. Apart from educating children, there were also courses run there, simultaneously, of the Polish language for adults, in which 34 students participated³⁷. Since the 1st of June 1951, the school received the name: the Public General Education School of the primary grade no 9 with the German language instruction in Legnica (later referred to as SP 9), and Rudolf Gaebel was appointed its headmaster. In the new year, a change of the premises took place to the building in Lubeckiego street 4 (later Alfreda Lampego street, at present Fryderyka Skarbka street) and apart from R. Gaebela – the following teachers were working here: H. Hübner, a Polish woman – Jadwiga Sklepkiwicz (as one of very few she had teaching qualifications), W. Meissler, Carl H. Hiller Walburg Langer, Margot Nowroth and Walter Berlin³⁸.

In 1953 R. Gaebel gave up work, and Dorota Krzywik was temporarily entrusted with the function of the headmaster (for the period of two weeks), then replaced by Felix Bittner, joining the post of the principal with performing the duties of the councilor in the Town National Council. In the time of his term in office, lasting till 1957, the school experienced a period most intensive development: it received a bigger building fully adapted to the education needs

³⁵ B. Ociepka, op. cit., s. 19–47.

³⁶ J. Gretschel, *Sytuacja powojenna Niemców w Legnicy* [w:] red. I. Lipman, *Wczoraj, dziś, jutro. 50 lat Niemieckiego Towarzystwa Kulturalno-Społecznego na Dolnym Śląsku*, NTSK, Wrocław 2014, s. 201–203.

³⁷ B. Techmańska, *Szkolnictwo mniejszości narodowych na Dolnym Śląsku...*, s. 169.

³⁸ R. Stepień, A. Stępień, *Szkolnictwo niemieckie na Dolnym Śląsku i w Legnicy w latach 1945–1963*, „Szkice Legnickie” 2014, XXXV, s. 55–60.

in Rewolucji Październikowej street 32 (at present Senatorska street), in 1955 the largest number of learners was educated there and the most numerous faculty worked there (respectively 264 children and eight teachers); a scout team was run and two musical bands were functioning, one composed of teachers and the other one of learners. Together with mass departures of Germans from Legnica, a regress in education of minorities appeared. In 1958 the number of learners decreased to 57 pupils educated by four teachers, which became the cause of education authorities taking the decision of changing the location of the school. It was moved to a smaller facility situated in Róży Luksemburg street 13 (at present Rycerska street), and J. Sklepkiwicz was appointed the new headmaster, who replaced on this post Wolfgang Nentwig (he was on duty since September 1957 till February 1958). Soon another change took place, the last one in the history of the school, relocation to the building in Chojnowska street 100, where it got rooms on the second floor together with a dormitory for children from remote places from various counties. After several months, as a result of further reduction of the number of learners, SP 9 shared the premises with the public Primary School No 15³⁹.

The assumption of the voivodship education authorities was that the centre in Legnica, performing since the beginning of the sixties the function of consolidation point, was to solve the problems of education of German children in Lower Silesia. It was planned that along with the shutdown of schools in the Wrocław voivodship, parents will be offered transfer of their children to the Legnica centre and accommodation in the local dormitory. It soon turned out that despite implementing the above solution, the number of learners of SP 9 was still gradually decreasing. In the school year 1961/1962 42 learners attended it (29 of them lived in the dormitory), and in 1962/1963 – only 29 (including 6 staying in the dormitory). Because the forecasts for the next year indicated, that 20 children would remain, education authorities took a decision of closing down the centre from the 1st of September 1963 (the same happened to the Primary School No 56 in Wrocław with the German language of instruction, including at that time 14 pupils). Learners were transferred to Polish schools (mainly to SP 15), and for the ones declaring a will to attend lessons of German, additional classes were organized, which were conducted till 1970 by H. Hübner, mentioned previously⁴⁰.

The basic difficulties in the activity of SP 9 throughout the whole period of its existence, similarly as in the case of other schools with the German language of instruction, was lack of specialized staff and decreasing number of learners. Outflow of pupils was determined by mass emigration of the Germans as part of the family reunification action, while the deficit of faculty was related to the fact of teachers' deportation in the years 1946–1949. The ones who avoided eviction, did not inspire confidence in the Polish authorities due to their prior membership in NSDAP and engagement in Nazi education. For this reason, candidates for teachers were searched, among others, amid "progressive" miners (for example, F. Bittner and W. Nentwig, mentioned above, worked in this profession) and industrial workers. It was acknowledged that they would achieve teaching qualifications in the course of working, and on account of their professional experience they would guarantee education in the socialist spirit. However, educators did not always reach the expectations placed in them, the example of which may be terminating the employment contract with three teachers during the school year 1951/1952, as a result of their

³⁹ R. Stępień, *Szkolnictwo niemieckie w Legnicy po II wojnie światowej. Kalendarz ważniejszych wydarzeń*, „Szkice Legnickie” 2005, XXVI, s. 246–249.

⁴⁰ T. Browarek, *Ludność niemiecka w polityce państwa polskiego...*, s. 351–352.

inappropriate attitude to the People's Poland and conducting classes not in accordance with the official programme⁴¹. Due to this reason, the staff composition in SP 9 was undergoing continuous fluctuations, and the only permanent teachers in the years 1951–1963 were H. Hedwig i J. Sklepkiwicz⁴².

Among other barriers significantly limiting the development of German education in Legnica, especially in the initial period of its functioning, a lack of teaching aids and coursebooks can be identified, deficit of which was attempted to be solved by import from the NRD. Because they deviated fundamentally from the teaching programme obligatory in Poland, only providing appropriate books by the State Publishing House since 1954 catered for all the needs in this respect. An additional obstacle in normal functioning of education was not uncommon absence of the pupils caused by their poverty and lack of possibilities to commute to school. Many children were being brought up by single mothers, working on State Farms or performing odd jobs and earning very low wages. For this reason, the Local Education Department in Legnica devoted considerable financial expenses, among others, to feeding, material benefits (including allowances) and taking medical care of children, which could not be secured by home environment⁴³.

Conclusion

Building a uniform society was the main aim of the politics of ethnicity in the People's Poland, however, in the selected moments of its existence, a significant evolution can be identified in the activities conducted by the state. Directly after the end of the war, national homogeneity of the state was aimed at, among others, by eviction or assimilation of the "non-Polish elements", but since the end of the forties these activities were retreated, being replaced by attempts of forming a multinational community of citizens. These measures were continued in the next decade, and their apogee was connected with the so-called "relaxation", i.e. a limited liberalization of the political system after 1956. Socio-cultural societies of the described groups were arising at that time, their representatives were included in the political life of the country, and also the development of their own national culture was allowed. However, relative autonomy did not last long, and already since the mid sixties, a significant reduction can be observed of the licensed freedom which the minorities enjoyed. Since the next decade, until the end of the eighties, the issue of ethnic fragmentation of PRL disappeared entirely from the public discourse. Evolution of the state influence on the non-Polish groups was also reflected in the education run for them, which was an important element of the politics of ethnicity of the People's Republic. According to its principles, the above mentioned education could come to existence (or be reborn) at the end of the forties – from the moment of implementation of the assumption of the "proletarian internationalism" – and it could develop until the second half of the sixties, replaced then by marginalization and return to realization of the idea of mono-national Poland.

⁴¹ B. Ociepka, op. cit., s. 113–116.

⁴² R. Stępień, A. Stępień, *Szkolnictwo niemieckie w Legnicy po II wojnie światowej...*, s. 55–59.

⁴³ B. Techmańska, *Szkolnictwo mniejszości narodowych w powojennej Legnicy*, „Pamięć i Przyszłość” 2014, nr 2(24), s. 47–49.

Referring to the standpoint of R. Zenderowski and J. Pieńkowski mentioned in the present elaboration, an observation seems to be authorised, that a weighty aim of the activities undertaken by the state in terms of national minorities, especially in the years 1944–1947 and after 1968, was their exclusion from the life mainstream and striving for “ethnic completeness” of the country. Thereby, it can be accepted, following T. Browarek, that the model of politics of ethnicity characteristic for People’s Poland turned out to be the integrative type of the compulsory variant, evolving at times in the direction of the segregationist model. The above observation allows for confirmation of the validity of the research hypothesis raised previously, according to which the politics of ethnicity of the post-war Poland was undergoing fluctuations comprising both stages of realization of the homogeneity idea as well as tolerating the limited nationality fragmentation of the state.

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STRESZCZENIE

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**Szkolnictwo mniejszości niemieckiej w Legnicy w latach 1951–1963
jako element polityki etnicznej „Polski Ludowej”**

Polityka etniczna w okresie tzw. „Polski Ludowej”, tj. w latach 1944–1989 charakteryzowała się brakiem jednolitej koncepcji postępowania wobec mniejszości narodowych. Pomimo, że jej głównym założeniem było urzeczywistnienie wizji państwa jednolitego narodowościowo, to jednak w wybranych momentach akceptowano fragmentaryzację etniczną społeczeństwa. W konsekwencji oświata mniejszości narodowych, będąca immanentną częścią wspomnianej polityki, także podlegała istotnym fluktuacjom, obejmując m.in. działania o charakterze ideologicznym, organizacyjnym i programowym.

Nadrzędnym celem powstania niniejszego artykułu było podjęcie próby charakterystyki funkcjonowania szkolnictwa mniejszości niemieckiej w Legnicy, w kontekście obowiązującej wówczas polityki etnicznej państwa, w tym jego polityki oświatowej.

Słowa kluczowe: polityka etniczna, mniejszość niemiecka, Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, szkolnictwo mniejszości narodowych, Legnica.

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