

Sylwia Bykowska

# The Rehabilitation and Ethnic Vetting of the Polish Population in the Voivodship of Gdańsk after World War II



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## **The Rehabilitation and Ethnic Vetting of the Polish Population in the Voivodship of Gdańsk after World War II**

This book describes the tragedy of a border society that had no place inside the boundaries of a nation-state under totalitarianism. It is the story of citizens of the former Third Reich with Polish ethnic roots in the second half of the 1940s. The story takes place in Gdańsk-Pomerania, which was a difficult homeland for its citizens. This book depicts the consequences of Third Reich's policies on this territory and the disastrous effects of communist policy towards the indigenous population after 1945. In parallel with exchange of population, the fortunes of the indigenous population unfolded. Based on archival sources, this work presents the fate of Pomeranians and the residents of Gdańsk who had to prove their national usefulness before they joined the post-war life.

### **The Author**

Sylvia Bykowska holds a PhD in Humanities. In her scientific work, she deals with history of Polish People's Republic, population changes in Gdańsk after 1945 and the development of a new city society, ethnic issues in the so-called Recovered Territories, and history of Gdańsk and Pomerania in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Rehabilitation and Ethnic Vetting of the Polish Population in the  
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## Preface to the English edition

The division of Europe into east and west as a consequence of World War II lasted half a century. It allowed societies in Western Europe to revert to their pre-war political structures, but it also brought Central and Eastern Europe under the Soviet sphere of influence. As a result of the decisions taken by the major powers, many countries in the region had to change their geographical shape. In compensation for the loss of her pre-war eastern borderlands to the USSR, Poland was rewarded with western German provinces. The international decisions reached at that time did not encourage rapid political and social stabilisation, especially in the eastern part of Europe, whose countenance was affected by ethnic cleansing, including deportation, resettlements and segregation of the population. Centralist political regimes appeared, propagating a national ideology and calling for a new order<sup>1</sup>.

In Poland, which had particularly suffered through the years of occupation and ethnic conflicts, the concept of 'nation' assumed jagged contours. Opinions became more radical, and the idea of 'nation' was treated on a par with the Polish *raison d'état*, which was occasionally used to justify brutal action. As Timothy Snyder has written, Stalin wanted to make Poland the centre of an ethnically pure zone<sup>2</sup>. Rapid demographic changes occurred, including the suppression of minorities. Non-Polish nationals were considered a threat to the state and the actions taken against them extended to entire communities. Ethnic purges took place in the border areas: Germans in the west and Ukrainians in the south-east of Poland were subjected to resettlement.

However, not everyone could immediately be categorised in terms of nationality. The situation in the eastern German territory annexed to Poland was especially difficult. Here there was the problem of the indigenous (autochthonic) population. Kashubians, Masurians, Vistulans and, the most numerous groups, Silesians, approached the issue of national-state identity with scepticism. Their regional culture and places they regarded as home were more important markers of collective identity. The life of the (multi-national) Second Republic formed

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1 See: P. Madajczyk, *Das zwanzigste Jahrhundert in Ost-mitteluropa. Eine politische Geschichte*, Erfurt 2014; Idem, *Czystki etniczne i klasowe w Europie XX wieku. Szkice do problemu*, Warsaw 2010; J. J. Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation. Inclusion and Exclusion in the Polish-German Borderlands 1939–1951*, London 2016.

2 T. Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, New York 2010, s. 313.

after World War I was too brief to establish a homogeneous statehood within its borders. The situation was comparable with the Free City of Danzig, which was formed in 1920 as a compromise under the Versailles Treaty. The German and Polish inhabitants of this city were so strongly attached to their local homeland that for many years after the war, they cultivated the tradition of their home city, describing themselves as “people of Gdańsk” (*gdańszczanie*). However, in the meantime the communist authorities of Poland resolved to suppress all manifestations of Kashubian or Silesian regionalism by administrative means, among others. The pre-war voivodship of Pomerania was divided into two new ones: Pomerania and Gdańsk. The area of the former Free City of Danzig was incorporated into the latter. Many considered the new situation a violation of their identity.

This book describes the tragedy of a border society that had no place inside the boundaries of a nation-state under totalitarianism. It is the story of citizens of the former Third Reich with Polish ethnic roots in the second half of the 1940s. The story takes place in Gdańsk-Pomerania, which was a difficult homeland for its citizens. After World War I, a part of the indigenous population found itself within the boundaries of Germany. Those on the Polish side of the border, mainly Kashubians, were forcibly enrolled on the *Volksliste* in 1941–44. The rapid conquest of eastern Germany by the Red Army between January and March 1945 and, finally, the fall of the Third Reich, diametrically changed the situations of both groups. In this volume, I attempt to depict on the one hand the consequences of Third Reich’s policies on this territory, and on the other hand the disastrous effects of communist policy towards the indigenous population after 1945.

The local communities of the former German territories disintegrated after World War II. Germans were forced to evacuate the areas which the authorities in Warsaw labelled ‘Regained Territories’. Shortly after the front had passed, these areas began to be populated with Polish settlers from the middle of the country and with persons displaced from Poland’s former eastern territories. In parallel with this exchange of population, the fortunes of the indigenous population unfolded. To remain on their home territory, these people had to prove that they were of Polish descent and that they were useful to the nation. In the eyes of the Polish authorities, this population, if not aware of their Polish origins, was at least closely linked to Polish tradition and history. Their presence was meant to defend Poland’s right to revert to the country’s ancient borders at the time of the Piast Dynasty. The question of the former *Volksliste* was even more complicated. Those who had found themselves on the list during the war encountered disgust and hostility after it. They were accused of collaboration and treason,



and to a certain extent blamed for the atrocities committed by the Germans. The settlers found it hard to accept any connections between the Polish inhabitants of Pomerania and their German neighbours. In their eyes, these qualities diminished, and sometimes even disqualified, Pomeranians and the residents of Gdańsk as Poles. Even today, the complicated history of the Polish-German border zone arouses strong emotions and is sometimes exploited in current political manoeuvres, especially now that nationalism is again firing society's imagination.

The English translation of this book has been altered somewhat from the Polish original. Due to its volume, I have removed the chapter on the subject of people's identity in Gdańsk-Pomerania between the wars. For the sake of easier reading, I have generalised some parts of the text, whilst expanding other parts to aid clarity.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to Prof. Anna Wolff-Powęska for inviting me to publish the English edition of this book in the *Geschichte-Erinnerung-Politik* series. I am extremely grateful to Prof. Stanisław Salmonowicz and Prof. Marcin Zaremba, whose favourable reviews encouraged the decision by the National Council of the Humanities Development Programme to award a grant for the translation and publication of this book. My thanks also go to Prof. Edmund Kizik for his support and advice during the preparation of this text for foreign readers. The English edition of this book has been provided by George Szenderowicz, whom I thank for his patient and kind cooperation. I also thank the Peter Lang publishing house for their interest in this book and for including it in their publishing programme.

Sylwia Bykowska,  
Gdańsk, 30 April 2017



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## List of Abbreviations

AMS	Archiwum Muzeum Stutthof (State Museum in Stutthof)
AP Bd	Archiwum Państwowe w Bydgoszczy (State Archives in Bydgoszcz)
AP Gd	Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsku (State Archives in Gdańsk)
AIPN Gd	Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Gdańsku (Archives of the Institute for National Remembrance in Gdańsk)
AUOP-B	Archiwum Urzędu Ochrony Państwa w Bydgoszczy (Archives of the State Protection Office in Bydgoszcz)
BPAN	Biblioteka Polskiej Akademii Nauk (Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences)
BZZ	Biuro Ziem Zachodnich (Office of the Western Territories)
COP	Centralny Obóz Pracy (Central Labour Camp)
DAF	<i>Danziger Arbeitsfront</i>
DR	Delegatura Rządu RP na Kraj (Delegation of the Government of Poland for the Homeland)
DVL	<i>Deutsche Volksliste</i>
FAiMPAK and WSP	Fundacja Archiwum i Muzeum Pomorskie Armii Krajowej oraz Wojskowej Służby Polek (Foundation, Archives and Museum of the Pomeranian Home Army and Women's Army Corps)
GG	Generalne Gubernatorstwo (General Government)
IZ	Instytut Zachodni w Poznaniu (Western Institute in Poznań)
KC	Central Committee
KOnZ	Komitet Opieki nad Zweryfikowanymi (Committee of Care over Vetted Persons)
KW	Komitet Wojewódzki (Voivodship Committee)
KRN	Krajowa Rada Narodowa (National People's Council)
LWP	Ludowe Wojsko Polskie (Polish People's Army)
MAP	Ministerstwo Administracji Publicznej (Ministry of Public Administration)

MBP	Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego (Ministry of Public Security)
MO	Milicja Obywatelska (Civil Militia)
MZO	Ministerstwo Ziem Odzyskanych (Ministry of the Regained Territories)
MGO	Morska Grupa Operacyjna (Maritime Operational Group)
NRD	Niemiecka Republika Demokratyczna (German Democratic Republic)
NLN	Niemiecka Lista Narodowościowa (German National List – <i>Volksliste</i> )
NRL	Naczelna Rada Ludowa (Supreme People's Council)
NSDAP	<i>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei</i>
PMR	Polska Misja Repatriacyjna (Polish Repatriation Mission)
PUR	Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny (State Repatriation Office)
PKWN	Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego (Polish Committee of National Liberation)
PPR	Polska Partia Robotnicza (Polish Workers' Party)
PPS	Polska Partia Socjalistyczna (Polish Socialist Party)
PSL	Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish Peasant Party)
PZPR	Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza (Polish United Workers' Party)
PZZ	Polski Związek Zachodni (Polish Western Union)
RKFDV	<i>Reichskommissar für die Festigung Deutsches Volkstums</i>
RSHA	<i>Reichssicherheitshauptamt</i>
SD	Stronnictwo Demokratyczne (Democratic Party)
SL	Stronnictwo Ludowe (Peasant Party)
SP	Stronnictwo Pracy (Labour Party)
SSK	Specjalny Sąd Karny (Special Criminal Court)
UWG	Urząd Wojewódzki w Gdańsku (Voivodship Office of Gdańsk)
UWP	Urząd Wojewódzki Pomorski (Voivodship Office of Pomerania)
WGO	Wojewódzka Grupa Operacyjna (Voivodship Operational Group)
WKW	Wojewódzka Komisja Weryfikacyjna (Voivodship Vetting Board)
WMG	Wolne Miasto Gdańsk (Free City of Danzig)
WUBP	Wojewódzki Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego w Gdańsku (Voivodship Public Security Office in Gdańsk)
WRN	Wojewódzka Rada Narodowa (Voivodship People's Council)
WSP	Wydział Społeczno-Polityczny (Socio-Political Department)
ZMG	Zarząd Miasta w Gdańsku (City Council of Gdańsk)

ZRK	Zrzeszenie Regionalne Kaszubów (Regional Association of Kashubians)
ZLN	Związek Ludowo Narodowy (People's National Union)
ZOKZ	Związek Obrony Kresów Zachodnich (Union of Defence of the Western Borderlands)





## Introduction

The voivodship of Gdańsk was formed on 30 March 1945, before the end of the war. It included areas that had belonged to three administrative units between the wars: the Free City of Danzig, the Second Polish Republic, and the German Reich. The shape of the voivodship was adjusted in 1945–1946, so that in the end it included the following: the separate cities of Gdańsk, Sopot and Gdynia; and the *powiats* (counties) of Gdańsk, Gdynia, Kartuzy, Starogard, local coastal waters, Kościerz, Tczew, Elbląg, Malbork, Sztum, Kwidzyn and Lębork. By 29 May 1946, the voivodship had been expanded to include the counties of Sławno, Miastko, Słupsk, and Bytowo. Subsequently, these came under the authority of the voivode of Szczecin. This change had an impact on the subject examined in this book, for the process of vetting and rehabilitation regarding these four counties relates to the period when they belonged to the administrative unit in question. The voivodship of Gdańsk was thus a mixed area, comprising old counties that had previously belonged to the Second Polish Republic before the war (Gdynia, Kartuzy, local coastal waters, Starogard, Kościerz, and Tczew), and new counties annexed to Poland after the war (Gdańsk, Elbląg, Malbork, Sztum, Kwidzyn, and Lębork). The process of rehabilitation concerned the old counties, whilst the process of vetting was applied to the new ones, where the local population of Polish descent was subjected to it.

One of the effects of the occupation was the disintegration of the Polish community, a prime aim of German national policy intended to weaken national bonds and destroy the Poles' unity. This aim was effected by creating the German National List (*Deutsche Volksliste* – DVL, *Volksliste*). The inclusion on this list of most of the inhabitants of these areas, frequently of Polish descent, was based on the conviction that the areas in question were historically German, and that they could quickly be re-Germanised. Inclusion on the DVL meant a recognition of German descent and the acquisition of German nationality. Therefore, a rapid settlement of the legal status of these persons became one of the most pressing and complicated tasks facing the post-war authorities. The liquidation of the effects of voluntary or compulsory enrolment on the *Deutsche Volksliste* was described as rehabilitation and led to strong emotions and condemnation, especially in the context of compulsory enrolment. During the 2005 Polish presidential campaign, this topic resurfaced when it was announced that the grandfather of one of the candidates for the highest state office had served in the *Wehrmacht*,

one of the prime and most painful effects of being on the *Volksliste*<sup>3</sup>. During martial law in 1982, there was an attempt to discredit Father Henryk Jankowski by mentioning that his family had also been enrolled on the *Volksliste*.

Those who had waived their Polish nationality were often described as ‘traitors’ and *Volksdeutsche* in conspiratorial writings and have even been branded thus in post-war literature and by various social communities. And yet the term *Volksdeutsche* applies solely to those included in Group II of the DVL. We should note that this erroneous label of *Volksdeutsche* has been applied indiscriminately to anyone who held an *Ausweis*<sup>4</sup>, which is taken mean that they were collaborators and traitors, an opinion shared by many researchers of the topic<sup>5</sup>. The lack of clarification of this issue in academic publications has resulted in a repetition of well-worn false convictions among society, with the result that the topic remains extremely controversial<sup>6</sup>.

The second topic dealt with in this treatise is ethnic vetting, a process derived from the granting of eastern German territory to Poland in 1945 under the terms of the Yalta and Potsdam agreements. The population of this territory possessed German citizenship, resulting in the need to create a clear divide between Poles and Germans and to grant Polish citizenship to the former and expel the latter from Polish territory. The vetting was publicised as a legal process aimed at determining ethnic identity by administrative means, and was an exceedingly difficult task. A part of the population preserved a sense of belonging to the Polish nation, but many others had completely lost it under the pressure of Germanisation. Others still, despite their Polish descent, felt no connection with any sense of

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3 See: B. Szczepuła, *Dziadek w Wehrmachcie*, Gdańsk 2007.

4 Those enrolled on the *Volksliste* in the areas annexed to the Third Reich received an identity card called an *Ausweis* (*Ausweis der Deutsche Volksliste*). But on the territory of the General Government an *Ausweis* was a means of identification issued by an employer. By way of identity cards, from 13 June 1941 the German authorities issued all non-German residents with *Kennkarten*. See, e.g. the Archives of the Museum of Stutthof, Z-II-1-7, *Teczka osobowa Antoniego Wiśniewskiego*; G. S. Paulsson, *Utajone miasto. Żydzi po aryjskiej stronie Warszawy (1940–1945)*, Kraków 2007, pp. 154–155; T. Szarota, *Okupowanej Warszawy dzień powszedni*, Warsaw 1988, p. 34.

5 See: L. Olejnik, *Zdrajcy narodu? Losy volksdeutschów w Polsce po II wojnie światowej*, Warsaw 2006.

6 The term *Volksdeutsch* is also applied to the descendants of Germans who had colonised Polish lands centuries earlier, Polish citizens of German origin, and Germans resettled during the war to areas annexed from other areas occupied by the Third Reich. *Encyklopedia „Białych Plam”*, vol. XVII, Radom 2006, p. 316.

Polish identity. The Polish authorities conducted a heated debate on the criteria which the Vetting Boards should apply when separating Poles from the expelled German population. The principle of so-called broad vetting prevailed, driven by the need to swiftly make the Regained Territories Polish.

In this work I shall describe the entire processes of rehabilitation and ethnic vetting in the voivodship of Gdańsk immediately after the war, against the background of the political and social changes at the time. These processes were determined by the following socio-political phenomena:

- the shaping of national or ethnic identity in the border areas;
- the nationalist policy of the German occupants in the *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen*;
- the attitudes of the indigenous Polish population towards the German National List during World War II;
- the geo-political changes in Poland after the war, including the monopolisation of power by the communists;
- the legal standards regarding rehabilitation and vetting, and amendments thereto;
- the effects of the population shift in Gdańsk voivodship after 1945;
- the policies of the post-war Polish authorities and of the administration of Gdańsk voivodship to the indigenous population.

I describe the processes of rehabilitation and vetting in the context of the legislation applicable to Poland as a whole and to the voivodship of Gdańsk in particular, for it provided the basis for both operations. They underwent frequent modification because various circumstances regarding inclusion on the *Volkliste* had not been taken into consideration in the context of rehabilitation, whilst in the context of rehabilitation there was not enough knowledge of the issues concerning the indigenous Polish population inhabiting the Regained Territories vis-à-vis post-war vetting. Insufficient awareness of these issues, the absence of qualified officials, the creation of a Polish administration from scratch in the regained areas, migrants and resettlement – all of this encumbered and delayed efficient rehabilitation and vetting. Furthermore, local officials often interpreted central regulations in different ways and sought to profit from the unregulated situation of persons deprived of civic and financial rights, resulting in many dramatic situations, including continued detention in labour camps and indiscriminate confiscation of the property of those being rehabilitated or vetted. A significant role here was played by security officials, whose stance towards the indigenous population often differed from that of the central authorities. The intimidation of these persons in various spheres of daily life had a particular

effect on both processes. Hence, the discrimination of the indigenous population in Gdańsk is present throughout this treatise.

I describe the topic in the context of the political changes caused by the monopolisation of power in Poland by the revolutionary left wing. Two factors which strongly affected the processes of rehabilitation and vetting deserve to be mentioned.

First, both of these processes were a major component of the German question extensively covered in Polish communist propaganda after the war. In particular, rehabilitation was presented as a struggle between the forces of democracy and the ever-present spectre of fascism. Secondly, granting civic rights to a segment of the population obliged to go through these processes turned them into potential voters in the political campaign that enabled the pro-Soviet forces to assume full authority in Poland. The supporters of this policy hoped that the mere creation of legislative conditions in this regard would provide a basis for extending their social influence. Such a manner of thinking whereby despite the enormous difficulties, the young Polish state fulfilled its obligations towards the people included on the *Volksliste* merely by adopting the appropriate legislation, was propagated towards the end of the 1960s by Julian Rados, a security police official<sup>7</sup>. Ignoring the harsh experience of thousands of Poles whose status and further fortunes often depended on the whims and moods of state officials should be included in the formula of historical interpretation which Michel Foucault has described as a reflection of the discourse of power<sup>8</sup>.

Rehabilitation and vetting occurred at a time not only of political changes, but also social changes. As in other regained areas, those areas belonging to Gdańsk voivodship witnessed the beginning of the creation of a new post-migration society in 1945. A characteristic feature of the first stage of this phenomenon was a confluence of various groups of people: persons resettled from central and south-eastern Poland, those repatriated from the eastern parts of the pre-war Republic, and the indigenous Polish population. These groups differed not just in terms of their territorial origin, but also in terms of cultural, political and economic characteristics, resulting in the emergence of fresh differences and sometimes even hostility. Mutual antagonism was mainly the result of economic factors. As a result of successful rehabilitation and vetting, people regained the rights to their property and farms. Until then, their properties had often been

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7 J. Rados, *Rehabilitacja na Pomorzu Gdańskim*, Gdańsk 1969.

8 M. Foucault, *Trzeba bronić społeczeństwa*, Warsaw 1998, p. 74.

occupied by newcomers placed there by the authorities who wanted to preserve the uncertain status of the local population for the sake of material gain.

The choice of subject of this treatise was dictated by the absence of thorough works on this issue with reference to the voivodship of Gdańsk. The above-mentioned J. Rados tackled the subject of rehabilitation in *Rehabilitation in Gdańsk Pomerania (Rehabilitacja na Pomorzu Gdańskim)*, but he limited himself to describing the legislation and the legal procedures of rehabilitation, thus narrowing the subject altogether. Vetting, too, has never been thoroughly examined concerning the area in question, although the subject has been dealt with several times in various works. For example, in his work about vetting in Warmia, Masuria and Powiśle, L. Belzyt describes the subject with reference to parts of Gdańsk voivodship, i.e. the counties of Elbląg, Malbork, Sztum, and Kwidzyn, but for understandable reasons focuses mainly on the problem of Masuria<sup>9</sup>. Vetting has also been discussed as an element of the demographic, including national, processes initiated in the area in question after the war. Here we can note works by such authors as B. Maroszek<sup>10</sup>, L. Zieliński<sup>11</sup>, R. Wapiński<sup>12</sup>, and M. Hejger<sup>13</sup>.

The question of rehabilitation in a local sense has been discussed regarding Upper Silesia by Z. Boda-Kreżel<sup>14</sup>, regarding Bydgoszcz by M. Romaniuk<sup>15</sup>, and regarding Greater Poland by K. Strykowski<sup>16</sup>. The legal aspects of crimes by the occupants, including the deprivation of Polish nationality, has been discussed at length by A. Pasek<sup>17</sup>. The only work devoted entirely to the problem of the *Volksliste* in Poland is the work by L. Olejnik<sup>18</sup>. The authors of works on ethnic

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9 L. Belzyt, *Między Polską a Niemcami. Weryfikacja narodowościowa i jej następstwa na Warmii, Mazurach i Powiślu w latach 1945–1950*, Toruń 1999.

10 B. Maroszek, *Kształtowanie się nowego społeczeństwa w województwie gdańskim w latach 1945–1964*, Gdańsk 1965.

11 L. Zieliński, *Przemiany społeczno-polityczne w województwie gdańskim w latach 1945–1948*, Gdańsk 1972 (for the internal use of the PZPR Voivodship Committee).

12 R. Wapiński, *Pierwsze lata władzy ludowej na Wybrzeżu Gdańskim*, Gdańsk 1970.

13 M. Hejger, *Polityka narodowościowa władz polskich w województwie gdańskim w latach 1945–1947*, Słupsk 1998.

14 Z. Boda-Kreżel, *Sprawa volkslisty na Górnym Śląsku*, Opole 1978.

15 M. Romaniuk, *Podzwonne okupacji. Deutsche Volksliste w Bydgoszczy (1945–1950)*, Bydgoszcz 1993.

16 K. Strykowski, *Położenie osób wpisanych w Wielkopolsce na niemiecką listę narodowościową w latach 1945–1950*, Poznań 2004.

17 A. Pasek, *Przestępstwa okupacyjne w polskim prawie karnym z lat 1944–1956*, Wrocław 2002.

18 L. Olejnik, *op. cit.*

vetting and the Polish indigenous population in the regained areas are, in addition to L. Belzyt, J. Misztal<sup>19</sup>, Z. Romanow<sup>20</sup>, and G. Strauchold<sup>21</sup>.

Rehabilitation and vetting have both been covered in more general works devoted mainly to the Regained Territories or the German population<sup>22</sup>. Both of these processes have also been examined in the context of ethnic groups, in the case of Gdańsk voivodship Kashubians<sup>23</sup>. Finally, these topics have also been covered in works about the activity of the Polish Western Union (*Polski Związek Zachodni*), an organisation keenly interested in the situation of the Polish indigenous population after the end of the war<sup>24</sup>.

The literature mentioned here does not exhaust the list of works that were necessary to prepare this treatise. I have restricted myself to the works of authors who chose rehabilitation and vetting as the direct subject of their research or who, dealing with this topic on the side-lines of other works, helped impart a fresh impetus to the topic. The bibliography at the end of this work indicates the complex and multi-faceted nature of this issue. I have tried to present it in as broad terms as possible, in order to encapsulate all of the important elements that contribute to the process and outcome of rehabilitation and vetting in Gdańsk voivodship.

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- 19 J. Misztal, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa na Śląsku Opolskim 1945–1950*, Opole 1984; *ibid.*, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa na Ziemiach Odzyskanych*, Warsaw 1990.
  - 20 Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz polskich wobec ludności rodzimej ziem zachodnich i północnych w latach 1945–1960*, Słupsk 1999.
  - 21 G. Strauchold, *Polska ludność rodzima ziem zachodnich i północnych. Opinie nie tylko publiczne lat 1944–1948*, Olsztyn 1995; *ibid.*, *Autochtoni polscy, niemieccy, czy...od nacjonalizmu do komunizmu (1945–1949)*, Toruń 2001.
  - 22 See: Cz. Osekowski, *Spółeczeństwo Polski zachodniej i północnej w latach 1945–1956. Procesy integracji i dezintegracji*, Zielona Góra 1994; A. Magierska, *Ziemie zachodnie i północne w 1945 r. Kształtowanie się podstaw polityki integracyjnej państwa polskiego*, Warsaw 1978; M. Jaworski, *Na piastowskim szlaku. Działalność Ministerstwa Ziem Odzyskanych w latach 1945–1948*, Warsaw 1973; B. Nitschke, *Wysiedlenie ludności niemieckiej z Polski w latach 1945–1949*, Zielona Góra 1999; Z. Romanow, *Ludność niemiecka na ziemiach zachodnich i północnych w latach 1945–1947*, Słupsk 1992.
  - 23 C. Obracht-Prondzyński, *Kaszubi. Między dyskryminacją a regionalną podmiotowością*, Gdańsk 2002; M. Latoszek, *Pomorze–zagadnienia etniczno-regionalne*, Gdańsk 1996; H. Rybicki, *Powrót pogranicza kaszubskiego do Polski po drugiej wojnie światowej*, Słupsk 1988.
  - 24 M. Musielak, *Polski Związek Zachodni 1944–1950*, Warsaw 1986; M. Ujdał, *Polski Związek Zachodni wobec problemów narodowościowych w latach 1944–1950*, Katowice 1988.

Due to the shortage of literature mentioned above, a significant part of this work is based on archival material.

The primary source material that forms the basis of my analysis of rehabilitation and vetting is kept at the State Archives in Gdańsk and comprises the documentation of first-instance administrative authorities (including the Voivodship Office in Gdańsk, Gdańsk City Council, and the Voivodship Vetting Board) and the Voivodship Committee of the Polish Workers' Party.

Extremely valuable sources are also to be found in the New Files in Warsaw. To review the decision-making processes involved in the rehabilitation and vetting of the local population, I examined the central files of central administrative authorities, including the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of the Regained Territories. Reports of the Homeland Delegation of the Government of the Republic broadened my outlook on the issue of German ethnic policy during the war. For this purpose, too, I availed myself of the collections of the Archives of the State Protection Office in Bydgoszcz, the archives of the Stutthof Museum, the archives and museum of the Pomeranian Home Army, and the Polish Women's Army Service.

The documents in the State Archives in Bydgoszcz allowed me to compare the policy of the neighbouring voivodship of Pomerania regarding the process of rehabilitation. A valuable source of knowledge about the attitudes of the security services towards the indigenous population are the Archives of the Institute for National Remembrance, Gdańsk branch, where I perused reports by the Security Office and Civil Militia at voivodship, county and municipal level. Court materials from rehabilitation trials are also an interesting source of knowledge, kept at the Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Gdańsk. They describe in detail the fortunes of people who had been assigned to a 'group' and then rehabilitated, and of witnesses during court trials. These materials bring the wartime and post-war periods together, illustrating the determination with which the two totalitarianisms of the last century approached the question of rehabilitation.

Furthermore, I also used the special collections of the University of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Archives of the Western Institute in Poznan, and the Museum of Kashubian-Pomeranian Literature and Music in Wejherowo. The culmination of this research is a review of documents devoted to the broadly-conceived German question. We should note that these publications are not free of erroneous conclusions and inconsistencies. The concepts of rehabilitation and vetting were very often wrongly applied and confused with each other<sup>25</sup>.

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25 Cf.: *Niemcy w Polsce 1945–1950. Wybór dokumentów*, vol. IV, Pomorze Gdańskie i Dolny Śląsk, ed. D. Boćkowski, selection and report I. Eser, Warsaw 2001. In this work,

In archival materials as well, the authors of documents misnamed procedures, calling rehabilitation vetting and vice versa. In some cases, a comparative analysis of the numerical data in these materials was required in order to draw the right conclusions.

I have used post-war press materials which helped me encapsulate the legal dimension of rehabilitation and vetting as well as illustrate the social attitudes towards the indigenous population and the question of their status. This latter element and the climate of wartime and post-war reality is present in the above-named publications and collection of reports, although these required particular analysis and comparison with other sources.

I have tried to carefully analyse and critically assess the accumulated research materials. Given the multitude of socio-political phenomena referred to above, much of the source material, especially that dated after 1945, contains inconsistencies and loopholes, especially regarding statistics involving rehabilitation and vetting. Information reaching the voivodship authorities from the field occasionally did not agree with the reports submitted to the central authorities, so that the numerical data included in this work are estimates due to the specific nature of the period discussed. Another shortcoming is the frequent lack of Christian names of the people I decided to mention. I established some names on the basis of other documentation, but was unable to do so for less known people, such as party activists in the field.

The chronological framework of this treatise is 1945–1950. The opening year is obvious, but the closing year derives from the fact that in December 1950, the Presidium of the Council of Ministers reached final decisions on the fate of people in Poland who had enrolled on the *Volksliste*. These decisions altered previous procedures regarding the deprivation of Polish citizenship and the resettlement of people contained on the *Volksliste*. The Polish Citizenship Act of 8 January 1951 abolished the distinction between nationality and citizenship. From then on, the problem of people entered on the DVL no longer concerned the local authorities. In a formal legal sense, their status had finally been settled. Nevertheless, the security apparatus continued to be interested in this category of people. A cloud of suspicion continued to hang over them for a long time. At the same time, the Voivodship Office in Gdańsk performed the final mass conferment of Polish citizenship on those who had been deprived of it because

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the Act on Polish Citizenship in the Regained Territories of 28 April 1946 is regarded as an act of rehabilitation.



they were in a 'group' and on German citizens of Polish descent living on the Regained Territories or in the former Free City of Danzig.

I present the results of my research in four chapters. In the first chapter, I discuss the ethnic policy of the Third Reich in the *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen* during the war, including the legal institutions of the German National List and details of the enrolment campaign conducted in that area until autumn 1944. The second chapter is devoted to Polish national legal solutions on rehabilitation and vetting, and to the amendments to it. This chapter also describes the political and social dimension of this issue and the results of both operations. Chapter III describes the first regulations adopted by the Gdańsk authorities on the subject of the processes in question and on their course and outcome throughout the voivodship. Finally, Chapter IV, which is a continuation of Chapter III, describes the long stage of rehabilitation and vetting, placing its beginning of the political efforts to guarantee the Polish communists complete power in Poland, i.e. the referendum of June 1946 and the parliamentary elections in January 1947.

This work is an attempt to describe the processes of rehabilitation and vetting in Gdańsk voivodship comprehensively. It does not close the door on the examined issues, nor does it exhaust the list of questions about both the operations and their outcome. There is no doubt that it encourages further examination and leaves room for further exploration of the issues upon which it touches.



# I Ethnic Policy in the *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen* 1939–1944

## 1.1 The Objectives and Principles of Third Reich Policy towards the Population of Pomerania

When Hitler instigated what would become World War II, he had no final concept of the political and territorial solutions regarding Polish territory<sup>26</sup>. Nevertheless, the question of the annexation of Poland's western and northern territory, and German settlement, had already been clearly defined<sup>27</sup>. At the same time, during the September campaign, the Germans consistently implemented the plan of "cleansing" the occupied territories (*Flurbereinigung*) of Jews, the intelligentsia, the clergy and landed gentry. Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Reich Main Security Office, described this operation as a "merger of land"<sup>28</sup>.

The extermination of the Polish population in Pomerania, the first act of the hecatomb of World War II, proceeded in four stages. The first stage occurred in September 1939. The physical extermination of the social classes who might obstruct the political plans of the Reich was carried out by the *Wehrmacht* and by operational groups of the security police and security service. These units acted directly in the rear of the German armies in Poland. Their basic task was to combat all resistance by the Polish population towards the aggressor<sup>29</sup>. The second stage of the extermination, marked by the highest number of executions, lasted from September 1939 to January 1940. The main role in carrying out atrocities during this period was played by units of the *Selbstschutz* (so-called Self-Defence). The third period saw less extermination, whilst executions were

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26 C. Madajczyk, *Generalna Gubernia w planach hitlerowskich*, Warsaw 1961, p. 16.

27 K. Radziwończyk, *Okupacyjny zarząd i zbrodnie wojenne Wehrmachtu podczas agresji na Polskę (1 IX-25 X 1939)* [in:] „Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny”, 1973, No. 2, p. 100.

28 D. Schenk, *Albert Forster, gdański namiestnik Hitlera. Zbrodnie hitlerowskie w Gdańsku i Prusach Zachodnich*, Gdańsk 2002, p. 236; F. Halder, *Dziennik wojenny*, vol. I, Warsaw 1971, p. 117.

29 C. Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*, vol. I, Warsaw 1970, pp. 48–49; W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, *Okupacja hitlerowska na Pomorzu Gdańskim w latach 1939–1945*, p. 72.

carried out on the basis of sentences handed down by the so-called judicial apparatus<sup>30</sup>. The fourth period was the final months of 1944.

The liquidation of Poland's elite was meant to provide the basis for a rapid and lasting Germanisation of the conquered territories. At the same time, during the period until 25 October 1939, decisions were reached which established the administrative framework of Polish territory for the next six years. On 2 October of that year, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Third Reich issued a directive entitled *Tasks of the civil administration in occupied Polish lands*. It called for the expulsion from western and northern occupied territories of Poles who had acquired land from German landowners after 1918, followed by the resettlement of Germans from the Reich and of representatives of German minorities in other countries, chiefly South America<sup>31</sup>. Thus, even before they had settled the administrative status of the conquered territories, Nazi decision-makers gave a clear sign that the acquisition of *lebensraum* in the east would involve major demographic changes.

Pursuant to a decree of 8 October 1939, contrary to international law and entitled *On the structure and administration of eastern territories*, Hitler formally annexed Poland's western and north-western lands to the Reich. These areas were described as annexed territories (*Eingegliederte Ostgebiete*)<sup>32</sup>. Under the terms of Convention IV of the Hague Conference of 1907, the takeover of a country could not violate that country's borders or the previous legal order, including citizenship and national allegiance<sup>33</sup>, which is particularly important

30 B. Chrzanowski, *Pomorze Gdańskie pod okupacją hitlerowską (1939–1945)* [in:] *Stutthof, hitlerowski obóz koncentracyjny*, ed. D. Steyer, Warsaw 1988, p. 31.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

32 The annexed area accounted for almost half the Polish territory taken by Germany and one quarter of the entire Polish state. With a population of some 10 million, the territory covered 91,764 km<sup>2</sup> and included the following voivodships: Pomerania, Poznań, Upper Silesia, the greater part of Łódź voivodship, the western part of Kraków voivodships, Mazovia, the county of Suwałki, some counties of Kielce voivodship, and the Dąbrowa Basin. C. Madajczyk, *Faszyzm i okupacje. 1938–1945*, vol. II, Poznań 1984, p. 66. See also P. Semków, *Polityka Trzeciej Rzeszy wobec ludności polskiej na terenie byłego Wolnego Miasta Gdańska w latach 1939–1945*, Toruń 2001, pp. 89–91; J. Krasuski, *Polska–Niemcy. Stosunki polityczne od zarania po czasy najnowsze*, Poznań 2003, p. 286; C. Łuczak, *Polska i Polacy w drugiej wojnie światowej*, Poznań 1993, pp. 91–97.

33 K. Ciechanowski, *Pobór Polaków z Pomorza Gdańskiego do armii niemieckiej i zmilitaryzowanych oddziałów roboczych w latach II wojny światowej* [in:] "Zeszyty Muzeum Stutthof", 1985, No. 6, p. 42.

in the context of this treatise. The occupier was obliged to preserve the country's original administration and judicature, and restore legal and social order<sup>34</sup>.

New administrative units were formed in the annexed areas. They included the Reich District of Danzig-West Prussia (*Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen*), created on 26 October 1939. It covered the Free City of Danzig, six counties (*powiats*), the province of East Prussia that belonged to Germany before 1 September 1939, most of the pre-war Voivodship of Pomerania, and a part of the Voivodship of Warsaw. In December 1939, the population of this area was 2,351,166, of which the Free City of Danzig held 407,517; the territories in East Prussia had 362,137; and the pre-war territory of Poland contained 1,502,010 people<sup>35</sup>. Poles accounted for 61 % of the population and Germans 38 %<sup>36</sup>. Administratively, the District comprised three regions (*rejencje*): Danzig, Bydgoszcz and Kwidzyn, whilst the capital of the district became Danzig. Each region was divided into urban and rural counties, and these in turn were divided into official districts and *gminas* (districts). On the basis of the above-mentioned decree of 8 October 1939 and Hitler's directive of 2 November of that year, the highest administrative authority in a *Reichsgau* was the governor, and the head of the province under his authority was the president<sup>37</sup>. The head of the *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen* was Albert Forster, also acting as *Gauleiter*, head of the district authority of the National Socialist German Workers Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, NSDAP). In the Third Reich, political authority and administrative authority (state authority, special authority, local government authority) were combined<sup>38</sup>. *Gauleiter* Forster exercised unlimited power over his area and was

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34 A. Kilian, *Położenie publiczno-prawne ludności Pomorza Gdańskiego w okresie okupacji wojskowej (1IX 1939–25 X 1939)* [in:] "Zeszyty Muzeum Stutthof", 1981, No. 4, p. 44.

35 Hitler issued a decree regulating the status of the remaining Polish conquered territory on 12 October 1939. The decree, entitled *On the administration of occupied Polish territory*, formally created the General Government (GG). See: W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, op. cit., Gdańsk 1979, p. 51.

36 C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, p. 69.

37 See W. Jastrzębski, *Bilans rządów niemieckich na ziemiach polskich wcielonych do Rzeszy (1939–1945)* [in:] *Wrzesień 1939 i jego konsekwencje dla ziem zachodnich i północnych Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. R. Sudziński and W. Jastrzębski, Toruń-Bydgoszcz 2001, p. 175–177. More on the organisation of the *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen* in: Z. Janowicz, *Ustrój administracyjny ziem polskich wcielonych do Rzeszy Niemieckiej 1939–1945*, Poznań 1951.

38 See, e.g. C. Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa i ekonomiczna hitlerowskich Niemiec w okupowanej Polsce*, Poznań 1979, p. 37.

accountable directly to Hitler<sup>39</sup>. A. Forster's appointment as *Gauleiter*, governor of the *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen*, was an expression of the confidence which Hitler had in him. It also illustrated the status of Danzig and the role it was meant to play in plans to colonise the east. During his appointment ceremony, A. Forster heard from the lips of Reich interior minister Wilhelm Frick that the *Reichsstatthalter* of a district is the Führer's representative and a plenipotentiary of the state<sup>40</sup>. Furthermore, on 21 October 1939 Hitler granted the *Gauleiters* unlimited powers in their areas. During a meeting of *Reichsleiters* and *Gauleiters*, he decreed: "They can act against anyone who professes defeatism, whether he is in uniform or not"<sup>41</sup>. On 26 October that year, military authority came into force throughout the *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen* and the above-mentioned law of 8 October on the annexation of eastern territories took effect<sup>42</sup>. The above decisions regarding the administration of the conquered Polish territories originated from the realisation by the German authorities that the Germanisation of all the conquered territories was not possible in a short time. These solutions determined the fate of the population living there. Nazi aims towards the annexed western and northern territories and towards the *General Government* clearly differed, both regarding the population and the territory itself.

The fundamental difference was the possibility of cultural life. In the territories annexed to the Reich, all forms of Polish cultural and educational life were eliminated. The use of the Polish language in public (conversation, messages, signs, posters, etc.) was strictly prohibited in the *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen*, and there was not a single Polish school or library<sup>43</sup>. In literature, Pomerania was even described as an annexed territory, with a reign of terror unheard of in any other Polish area occupied by the Germans. Here, the basis of Polish identity was hit the hardest; the population was forbidden to conduct religious life, including

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39 More on the subject of A. Forster: D. Schenk, *op. cit.*; M. Podgóreczny, *Albert Forster, gauleiter i oskarżony*, Gdańsk 1977.

40 P. Semków, *Polityka Trzeciej Rzeszy...*, pp. 92–93.

41 D. Schenk, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

42 E. Serwański, *Wielkopolska w cieniu swastyki*, Warsaw 1970, p. 61.

43 Instytut Zachodni w Poznaniu (Western Institute in Poznan (hereinafter IZ)), doc. I-607, 24 IX 1942; K. Ciechanowski, *Walka z językiem polskim i zewnętrznymi przejawami życia polskiego na Pomorzu Gdańskim w latach 1939–1945* [in:] *Przymus germanizacyjny na ziemiach polskich wcielonych do Rzeszy Niemieckiej w latach 1939–1945*, ed. W. Jastrzębski, Bydgoszcz 1993, p. 33 et al. H-Ch. Harten, *De-Kulturation und Germanisierung. Die nationalsozialistische Rassen- und Erziehungspolitik in Polen 1939–1945*, Frankfurt am Main, New York 1996, pp. 170–264.

confession, in their native language<sup>44</sup>, possess Polish prayer books or place Polish epitaphs in on graves<sup>45</sup>. Daily life during the war in the former western and northern territories of the Second Republic revealed with limitless brutality the role of the Polish population as a labour force. All attempts at Polish self-defence and all manifestations of patriotism were severely repressed. Meanwhile, in those Polish areas located in the *General Government*, various forms of Polish ethnic life were permitted to a certain extent, despite the difficulties with supplies and materials and the presence of terror. General and vocational schools for Poles functioned, and Poles remained as employers. Additionally, in the areas belonging to the GG, which was only just being prepared for annexation into the Third Reich, there was no general confiscation of private property<sup>46</sup>.

The difference between the Nazi tactics used in the lands annexed to the Reich including Pomerania, and those used in the *General Government* merit particular attention because this difference has often been overlooked or ignored altogether, thus distorting the view of the conditions under occupation and leading to unfair judgments of the attitudes of Poles during the war<sup>47</sup>.

The end of the first stage of the Blitzkrieg, i.e. the annexation of part of Poland and the neutralisation of the fabric of its ethnic leadership, allowed Hitler to proceed to implement a basic principle of the concept of *Lebensraum*<sup>48</sup>. A rapid, mass Germanisation of the western and northern territories of the Second Republic now became the supreme task, requiring the launch of suitable mechanisms of action, especially because Hitler did not approve of the method of Germanifying the Polish population used during the period of the Prussian partition. This time, the strategy called for Germanisation by means of the mass expulsion of the population and the settlement of Germans.

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44 About the work of the Gdańsk bishop Karol Maria Splett, who was apostolic administrator of the diocese of Chełmno during the war and, under pressure from the Gestapo, prohibited confessions in Polish, see S. Bogdanowicz, *Karol Maria Splett – biskup gdański czasu wojny, więzień specjalny PRL*, Gdańsk 1995; P. Reina, *Karol Maria Splett, biskup gdański na ławie oskarżonych*, Warsaw 1994.

45 T. Bolduan, *Nie dali się złamać. Spojrzenie na ruch kaszubski 1939–1996*, Gdańsk 1996, p. 14.

46 C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, p. 137.

47 See, e.g. T. Bolduan, *op. cit.*, p. 14 et al.

48 The realisation of the *Lebensraum* plan was a condition for bringing all Germans together in one great German state (*Grossdeutschland*). This postulate was already included in 1920 in the programme of the nationalist socialist party, which at that time bore the name German Workers' Party (*Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*).

For this purpose, on 7 October 1939 Hitler issued a decree entitled *On consolidating German nationhood in the east*, comprising three main directives: on the resettlement in the Third Reich of all Germans living outside its borders, the exclusion of all ethnic elements and groups harmful to the Reich and to the German nation, and on gaining new areas for settlement. Hitler entrusted this task to SS *Reichsführer* and German Police chief Heinrich Himmler, whom he appointed Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationhood (*Reichskommissar für die Festigung Deutschen Volkstums*, RKFDV)<sup>49</sup>. The plans for genocide were largely implemented by entities under Himmler's authority: the Main Security Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, RSHA), the Race and Resettlement Office (*Rassen und Siedlungsamt*) and the Office of the Germanisation of the Population (*Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle*)<sup>50</sup>.

A preliminary estimate of the resettlement of Polish territories incorporated in the Reich was presented in a document of 25 November 1939, produced by the NSDAP Office of Racial Policy, led by Dr. Walther Gross. The ethnic programme, whose authors were Dr. Erhard Wetzel and Dr. Günther Hecht, bore the title *The treatment of the population of former Polish areas from a racial-political point of view*, and was the foundation of many of Himmler's actions. It comprised three parts: the first part described a picture of Poland's racial and national structure, and was a demographic description of Polish territories. The second part discussed what to do with the population in the new territory of the Reich, taking into account the question of resettlement, and the third part discussed the specific issue of western Poland<sup>51</sup>. The document postulated the liquidation of the Polish population by limiting its natural growth and by enforcing overseas emigration. The Polish element was also to be eliminated by depriving it of educational, cultural, political and economic life. The authors of this document called for: "...the complete and final Germanisation of the strata that seemed capable

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49 The direct head of this institution was SS *Gruppenführer* Ulrich Greifelt, but the planning director was SS *Oberführer* Dr. Konrad Meyer-Hetling. From 1940, he acted as chief of the Berlin-based SS Planning Office for Polish lands annexed to the Reich, and in 1941 he became planning chief at the RKFDV and at the Main Land Office.

50 See: C. Madajczyk, *Faszyzm...*, vol. II, pp. 178–185. See also W. Jastrzębski, *Ogólne założenia polityki narodowościowej na ziemiach wcielonych do Rzeszy* [in:] *Polityka germanizacyjna Trzeciej Rzeszy na Pomorzu Gdańskim w latach 1939–1945*. Materials from an academic session edited by K. Minczykowska and J. Sziling, Toruń 2007, pp. 13–21. I. Heinemann, "Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut". *Das Rasse und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas*, Göttingen 2003.

51 B. Mąciór-Majka, *Generalny Plan Wschodni*, Kraków 2007, p. 132.



of it and the expulsion of all alien groups incapable of Germanisation and resettlement by Germans<sup>52</sup>. Thus, the prerequisite for the introduction of a new ethnic order in the lands annexed to the Reich was racial and ethnic membership. There appeared the concept of the German National List (*Deutsche Volksliste*) as a means to determine inclusion in German nationhood and the qualifications for Polish nationhood. The authors of the programme explained: “The objective of German policy in the new territories of the Reich must be the creation of a racially homogeneous German nation, hence also spiritually-psychologically and nationally-politically uniform<sup>53</sup>. The significance of the document lies in its demographic analysis of the annexed areas. 300,000 Kashubians and Mazovians are considered non-Poles, and 1.2 million are considered uncertain (*Wasserpolen*). Together with Silesians, mostly considered to be Polonised Germans, the above groups are described as non-Polish minorities. They were to remain in the eastern areas annexed to the Third Reich, preserving their economic and cultural rights<sup>54</sup>.”

These directives provided the basis for a treatise called *A few thoughts on the treatment of non-natives in the east*, which Himmler handed to Hitler on 20 May 1940. Its author stated two prime objectives of the Germanisation of the indigenous Polish population: to prevent further growth in the Polish intelligentsia, and to “increase the growth of a population desirable for the German nation and attain a biologically pure workforce for the development of agriculture and industry<sup>55</sup>”. Himmler indicated the principle of ‘divide and rule’ as the most appropriate way to disenfranchise and break up the population in the East. Thus, it lay in the interests of the Third Reich to maintain the maximum number of separate ethnic groups and set them against the Poles.

From the middle of 1941, the plans to Germanise lands assumed importance due to the Russian campaign. Successive plans appeared, together comprising the General Plan East (*Generalplan Ost*)<sup>56</sup>. These included a programme produced inside the RSHA by SS *Standartenführer* Hans Ehlich, a document by

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52 E. Serwański, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

53 B. Mąciór-Majka, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

54 For the treatise by Wetzel and Hecht, see also W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, p. 32..

55 C. Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa...*, p. 176; *Dziennik Hansa Franka 1939–1945*, vol. I, 1939–1942, Warsaw 1972, pp. 288–290.

56 The name GPO first appeared in the documents of the Main Staff Office of the RKFDV, in which the above-mentioned K. Meyer, in response to an order from Himmler on 24 June 1941 to produce a plan of settlement and land utilisation on the Polish territories annexed to the Reich, and described his first suggestions as *Generalplan Ost*.

Dr. Wetzel, an employee of the NSDAP Office of Racial Policy and of the Political Department of the Ministry of the East, and a plan by K. Meyer<sup>57</sup>.

As we know, 'living space' was meant to be gained on the basis of racial purity. The inhabitants of these areas were to be strongly tied to the land and weaker persons would be treated ruthlessly. The Polish territories were a testing ground in the reconstruction of ethnic and national relations in the spirit of 'racial renewal'. The reconstruction of the European order, especially on the eastern fringes of the continent, was closely associated with the biological extermination of Poles and the racial-political selection of desirable elements. Methods to reduce the natural increase in the Polish population were also used. In addition, resettlement of the areas annexed to the Third Reich was an important stage in the great colonisation of the east: "On Polish lands, this policy served to extend, as it were, the wartime situation with the intention of Germanising the land and creating a new ethnic structure, and at the same time a new racial component. The entire process of Nazi resettlement during the period 1939–1941 was realised for the sake of protecting the German race"<sup>58</sup>. By January 1943, 121,765 people had been moved to the *General Government*, 10 % of the population of Pomerania. Among them were Poles resettled in the GG (91,533), and those placed in camps, sent to forced labour and subjected to Germanisation (30,232)<sup>59</sup>.

The biological extermination of Poles and the weakening of their psyche also occurred by discriminating against them in the most general spheres of daily life. This was exacerbated by the application of Nazi criminal law and jurisdiction, targeted mainly at the Jewish and Polish populations. For example, a decree entitled *Criminal law for Poles and Jews in the annexed eastern territories* appeared on 4 December 1941, setting forth the severest penalties for even the most minor misdemeanours, made additionally severe by wrongly qualifying the deed. Criminal law deprived Poles and Jews of any mitigating circumstances (e.g. the offender's age) during a trial. Discrimination also manifested itself in the application of criminal procedures. They included the immediate carrying out of the sentence and the exclusion of the right to have a judge removed from a case<sup>60</sup>.

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57 C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, pp. 145–149.

58 C. Madajczyk, *Faszyzm...*, vol. II, p. 258.

59 *Ibid.*, pp. 153–154 and 158–159.

60 W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, pp. 133–134; C. Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa...*, pp. 99–100; W. Lemiesz, *Paragrafi zbrodnie*, Warsaw 1963, pp. 159–163; A. Konieczny, *Pod rządami wojennego prawa karnego Trzeciej Rzeszy. Górny Śląsk 1939–1945*, Warsaw-Wrocław 1972, pp. 129–137.

It is worth noting that Polish property in the *Reichsgau Danzig–Westpreussen* was confiscated and misappropriated. As early as 19 September 1939, A. Forster issued the first decree on the confiscation of Polish property in Danzig, and further decrees were issued on 4 October of that year by the Main Trusteeship Office in the East, headed by Hermann Göring. In Danzig, a branch of the Trusteeship Office in the East operated for the *Reichsgau Danzig–Westpreussen*<sup>61</sup>. Universal de-Polonisation, daily injustice and arbitrary behaviour by German officials, the permanent threat of labour camps or extermination, and the exclusion of Poles from law turned them into pariahs in their own native land.

## 1.2 The German National List in Pomerania and Its Consequences

The first person to apply the policy of direct Germanisation was *Gauleiter* and governor of *Wartheland* Artur Greiser<sup>62</sup>. On 28 October 1939, he created the Central Office of the German National List (*Deutsche Volksliste*, DVL, *Volksliste*)<sup>63</sup>. Greiser divided the population under his authority into five categories: 1. Active Germans, 2. Passive Germans, 3. Persons of German origin who could be trusted to become fully valuable citizens again, 4. Persons of German origin who had drifted apart among Polish society but who were not actively opposed to the Germans, and 5. Persons of German origin who had drifted apart among Polish society and were actively opposed to the Germans<sup>64</sup>. On 27 November 1947, the *Tagesspiegel* reported that Greiser's list regulated ethnic policy in the east, but

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61 For more on this subject, see: C. Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa...*, pp. 226–257.

62 See: C. Epstein, *Model Nazi. Arthur Greiser and the occupation of western Poland*, Oxford 2010.

63 On the functioning of the *Volksliste* in other Polish areas occupied by the Germans, see: Z. Izdebski, *Niemiecka lista narodowa na Górnym Śląsku*, Katowice-Wrocław 1946; Z. Boda-Kreżel, *Sprawa volkslisty...*; K. M. Pospieszalski, *Niemiecka lista narodowa w „Kraju Warty”: wybór dokumentów z objaśnieniami w języku polskim i francuskim*, Poznań 1949; C. Łuczak, „Kraj Wart” 1939–1945. *Studium historyczno-gospodarcze okupacji hitlerowskiej*, Poznań 1972; W. Porzycki, *Posłuszni aż do śmierci: niemieccy urzędnicy w Kraju Warty 1939–1945*, Poznań 1997; T. Janicki, *Wieś w Kraju Warty (1939–1945)*, Poznań 1996; *Przymus germanizacyjny...*; L. Olejnik, *Zdrajcy...*; C. Madajczyk, *Faszyzm...*, vol. II, pp. 223–229; *Ibid.*, *Polityka...*, vol. II, pp. 366–463. G. Wolf, *Ideologie und Herrschaftsrationalität. Nationalsozialistische Germanisierungspolitik in Polen*, Hamburg 2012, pp. 377–404; H-Ch. Harten, *op. cit.*, pp. 99–121.

64 K. M. Pospieszalski, *op. cit.*, pp. 48–49.

K. M. Pospieszalski has established that the “Wartheland” served as a template for legal solutions in this regard<sup>65</sup>.

Greiser’s experience provided the basis of the document mentioned above, issued by Himmler on 12 September 1940 and entitled *On the examination and segregation of the population of the territories annexed to the Reich*. It contained the legal basis and organisational framework of the *Deutsche Volksliste*<sup>66</sup>, introduced six months later. In the introduction, the author noted that the annexed territories contained large groups of people who were difficult to classify from an ethnic angle. In the *Reichsgau Danzig Westpreussen*, one such group was 120,000 Kashubians and another was 100,000 Poles who, as a result of mixed marriages and German cultural influence, tended to identify themselves as Germans<sup>67</sup>. Himmler divided the population in the Polish territory into four categories. In the first category, he placed Germans (*Deutsche Volkszugehörige*) who possessed German nationality and citizenship. The second category contained persons of German descent (*Deutschstämmige*) who had German nationality. They were to be re-Germanised on the territory of the Third Reich. The third group, to consist of up to one million people, was to comprise a valuable section of foreign nationals (*Wertvolle Fremdvölkische*) and German renegades. People would be included in this category by means of racial-biological selection. A positive result in this selection conferred the status of German nationality until further notice. This group was also to be re-Germanised in the Reich. Finally, the fourth group comprised foreign nationals. Racial examinations were to be performed by *Deutsche Volksliste* boards appointed by the regional heads. The document heralded the issue of a decree about the German National List. But before this happened, at the beginning of 1941 the Reich Interior Ministry produced a draft of changes to the laws on citizenship of the Reich. Based on guidelines from Himmler, the conquered peoples were divided into better and worse categories, and into slaves, whereby strict dividing lines were drawn between them. The gradual tidying-up of German nationality commenced, starting with the lands annexed to the Reich<sup>68</sup>.

The directive on the German National List and on German nationality in the annexed eastern territories (*Verordnung über die Deutsche Volksliste und die Deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit in den eingegliederten Ostgebieten*) appeared

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65 *Doc. Occup.*, vol. IV, Poznań 1949, p. 8.

66 IZ, doc. I-53, 12 IX 1940; *Doc. Occup.*, vol V, pp. 114–118.

67 K. M. Pospieszalski, *op. cit.*, p. 46; C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, p. 370.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 372.

on 4 March 1941, signed by Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick, Hitler's deputy Rudolf Hess and SS *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler<sup>69</sup>. Bearing Hitler's seal of approval, it constituted an agreement between the Interior Ministry and the RKFDV. According to Article 1 of this directive, the purpose of the *Volksliste* was to encapsulate the German population in the eastern territories annexed to the Reich and divide it into four groups. The *Volksliste* was addressed to people who on 26 October 1939<sup>70</sup> held Polish citizenship and to people who had been citizens of Danzig on 1 September 1939. The *Volksliste* also included persons who possessed no nationality on the above dates, insofar as they had been residents of the Polish state or Free City of Danzig, and who on 26 October or 1 September 1939 had resided in the annexed eastern territories or in the Free City of Danzig<sup>71</sup>. Thus, the directive was mainly concerned with citizenship, and only in the case of stateless persons did it require residence in the eastern annexed territories.

The legal basis of the *Deutsche Volksliste* sanctioned a sharp national and racial division of the population of the annexed eastern territory, including in *Reichsgau Danzig Westpreussen*. But the actual division of the population of these areas into four groups was introduced by a secret decree (*Erllass*) of the Interior Ministry on 13 March 1941<sup>72</sup>:

**Group I** comprised German nationals who had been active on Polish territory for the sake of German nationhood before 1 September 1939. This group included members of minority political, economic, cultural, sports and religious organisations who had acted in a spirit of national awareness, as well as anyone who professed German nationhood by speaking German in public and sending their children to German schools.

**Group II** also comprised German nationals, but those who had not taken an active part in the ethnic struggle or in public life. The qualification for inclusion in this group was national awareness, manifested in the use of the German language and in cultivating German traditions in the family and among friends. It also included Germans who belonged to Polish organisations

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69 AMS, Collected Archives of the Office for State Protection in Bydgoszcz (hereinafter Kol. AUOP-B), K-1-18, p. 159; Z. Izdebski, *op. cit.*, pp. 101–104; *Doc. Occup.*, vol. V, pp. 119–122; K. M. Pospieszalski, *op. cit.*, p. 47 et seq.; J. Rados, *op. cit.*, p. 27; C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, p. 373; Idem, *Faszyzm...*, vol. II, p. 228; C. Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa...*, p. 173; D. Schenk, *op. cit.*, p. 297; L. Olejnik, *Zdrajcy...*, p. 25.

70 The decree of incorporation issued by Hitler on 8 October 1939 took effect on that date.

71 Z. Izdebski, *op. cit.*, p. 101, K. M. Pospieszalski, *op. cit.*, p. 55; W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

72 IZ, dok. I-167, *Eras*, 13 III 1941; *Doc. Occup.*, vol. V, pp. 122–139.

through necessity (e.g. because of their jobs) or who worked in Polish administrative bodies.

**Group III** comprised people of German descent who had become Polonised over time but who pledged that they would once again be full-value representatives of the German community; persons married to a German national; and persons of – from the German point of view – ambiguous national identity, speaking a Slav language but nevertheless professing German nationality through their blood ties or culture. These persons had not admitted being Germans before September 1939.

**Group IV** comprised people of German descent who had become completely Polonised between the wars and continued to manifest their Polishness. This group also included people of German descent married to non-Germans; persons who had relinquished their German nationality in order to gain high social status in Poland; persons who had come under the influence of the Protestant or Catholic churches in Poland; persons who had relinquished their German nationality due to their social status (clergy, landowners, the nobility); and persons who had lost their German nationality because they were isolated from the influence of German culture<sup>73</sup>.

In practice, the following terms were adopted for the groups in the *Volksliste*: Group I, *Reichdeutsche*; Group II, *Volksdeutsche*; and Group III, *Eingedeutsche*. Due to the relative insignificance of Group IV, no term was adopted for it.

The first two groups doubtlessly applied to Germans, but there were psychosocial differences between them, especially regarding the German minority in the Second Republic. Their German nationality had been established in the above-mentioned memorandum of 25 November 1939. The *Deutsche Volksliste* decree confirmed this status, reintroducing it as of 26 October 1939, regardless of the date of accession to one of these groups<sup>74</sup>. Members of Groups I and II were treated on an equal footing with citizens of the Third Reich. The above-mentioned *Erlass* of 13 March 1941 stressed that no external differentiation should be made between Groups I and II. Members of both groups had the same blue identity cards, confirming their nationality through their inclusion on the DVL. Subsequent directives laid down that only *Reichdeutsche* could belong to the NSDAP<sup>75</sup>.

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73 Z. Izdebski, *op. cit.*, pp. 56–59; W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, pp. 168–170; J. Rados, *op. cit.*, pp. 32–34.

74 Z. Izdebski, *op. cit.*, pp. 54 and 102.

75 For more on the status of members of Groups I and II DVL, see: K. Pospieszalski, *op. cit.*, pp. 50–51.

Group III in the *Volksliste* comprised a broad segment of people who had some connections with Germany but who in practice were often Poles. Zygmunt Izdebski has written that these were: “people normally of Polish descent of whom there were hopes that over time they could be Germanised, taking into account their hitherto political indifference”<sup>76</sup>. They included first or second-generation Germans unaware of their ties to the German community. Furthermore, the label *Eingedeutsche* in the *Reichsgau Danzig–Westpreussen* applied to the Kashubian people, regarded as a ‘middle stratum’ (*Zwischenschicht*), as well as Himmler’s estimate of 100,000 people, mostly of Polish descent, inhabiting Pomerania under the Prussian partition. Thus, part of this group qualified for recognition as non-Poles under the terms of the above-mentioned memorandum of 14 November 1940. Members of Group III of the *Volksliste* received green identity cards<sup>77</sup>. The fact that they were included on the DVL was recorded, but this did not make them German nationals. The decree of 4 March 1941 merely foresaw such possibility on the basis of a separate certificate. In the meantime, people in this group were protégés (*Schutzangehörige*) of the Third Reich. This situation changed when the so-called second decree on the DVL appeared on 31 January 1942, granting this group limited German nationality, subject to revocation within ten years (*Deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit auf Widerruf*)<sup>78</sup>. This change was certified by the appropriate stamp in the identity card. This decree also permitted the authorities to waive their right of revocation (*Verzicht auf den Widerruf*). In such case, the situation of people in Group III became equal to that of people in Groups I and II<sup>79</sup>.

People in Group IV had no automatic German nationality. They gained it on the basis of a separate certificate, which could be issued during the following ten years. They held the status of *Schutzangehörige* and had red identity cards with an annotation confirming that they were entered on the *Volksliste*<sup>80</sup>.

The obligations of those in Group III of the *Volksliste* remained the same as the obligations of those in the first two groups. Most of all, German law imposed the duty of service in the *Wehrmacht*, followed by the upbringing of children in a German spirit and participation in German organised life. Other duties

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76 Z. Izdebski, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

77 W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

78 AMS, Kol. AUOP-B, K-1-18, k. 143 and 160; K. M. Pospieszalski, *op. cit.*, pp. 56 and

64. Cf. C. Madajczyk, *Faszyzm...*, vol. II, p. 375.

79 Z. Izdebski, *op. cit.*, pp. 54–55.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

imposed on this group of people included the duty to work for one year, the Germanisation of names, etc<sup>81</sup>.

In turn, an RKFDV decree of 16 February 1942 regulated the status of people in Group IV of the DVL, labelled as renegades<sup>82</sup>. But the use of this term in public was not recommended in case it made it difficult to 'recover' these persons. Instead, it was instructed that these people be referred to as 'Polonised Germans'<sup>83</sup>. Their property was subject to seizure, but they were entitled to maintenance benefits. Those in Group IV were granted the same food rations as other Germans. Their children were permitted to join the Hitler Youth, but could only attend secondary school or college in exceptional cases. The persons in this Group were also to be deprived of any managerial positions and retrained for other occupations. They were excluded from membership of the NSDAP and from any of its associated organisations. Their property was to be sold, they were allowed to change their place of residence only after five years, and could marry only with the permission of a senior SS officer and police officer<sup>84</sup>.

Many German plans for the Polish population of areas annexed to the Reich, as well as the populations of other conquered areas, did not go further than mere intentions. Many of the legally established provisions applicable to people included on the *Volksliste* were never implemented. A lack of funds, a shortage of transport, and military operations halted the wide-scale resettlement of people. Nevertheless, the legal regulations applicable to the territories annexed to the Reich were those that were mostly implemented. Here, the DVL was a very important instrument of ethnic policy in the Third Reich. The system of ethnic relationships imposed by the Germans, segregating the population of the annexed eastern territories into groups regardless of their own convictions, placed these people in a situation without extrication. The political order was constructed in such a way that Polish individuals and groups were placed in three categories. The *Deutsche Volksliste* created a category of privileged persons comprising genuine or alleged *Volksdeutsche*, a category of people 'capable of Germanisation', and the remainder of the population, who were turned into a mass of slaves condemned to persecution and the heaviest work. Hierarchisation

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81 K. M. Pospieszalski, *op. cit.*, pp. 191–196; W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, pp. 172–173; Z. Izdebski, *op. cit.*, pp. 59–63.

82 AMS, Kol. AUOP-B, K-1-18

83 Z. Izdebski, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

84 *Ibid.*; K.M Pospieszalski, *op. cit.*, pp. 197–198; W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, p. 173.



and slow social advancement under Nazi occupation were meant to undermine morale and promote assimilation into the new German reality.

The basic thought behind the regulations on the Germanisation of the population of areas incorporated into the Reich was that this population must not be wasted, and “not a single drop of German blood” must be used to the advantage of other nations. Hence, people who had not applied to be included on the *Volksliste* were to be arrested and placed in concentration camps. This prevented their possible activity in the defence of Polishness. At the same time, an executive order dated 13 March 1941 stated that a mere declaration of intent to join the German community was not enough. It was also necessary to prove one’s origins and racial classification. Another feature taken into consideration was a suitable number of ancestors. It was also important for the candidate to create a good impression and display a suitable attitude for inclusion on the list<sup>85</sup>. The applicant’s behaviour between the wars was also considered.

As previously mentioned, the most important qualification for inclusion on the DVL was the applicant’s origins<sup>86</sup>. In September 1941, Heinrich Himmler ordered that if there were difficulties in establishing the descent of a German ancestor, candidates for inclusion in Group III were to undergo a compulsory racial examination which only experts from the SS Race and Resettlement Office were qualified to perform. In Himmler’s opinion:

“It would be irresponsible to admit Wasserpolen, Kashubians and Polish-German half-breeds to the genetic German corpus (*Volkskörper*) without a racial examination. To prevent putrefaction, the most troublesome elements are to be weeded out (*ausmerzen*) before they are entered in the *Volksliste* by mistake<sup>87</sup>”

However, Albert Forster, as with the *Gauleiter* of Upper Silesia Fritz Brecht, ignored this order<sup>88</sup>. Due to military requirements, the conditions for inclusion in this category of the *Volksliste* were relaxed on the basis of a decree dated 2 April 1943. The RKFDV permitted exemption from the requirement of ethnic origin in exceptional cases, but subject to three conditions:

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85 K. M. Pospieszalski, *op. cit.*, pp. 51–52.

86 However, according to J. Rados the most important characteristic considered for inclusion on the DVL was the right number of children. We can assume that this was connected with recruitment to the *Wehrmacht*. A family with many children offered the greatest possibilities. See J. Rados, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

87 G. E. Schafft, *Od rasizmu do ludobójstwa. Antropologia w Trzeciej Rzeszy*, Kraków 2006, p. 116.

88 C. Madajczyk, *Faszyzm...*, vol. II, p.376; W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, pp. 170–171.

1. The family must be members of the German cultural community through upbringing and many years of residence in the former Reich.
2. A member of the family must have served in a front-line combat unit for at least one year.
3. Racial suitability<sup>89</sup>.

Special offices were created to segregate the population and conduct Germanisation. In certain districts, Central Offices of the German National List (*Zentralstellen der Deutschen Volksliste*) appeared, in the regions District Offices (*Bezirksstellen*) appeared, and in the rural and urban counties there were branches (*Zweigstellen*)<sup>90</sup>. The German National List branches in the county administrative bodies were directly responsible for entering names on the *Volksliste*. They engaged in propaganda, conducted campaigns to enter people on the list, were responsible for the number and qualifications of the people entered, circulated the required documentarian, and issued the appropriate documents. The relevant NSDAP cells were responsible for recruiting staff to the branches. They consisted of mayors, village chiefs, factory managers and others who were given the task of convincing individual families to register on the *Deutsche Volksliste*, which in practice meant applying various forms of persuasion. Furthermore, in DVL offices at every level there were special committees to consider complaints and irregularities during the process of including people in various groups<sup>91</sup>.

During his visit to Danzig on 19 September 1939, Hitler said that *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen* should be Germanised within ten years. But Albert Forster, a zealous and ambitious pupil of his master, assured Hitler he would do this much sooner, within five years<sup>92</sup>. He formulated his ethnic policy on 2 November of that year, making the success of this operation conditional upon the complete cleansing of Pomerania from Poles who had settled there from the Congress territory and Galicia before the war, and from Jews<sup>93</sup>. In October he addressed his followers thus: "You may be certain: we shall cleanse. Our steadfast goal – peace and order in this German district – requires an uncompromising attitude against the enemies of the German people. The Poles must be taught who is master here. Germans, having been subjugated for twenty years, are now the masters of this country. We must be hard and inflexible<sup>94</sup>." Thus,

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89 Z. Izdebski, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

90 K. M. Pospieszalaki, *op. cit.*, p. 57; W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

91 J. Rados, *op. cit.*, pp. 29–31; W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

92 J. Milewski, *Kociewie w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej*, Warsaw 1977, p. 118.

93 C. Madajczyk, *Faszyzm...*, vol. II, pp. 393–394.

94 D. Schenk, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

for the purposes of propaganda, the *Gauleiter* of Pomerania justified the brutal methods of the Nazi struggle, claiming victimhood for the German minority in the Second Polish Republic. This exceedingly effective propaganda ploy was not intended to invite questions about the justification for the Nazi extermination machine.

“In a few years’ time, this country will have a completely new countenance. This country shall be colonised anew because we wish to go back to the times of the Teutonic Knights and make this country blossom. We shall solve the Polish question in this area. Our goal is that this country will shortly become 100 % German again. That is our sacred duty to the past, when German burghers founded cities here, German peasants tilled the soil, and Germans generally brought culture here. The Poles, who have no business here, must be firmly removed<sup>95</sup>.”

On 21 May 1941, on behalf of the Central DVL Office of *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen*, Forster issued a secret document on the practical implementation of the policy of Germanisation<sup>96</sup>. It contained two separate decrees: on the criteria to be applied when including people on the DVL, and on the organisation and functioning of *Volksliste* institutions. The precise conditions and stages which candidates for inclusion on the DVL in Pomerania had to satisfy and go through were as follows. Firstly, they had to produce birth or baptism certificates for themselves and their parents and grandparents, and men had to produce military papers<sup>97</sup>. On the basis of these documents, 100, 50 or 25 % German descent was established.

As mentioned above, so-called field work was carried out mainly by DVL units who conveyed applications to join the list to the commission for the purpose of the main investigation. The principle of ‘*liberum veto*’ applied here, because a negative opinion by one of the commission’s members led to the rejection of the entire application, an appeal against which went before a higher instance of the DVL. Apart from the factors mentioned above, a positive decision also depended on the personal impression which the candidate made on the commission members<sup>98</sup>. Considering how many people in Pomerania were classified in the groups through the terror of enrolment, the body determining the applicant’s suitability for German nationality often based its decision on outside

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95 Ibid.

96 IZ, doc. I-633, 21 V 1941.

97 See, e.g. the State Archives in Gdańsk (henceforth AP Gd), *Starostwo Countyowe w Kościerzynie (Landratsamt Berent 1939–1944)*, 23/I, vol. 2.

98 Ibid., p. 176.

appearances<sup>99</sup> because this involved the least effort. Thus, the *Volkliste* in its administrative dimension came down to deciding who belonged to the Germanic or Slav race on the basis of outside appearances or pseudo-scientific research.

In Pomerania, the first to be entered on the *Volkliste* were local Germans and representatives of the “middle stratum” chosen during a preliminary selection process (*Vorerfassung*) that lasted between May and July 1941, mainly people whose belongings had been confiscated<sup>100</sup>, who had not been granted pensions or aid, who intended to get married, who were earmarked for promotion to a higher position, who had relatives in the Reich or *Wehrmacht*, and persons destined for resettlement<sup>101</sup>. A. Forster entrusted the task of segregation to the NSDAP apparatus. The final decision was made by the *Blockleiter*<sup>102</sup>, situated lower in the party hierarchy. These persons were supposed to receive compensation for their confiscated belongings and property later. Their enforced ‘path to Germanisation’ led via a camp in Jabłonowo specially set up for this purpose<sup>103</sup>. Racial selection in Pomerania ended at the beginning of 1943, together with the end of resettlement. Altogether, between April 1941 and the end of 1942, 2,054 people were selected for further assimilation on the territory of the Reich proper<sup>104</sup>.

The first attempts at direct Germanisation of the population of Pomerania did not succeed. For example, in the county of Gniew, with 4,125 inhabitants, only 650 people had voluntarily joined the *Volkliste* by the end of 1941. In the county of Tczew during the same period, 6,847 applied to join the list, whilst in Starogard Gdański 95 Polish families applied for inclusion in group III of the list<sup>105</sup>. The Germanisation campaign in the remaining counties of Pomerania had similar results<sup>106</sup>.

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99 Where there was no evidence of the German descent of a candidate for the DVL, A. Forster ordered NSDAP members to determine racial qualification on the basis of external appearances. See C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, pp. 406 and 408.

100 The payment of compensation to disenfranchised Poles who had agreed to join the *Volkliste* also occurred in 1942–1944. See AP Gd, SS and Police High Command, Danzig-Westpreussen, 265/449–4485, *Odszkodowania dla wywłaszczonych Polaków, przyjętych następnie na Volklistę*.

101 W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

102 *Ibid.*, p. 177.

103 C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, p. 404.

104 W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

105 J. Milewski, *op. cit.*, pp. 124–125.

106 E. A. Cysewski, *Był taki czas kiedy las był moim domem*, Gdańsk 1972, p. 18.

We should note that this first stage of the enrolment process already took place in an atmosphere of terror. In a memorandum dated 30 October 1941, a *Gauleiter* who was not pleased with the results of the 'preliminary selection' ordered that the names of people who had been chosen for Germanisation but who had hesitated to enrol on the list, or had refused to do so, should be conveyed to local SS units<sup>107</sup>. In February 1942, Forster issued a memorandum calling on all hesitant Poles, also called 'complainers'<sup>108</sup>, who had refused to enrol on the list, to appear before the appropriate DVL or SS units<sup>109</sup>. No doubt this order arose great fear among the Polish population and was a prelude to the psychosis that would shortly follow.

During the initial period of the DVL's operation in *Reichsgau Danzig Westpreussen*, there was a kind of 'prelude' to a Germanisation campaign. Forster's probe was intended to combine in the practical process of Germanisation such factors as the expected affiliation and possible sentiments on the part of the local population towards Germanisation, and the use of compulsion and terror.

Meanwhile, the German army's first major defeat at Moscow in December 1941, marking the failure of the concept of *Blitzkrieg* in the east, not only put an end to the *Generalplan Ost*, but also spurred an immediate demand for human resources, chiefly soldiers, but also industrial manpower<sup>110</sup>. In this way, under pressure from enormous military and economic needs, a mass enrolment of the population on the German National List commenced in the areas in question<sup>111</sup>.

The second period of registration on the DVL of Poles living in the annexed territories began with a directive from Himmler dated 10 February 1942, ordering an acceleration and simplification of the registration procedure<sup>112</sup>. The author of this document assumed that all of the inhabitants of the annexed territories were of German descent. Therefore, all of them were obliged to register for

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107 IZ, dok. I-633, 21 V 1941; C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, p. 406.

108 E. Ogłóza, *Pomorze pod okupacją niemiecką w latach 1939–1945. Fragment toruński*, Toruń 1945, p. 48.

109 C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, p. 409.

110 See, e.g. A. Czubiński, *Historia drugiej wojny światowej 1939–1945*, Poznań 2006, pp. 178–181. Between 22 June and 31 December 1941, 830,903 German troops became casualties in the USSR: those killed and missing accounted for 26 % of the entire army of 3.2 million men with which Germany went to war with the USSR. These losses were several times greater than those suffered in all previous campaigns between 1939 and 1941.

111 Por. C. Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa...*, pp. 176–177.

112 IZ, dok.-107, 159 and 253, 10 II 1942; *Doc. Occup.*, vol. V, pt. I, pp. 145–146.

inclusion on the *Volksliste* by 31 March 1942<sup>113</sup>. The residents of these areas faced the choice of either registering themselves on the list or being sent to a concentration camp. Directives like this placed the *Gauleiter* of Gdansk in a favourable position because they enabled him to keep his promise to Hitler regarding the complete Germanisation of the area under his authority.

On the basis of Himmler's directives, on 22 February 1942 Albert Forster issued a memorandum to the population under his authority – the infamous *Aufruf* – on how to deal with people who refused to register on the *Volksliste*. He announced that the 36-month period of investigating the population had ended. However, some people may have been omitted from the selection, and it is to these that Forster addressed his memorandum, giving them a final chance to register on the DVL. The final deadline for this was set at 31 March 1942. Forster stressed that at the end of the victorious war it would not be possible to join German society. Anyone who considered him/herself a Pole would be treated on a par with the worst enemies of the German people<sup>114</sup>.

Forster's memorandum ushered in a period of mass compulsory registration of Poles on the *Volksliste*. Local authorities were authorised to apply pressure and physical force on those who refused to register. The memorandum appeared in the main newspapers of Pomerania (e.g. the *Deutsche Rundschau*), and was then posted in public places<sup>115</sup>. At the same time, a campaign commenced urging people to register on the *Volksliste*, spurred on by the *Blockleiter*s in particular. All apartments were visited and the residents urged to register with a mixture of persuasion and threats<sup>116</sup>. The DVL became the primary issue in the work of the occupation authorities and the NSDAP. By 15 March 1942, Forster had instructed that all work be set aside for the sake of direct Germanisation, and assumed personal supervision over the entire operation. The recruitment boards commenced their work on 1 April of that year. As mentioned above, the registration procedure was shortened and simplified<sup>117</sup>. Families and individuals aged over 21 received written orders to appear before a board<sup>118</sup>. This time, those

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113 T. Bolduan, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

114 IZ, doc. I-178, 22 II 1942. See also: AMS, Kol. AUOP-B, K-1-18, k. 144. J. Sziling, *Przymusowa służba Polaków z III grupy niemieckiej listy narodowościowej w Wehrmachcie na przykładzie Pomorza Gdańskiego* [in:] „Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej”, Warsaw 1991, p. 94. See also E.A. Cysewski, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

115 C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, pp. 411–412.

116 AMS, Kol. AUOP-B, K-1-18, k. 145.

117 IZ, doc. I-614, 23 II 1942.

118 *Wspomnienia działaczy kaszubskich*, compiled by J. Pawlik, Białystok 1973, p. 306.

seeking inclusion in a particular category did not have to produce certificates or other documents, nor fill in the six forms that had been required in the memorandum of 21 February 1941. The sole condition for enrolment in the DVL was signing the following application: *I apply for registration on the German national list for myself and my family. My family comprises the following persons...*<sup>119</sup>.

At first, the population of Pomerania assumed a wait-and-see attitude. Small groups were prepared to accept the *Volkliste*, mainly farm owners working for the Germans. But the longest opposition was put up by employees of large enterprises, e.g. employees of the port of Gdynia. They knew very well that they were needed for the German economy, therefore they were granted the status of 'subjects', and the worst they could expect was to be sent into the depths of the Reich to perform the same work<sup>120</sup>.

The implementation of Forster's memorandum and the application of force and terror caused tragedy among the Polish population who, fearful for their lives, registered themselves on the list *en-masse*. The population of Pomerania well remembered the first months of the occupation when, as previously mentioned, between 36,000 and 42,000 people died in mass executions. They remembered Piaśnica, the Szpegawsk Forest and other execution sites. They feared that the situation may repeat itself: "Decisions to register were induced by a kind of psychosis, backed by compulsion from employers and by hopes for relief from one's own misery and that of one's relatives<sup>121</sup>." Most people regarded their inclusion on the DVL as a means of survival and of securing the fortunes of their families, and had nothing to do with forsaking their Polish nationality<sup>122</sup>. This stage of the Germanisation campaign is sometimes described as a "mass production" of German citizens out of Poles<sup>123</sup>. The institution of the German National List has been described as a mechanism of enslavement and of enforcing German identity via an administrative procedure<sup>124</sup>.

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119 AMS, Kol. AUOP-B, K-1-18, k. 144; E. Ogłóza, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

120 C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, pp. 413–414.

121 W. Jastrzębski, *Przymus germanizacyjny w Okręgu Rzeszy Gdańsk-Prusy Zachodnie w latach 1939–1945* [in:] *Przymus germanizacyjny...*, p. 15. A similar opinion was expressed by C. Madajczyk in *Polityka...*, vol. I, p. 423.

122 Comp.: W. Wrześniński, *Polska trauma* [in:] *Dramat przemocy w historycznej perspektywie*, ed. J. Chrobaczyński and W. Wrześniński, Kraków 2004, pp. 143–145, 153–154.

123 A. Czarnik, *Moje powroty do przeszłości*, Słupsk 2005, p. 105.

124 M. Latoszek, *Wielokulturowość mieszkańców Pomorza na tle procesów przemian społecznych (1945–1995)* [in:] *Pomorze–trudna ojczyzna?*, ed. A. Sakson, Poznań 1996, p. 164.

The greatest number of enrolments occurred from April to June 1942. By the middle of October of that year, a total of 681,419 people in *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen* had been enrolled in the *Volksliste*, of whom 516,364 were in group III and 85,518, 76,872 and 2,665 were included in groups I, II and IV respectively<sup>125</sup>. Entire villages and small towns were often placed on the German National List<sup>126</sup>.

We should note that enrolment on the *Volksliste* did not always result in the Nazi authorities awarding German nationality. Applications from people who might be a burden on the Third Reich were rejected. Such people included the elderly, infirm and seriously ill. At the same time, those suspected of a genetic disorder or chronic disease, whatever the group to which they had been assigned, were subject to sterilisation to prevent the 'impairment' of future generations. Applications rejected in the first instance on the basis of the Interior Minister's memorandum of 4 May 1942 were to be reconsidered at a higher level on the basis of a compulsory appeal filed by the applicant<sup>127</sup>. As not everyone complied with this rule, Forster ordered that all rejected applications be reconsidered, which enabled him to implement the concept of a general Germanisation of Pomerania. People who did not file an appeal were threatened and intimidated by being evicted from their homes, dismissed from work, thrown in prison or even sent to labour or concentration camps<sup>128</sup>. The first people accused of refusing to join the DVL arrived at the concentration camp in Stutthof in the second half of 1942. *Wehrmacht* deserters met a similar fate<sup>129</sup>. According to K. Ciechanowski, internment in a camp was meant not so much to be a punishment for those refusing to enrol, but rather a general preventive measure<sup>130</sup>. In addition, opponents were assigned to physical labour in Pomerania, Germany or the Silesian coalmines<sup>131</sup>. The families of farmers were expelled from their farms and sent to labour camps in Potulice, Smukal and Torun, or to German farms in the former East Prussian counties annexed to Pomerania, or placed in a single small farm together with other Polish families<sup>132</sup>. The resettlement of Poles also

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125 IZ, dok. I-170.

126 W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, p. 190; C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, p. 415.

127 AP Gd, *Starostwo Powiatowe* (hereinafter SP) w *Wejherowie 1939–1945*, 37/471, 4 V 1942, AMS, Kol. AUOP-B, K-1-18, k. 153; C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, p. 417.

128 Zob. np.: AP Gd, *Wyższy Dowódca SS i Policji. Gdańsk Prusy-Zachodnie*, 265/1.

129 K. Ciechanowski, *Stutthof–hitlerowski obóz koncentracyjny*, Warszawa 1988..., p. 124.

130 K. Ciechanowski, *Pobór...*, p. 48.

131 C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, p. 417.

132 W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, p. 188.



resulted in enrolments on the DVL in areas that belonged to Germany before the war. For example, twenty applications to the *Volksliste* submitted in the district of Kwidzyn in 1941–1942 have survived<sup>133</sup>.

Thus, the mass submission of applications to enrol on the German National List was induced by the general atmosphere of threat and panic. Pressure was applied by the police and by employers, who demanded evidence of enrolment, e.g. as a condition for being allowed to live in an official apartment. Business managers and supervisors, as well as officials in various institutions, compelled employees to declare a change in their nationality<sup>134</sup>. For this purpose, meetings were organised, frequently attended by uniformed policemen, which merely added to the atmosphere of coercion<sup>135</sup>.

The direct psychological factors that induced applications to join the list certainly included the short deadline by which the application had to be filed and the long lines of applicants at the DVL offices. This served to create ‘artificial’ crowds and the impression that most of the inhabitants of Pomerania were joining, to help convince anyone who still hesitated<sup>136</sup>. In many homes, the only topic was whether to apply or not to apply<sup>137</sup>. The fact that those who refused were deprived of their food coupons and were not sold coal, potatoes and other essential commodities also played a part. We should also note that the Polish population of Pomerania was weakened spiritually and intellectually because it had lost its intelligentsia and leadership in the first months of the war. Despite these enormous hindrances, Poles included on the *Volksliste* cultivated Polish cultural traditions at home, and publicly manifested their Polishness and patriotic sentiment by speaking in Polish and singing Polish songs<sup>138</sup>.

The general rule was that entire families were investigated because the genetic evidence to qualify for inclusion in a particular DVL group had to be produced in the presence of the entire family. This was also a way of avoiding the break-up

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133 AP Gd, *Landratatura w Kwidzynie (Landratsamt Marienwerder)*, 33/62–81, *Akta personalne 1941–1942*.

134 About pressure from employers to join the DVL, see: E.A. Cysewski, *op. cit.*, pp. 18–23.

135 C. Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa...*, p. 178.

136 For more on attitudes and actions taken under pressure from society, see D.T. Kendrick, S.L., Neuberg, R. B., Cialdini, *Psychologia społeczna*, Gdańsk 2002, pp. 283–333.

137 A. Czarnik, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

138 B. Chrzanowski, *Kształtowanie się nastrojów ludności polskiej i niemieckiej na Pomorzu w świetle źródeł konspiracyjnych 1939–1944* [in:] *Spółczesność pomorskie w latach okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1945*. Materials from an academic session, Toruń, 2004, ed. K. Minczykowska and J. Sziling, pp. 25–46; W. Wrzesiński, *Polska...*, p. 153.

of values and any complaints. A problem occurred in the case of mixed Polish-German marriages where the spouses were wed before the war. Occasionally, parents were classified differently from their children. Decisions regarding mixed marriages were reached on the basis of the candidate's occupation, length of employment, employer's opinion, social status, health, cleanliness at home and whether he or she had any ever been convicted. If the assessment was positive, the entire family was entered on the DVL<sup>139</sup>. However, there were cases where members of the same family were placed in different groups on the *Volksliste*. Therefore, Forster's next move towards obtaining human material *en-masse* to be Germanised was a campaign of 'restoring the unity of families', commenced in October 1942<sup>140</sup>.

Some Poles joined the German National List simply in order to adapt to the new conditions. These were mainly people with an undeveloped national consciousness or fluctuating national identity. Occasionally, Poles on the *Volksliste* collaborated with the Germans by making denunciations, spying and intimidating other Poles. This was a case of conscious enrolment and of a desire to serve the Germans<sup>141</sup>. Under the stresses of the experience of war, persons of a weaker psyche or low sense of morality became submissive towards Hitlerite principles of co-existence. Most voluntary enrolments on the German National List occurred in 1940–1941, and comprised mostly people who held the above-mentioned certificates of 'non-membership of the Polish nation'<sup>142</sup>.

The most valuable human material was men fit to bear arms. Thus, the direct result of joining the DVL for men was compulsory recruitment to the ranks of the *Wehrmacht*<sup>143</sup>. Most recruits underwent this difficult service with great bitterness and a heavy heart<sup>144</sup>. This was all the more so because the uniforms in which they were to fight symbolised the terror of the occupation: executions, concentration camps, labour camps, resettlement, etc., i.e. the misfortunes of many of their relatives. Very often, recruits manifested genuine patriotic feelings, for example by singing the Polish national anthem or hymns in the trains taking them to

139 G. E. Schafft, *op. cit.*, pp. 117–118.

140 C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, p. 418.

141 J. Chrobaczyński, *Czy przemoc jest „motorem” historii?* [in:] *Dramat przemocy...*, p. 27.

142 Zob. A. Czarnik, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

143 For more on this subject, see: K. Ciechanowski, *Ruch oporu na Pomorzu Gdańskim 1939–1945*, Warsaw 1972; Idem, *op. cit.*, pp. 41–72; C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, p. 422 and in; T. Jaszowski, *Problem narodowościowy w pomorskim ruchu oporu*. Materiały drukowane.

144 B. Reszka, *Ich losy. Z życia kaszubskich Gochów 1939–1948*, Rumia 2005.

the front<sup>145</sup>. There were numerous cases of objection to service and desertion from the *Wehrmacht* on both the eastern and western front<sup>146</sup>. According to figures from July 1945, the Polish Armed Forces in the west numbered 288,000 soldiers, of whom 89,600, or 31 %, had deserted from the *Wehrmacht*<sup>147</sup>. It is worth mentioning that joining the German National List was frequently a condition for continuing conspiratorial work. Many members of the underground thus received orders from their superiors to enrol themselves in Group III<sup>148</sup>. Needless to say, enrolment on the *Volksliste* did not always guarantee the trust of the occupying authorities<sup>149</sup>. The Nazi authorities sought out men attempting to avoid military service and deserters. If a deserter was caught there was only one penalty – death, whilst his family ended up in a concentration camp<sup>150</sup>. On 28 September 1943, Fritz Katzmann, senior SS and police commandant and assistant to the Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationhood, ordered that the families of soldiers who had been convicted or who had refused to serve be sent to the camp in Potulice<sup>151</sup> within four hours after the Military Court had passed sentence<sup>152</sup>.

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145 See *Wspomnienia działaczy ...*, pp. 14–15; C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, p. 419; L. Jażdżewski, *Kaszubi w Wehrmachcie 1942–1945*, Gdańsk 1998, p. 77. Doctoral thesis defended at Gdańsk University.

146 Many escaped to the forests, mainly the Bory Tucholskie, joining partisan units, including the largest one in Gdańsk Pomerania called *Gryf Pomorski*, the Home Army, Polish Resurgent Army and others. See: C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, p. 420.

147 W. Jastrzębski, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

148 As an example, we can cite Antoni Wiśniewski, head of the intelligence cell KG ZWZ-AK on the coast. See: AMS, *Teczka osobowa Antoniego Wiśniewskiego*, Z-II-1-1. Many members of the Pomeranian resistance movement called the Lizard Union (*Związek Jaszczurczy*) enrolled themselves in Group III of the *Volksliste* so that they could continue their conspiratorial work safely. They included Antoni Smużyński, Z. Grochocki, Paweł Wyczyński, and Jan Wałaszewski. See: *Fundacja Archiwum i Muzeum Pomorskie Armii Krajowej and Wojskowej Służby Polek* (hereinafter FAiMPAK and WSP), *Związek Jaszczurczy*, file No. 78, pp. 11, 21; *Teczka osobowa Leona Tojzy*, M-366/978, p. 3; *Teczka osobowa Jahna Aleksandra Marcina*, M-1008/1747, p. 2.

149 See: FAiMPAK and WSP, *Teczka osobowa Jana Sznajdera*, M-47/656, p. 4.

150 J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, p. 100 et seq. K. Ciechanowski, *Pobór Polaków...*, pp. 55–56.

151 For more about the camp in Potulice, see: W. Jastrzębski, *Potulice: hitlerowski obóz przesiedleńczy i pracy (luty 1941 r.–styczeń 1945 r.)*, Poznań 1967; *Obóz w Potulicach – aspekt trudnego sąsiedztwa polsko-niemieckiego w okresie dwóch totalitaryzmów*, ed. A. Paczoska, Bydgoszcz 2005.

152 J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

Meanwhile, for Forster, service in the *Wehrmacht* was yet another way of Germanising the Polish population. In the policy of Germanisation, he attached great importance to the young generation, who he believed would be quickest and most eager to accept the slogans of national socialism. Last but not least, the purpose of drawing Poles into the German army was to weaken the Polish underground, including partisan units<sup>153</sup>.

The period 1939–1941 was when the Germans enjoyed military successes and expected rapid victory. Hence, the German question at that time was not so very connected with military issues. As mentioned above, a change occurred in early 1942, when the Germans made decisions on direct Germanisation conditional upon obtaining a recruit to the German army. In 1944, between 85,000 and 90,000 Poles from *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen* belonging to Group III of the DVL served in the ranks of the German army<sup>154</sup>. Of these, about 4,500 had been killed and some 2,200 had deserted by the end of 1944<sup>155</sup>.

Nevertheless, the full enforcement of obligations upon the disenfranchised Poles exceeded the capabilities of the German authorities, illustrated by the fact that anyone who failed to display the proper attitude was deprived of his *Ausweis*. This occurred if the bearer neglected his work, engaged in sabotage or showed off the fact that he was Polish. The administrative authorities and the security apparatus both complained that members of Group III of the DVL, the most numerous group in Pomerania, spoke Polish in public, disrespected the Germans, and either refused work or deserted their work places<sup>156</sup>. Emil Ogłóza even wrote about a campaign against Group III members in 1943, simultaneous arrests of members of underground organisations, and weekly transports to the Stutthof concentration camp, consisting solely of Poles belonging to Group III<sup>157</sup>. In any case, they were deprived of various rights which their DVL category had

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153 Ibid., p. 97. The German law on military service of 1935 disqualified persons of ‘foreign blood’ from the *Wehrmacht* and admitted only Germans. Hitler changed this in 1943, allowing persons with Polish nationality and citizenship with the appropriate racial qualities and under the influence of German culture to join the *Volksliste*, provided that they served on the front for at least one year, even if they had never applied to join previously or their application had been rejected. This possibility was regulated in law by a decree of the Reich Interior Ministry dated 4 August 1943.

154 J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

155 Ibid., p. 108.

156 W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, pp. 195–196.

157 E. Ogłóza, *op. cit.*, p. 55. These cases were confirmed by the testimonies of people appearing before the municipal courts in rehabilitation cases.

conferred upon them<sup>158</sup>. Among other things, they did not get back the farms that had been taken from them before enrolment, were discriminated against regarding pensions and social benefits, were unable to obtain credit, were refused licences to possess a radio, and young people had restricted access to secondary and higher education<sup>159</sup>. Moreover, they were not allowed to marry people belonging to other groups and were subject to deportation to the Reich for Germanisation<sup>160</sup>.

For this treatise, I examined a record of the post-1945 rehabilitation of persons entered on the *Volksliste* in Gdańsk. Containing 1,770 names of people who had signed the *Declaration of loyalty to the Polish nation and state* at the end of the war, the record also contains the personal details of people who joined the DVL. Thus, we can read the age and sex of the rehabilitated persons and the date and place where they enrolled on the *Volksliste*. An exhaustive volume listing people anxious to obtain Polish citizenship confirms that a *Deutsche Volksliste* was maintained in the Free City of Danzig that contained 1,511 names<sup>161</sup>. However, some literary sources claim that the DVL did not apply in that area<sup>162</sup>. Other areas where people on the DVL were rehabilitated included Gdynia and the following counties: Kartuzy, Starogard, Tczew, Kościerz, Toruń, Grudziądz, Chojnice, Bydgoszcz, Chełmno, Brodnica, Tuchola, and Wąbrzeźno<sup>163</sup>.

It was very interesting to discover the age the people rehabilitated in Gdańsk after 1945 had been when they joined the DVL, as well as their sex. I examined 1,216 personal files. The figures in the tables below show that most of those who enrolled voluntarily or under pressure (429 people) had been born during 1901–1910, meaning that they were aged 32–41 at the time, followed by 232 people born during 1891–1900 and 221 people born in 1921–1930. There were also persons who enrolled at the age of 42–51 and 12–21. The next age category is persons born in 1911–1920, of whom 204 persons aged 22–31 joined the DVL. Far fewer people, just 78, born in 1881–1890, aged 52–61, joined the list.

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158 *Ibid.*, p. 33 et seq.

159 IZ, doc. 308; Zob. C. Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa...*, p. 175.

160 J. Milewski, *op. cit.*, pp. 126–127.

161 AP Gd, Municipal Council and Corporation of the City of Gdańsk (hereinafter MRN-ZMG), 1165/1110, *Rejestr deklaracji wierności (\*Register of loyalty declarations) 1945–1946*. This documentation contains much information about the rehabilitation operation which shall be discussed later in this work.

162 W. Jastrzębski, *W dalekim obcym kraju. Deportacje Polaków z Pomorza do ZSRR w 1945 r.*, Bydgoszcz 1990, p. 22.

163 AP Gd, MRN-ZMG, 1165/1110, *Rejestr deklaracji wierności 1945–1946*.

**Tab. 1:** Persons on the DVL who applied for rehabilitation in Gdańsk after 1945, by age..

Age bracket	62–82 (1860–1880)	52–61 (1881–1890)	42–51 (1891–1900)	32–41 (1901–1910)	22–31 (1911–1920)	12–21 (1921–1930)	Total
Number of persons on the DVL	42	78	232	429	204	231	1216

Source: The author's research based on documents held by the State Archives in Gdańsk: Municipal Council and Corporation of the City of Gdańsk, 1165/1110, *Rejestr deklaracji wierności* (register of loyalty declarations) 1945–1946l.

**Tab. 2:** Persons on the DVL who applied for rehabilitation in Gdańsk after 1945, by sex.

Sex	Number	%
Women	870	71.5
Men	346	28.5
Total	1,216	100

Source: The author's research based on documents held by the State Archives in Gdańsk: Municipal Council and Corporation of the City of Gdańsk, 1165/1110, *Rejestr deklaracji wierności* (register of loyalty declarations) 1945–1946.

Finally, the smallest category of people entered on the German National List was those born in 1860–1880, aged 62–82 when they joined (42 people). The above records confirm information in literary sources the most intensive process of Germanisation took place in the spring and summer of 1942. Another criterion of investigation was sex. The result of my investigation shows that out of 1,216 people, 870 were women (71.5 %) <sup>164</sup>.

These figures confirm that the most frequent reason for joining the *Volksliste* was to secure one's own existence and that of one's family, because the people involved were in the 32–41 age bracket and usually had family obligations, especially caring for children. This latter fact may explain why the majority of the people whose records I examined were women, whereas men evaded enrolment because of the duty to serve in the German army. Nevertheless, the main factor affecting the balance between the sexes of DVL membership was that the men were away serving on the front.

An issue that has been treated somewhat superficially and too vaguely in literature is the problem of the *Volksdeutsche*, in other words those included in Group II of the *Volksliste*. It has been stressed that people were included in

<sup>164</sup> AP Gd, MRN-ZMG, 1165/1110, *Rejestr deklaracji wierności 1945–1946*.

this group if they collaborated with the occupiers. But the largest majority of people on the DVL were in Group III, which may account for the opinion that to become a *Volksdeutsche*, one had to ‘make a little effort’. However, according to court materials many of these people resisted Germanisation for as long as they could, until they found themselves in a hopeless situation – under brutal threats of the death of loved ones, transportation to a concentration or labour camp, termination of pension benefits or confiscation of their farm, often the sole source of making a living, whereupon they resolved to apply to join the DVL<sup>165</sup>. Occasionally, the occupiers did not respect the wishes of the applicant regarding groups. A person could be placed in Group II despite the choice he or she had made on the application form. Those who displayed the greatest resistance to joining the DVL were given documents to sign which they had never set eyes on before. This method was used the most often by employers, threatening to dismiss the employee or evict them from their home if they did not sign. In a climate of fear, a lack of German and a low level of ability, especially on the part of the elderly and infirm, people signed an application for an *Ausweis* not always aware of the consequences of this action.

However, as with Group III the enrolment of Poles in Group II was at its most intense after February 1942, i.e. after Forster had published his *Aufruf*. Here are typical examples of coerced enrolment as *Volksdeutsche* in the county of Tczew. Franciszek Lasecki joined the *Volksliste* in a critical situation. Upon his return from a concentration camp the Germans robbed him of everything and then told him they would give him his money back if he signed the application<sup>166</sup>. Paweł Lewandowski was enrolled in Group II of the DVL in May 1942, without effort. After the war, in his application for rehabilitation, he wrote:

“(…) I was enrolled in Group II probably by the German station master, Goetzky, a party man, whose task was to Germanise as many railwaymen as possible (…). Refusal to comply would have been tantamount to a death sentence for me and my family, for Goetzky applied the most revolting repressive measures to those who refused<sup>167</sup>”

Apart from providing testimony of the tragedy experienced by the population of Pomerania during the war, the documents on rehabilitation serve a valuable purpose. They are an interesting source of information on the bravery and self-sacrifice of the people of Pomerania, who did not hesitate to show solidarity with

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165 AMS, Kol. AUOP-B, K-1-18, k. 153.

166 Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Gdańsk (hereinafter AIPN Gd), *Akta rehabilitacyjne*, 20/2, k. 2.

167 AIPN Gd, *Akta rehabilitacyjne*, 20/5, k. 34.

their compatriots despite the severe regulations in force there during the war. For example, Jadwiga Condrat of Gniew signed a document she had been given saying that she had been accepted into the *Volksliste*, even though she had never applied. As she said during her rehabilitation proceedings: “The pressure from my German employer, Fiberkon was too great<sup>168</sup>.” Despite threats and blackmail, she continued to use Polish and also helped many Poles, especially those interred in a camp set up at the castle of Gniew. In turn, Zenon Gliszczyński was forced by the head of the village of Kulice, Guenter Fischer, to work in the local school. He was to teach in the German language and in the German spirit, “in order to redeem schoolchildren running about the streets and speaking Polish.” There was a shortage of teachers, and only a *Volksdeutsche* could carry out this profession. Fischer produced blue certificates of acceptance to Group II for the entire family, threatening them with a concentration camp if they refused. Needless to say, the terrorised teacher taught in Polish ‘on the quiet’ and helped Poles released from camp. This resulted in a very minor punishment for him; he was transferred to a school in Piaseczno<sup>169</sup>.

Witnesses appealing in rehabilitation proceedings mentioned many other displays of solidarity and civil courage by Poles who had been forcibly Germanised. Most often, they gave shelter to people in hiding (e.g. *Wehrmacht* deserters), looked after the belongings of people deported to camps, provided material assistance to camp and prison inmates, and arranged food. For example, the owner of a bakery in Gniew who had enrolled on the *Volksliste* ran the bakery on his own thanks to which, despite the strict controls on the production and sale of bread, he helped everyone in need, exposing himself to reprisals from the German authorities. Another way to raise the spirits of Poles was whispered propaganda. For example, Wojciech Johannsen of Gniew secretly listened to Polish broadcasts by the BBC in London, for which he and his family were repeatedly threatened with a concentration camp<sup>170</sup>. When talking to her neighbours in Polish, Benedykta Tomaszewska of Gniew frequently stressed that: “Poland will always be”. When she said this to her employer’s wife, she was arrested for a few days. After several refusals and much blackmail, Tomaszewska finally signed a document put before her, certifying that she had been accepted into Group II of the German National List<sup>171</sup>.

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168 AIPN Gd, *Akta rehabilitacyjne*, 17/15b, k. 5.

169 AIPN Gd, *Akta rehabilitacyjne*, 17/16, k. 6.

170 AIPN Gd, *Akta rehabilitacyjne*, 17/12, k. 12.

171 AIPN Gd, *Akta rehabilitacyjne*, 17/17, k. 2.



Enrolment on the German National List came to a halt in the middle of September 1944. Offices of the *Deutsche Volksliste* ceased work, and Albert Forster suspended meetings of district boards for six months<sup>172</sup>.

Due to the lack of exhaustive source data, it is not possible to establish the exact number of people on the *Volksliste*. But W. Jastrzębski has determined that the policy of direct Germanisation implemented in Pomerania between March 1941 and January 1944 resulted in 937,000 people finding themselves on the list. According to his findings, membership of the individual groups was as follows: Group I had 115,000 people, Group II had 95,000, Group III had 725,000, and 2,000 people belonged to Group IV. However, we should accept that as at 15 September 1944, the day when the enrolment campaign stopped completely<sup>173</sup>, the number of people on the list grew to 950,000 out of a population of 1,332,000 in this area (excluding the Free City of Danzig)<sup>174</sup>. These figures apply to the whole *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen*, whereby the greatest number of Germanised people was in the area of Gdańsk (79.9 %), the smallest number in the area of Kwidzyn (44.9 %), and in the area of Bydgoszcz it was 44.9 %<sup>175</sup>.

In the northern counties of *Reichsgau Danzig Westpreussen*, i.e. those annexed to the Voivodship of Gdańsk in 1945, the numbers of Pomeranians who had been enrolled in Group III by May 1944 were 66,422 in Gdynia (52.6 %), 40,217 in Kartuzy (51.8 %), 37,195 in Kościerz (70.1 %), 62,479 in Starogard (80 %), 51,217 in Tczew (70.5 %), and 65,531 in Wejherowo (69 %)<sup>176</sup>. To these we should add at least 1,511 people enrolled on the list in Gdańsk. This cannot be regarded as the final figure of people Germanised in that city because they might have applied for rehabilitation elsewhere in Poland.

Establishing the number of people belonging to Group II of the DVL is a greater problem. Researchers and post-war officials maintaining documentation often placed *Volksdeutsche* and *Reichsdeutsche* in one and the same category, 'Germans'. Hence, we obtain the following figures of membership of Groups I and II together: 26,824 in the county of Gdynia (20.4 %), 7,842 in Kartuzy

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172 W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

173 *Dzieje Kartuzy*, vol. 2, ed. M. Widernik, Kartuzy 2001, p. 180.

174 W. Jastrzębski, J. Sziling, *op. cit.*, p. 194; C. Madajczyk, *Polityka...*, vol. I, p. 415.

175 W. Jastrzębski, *W dalekim...*, p. 26

176 *Ibid.*, p. 22. See also other statistics on membership of the DVL: *Dzieje...*, pp. 176–180; *Dzieje Stargardu. Historia miasta od 1920 r.*, vol. 2, ed. M. Kallas, Stargard Gdański 2000, p. 168; J. Milewski, *op. cit.*, pp. 133–135; *Historia Tczewa*, ed. W. Długockęcki, Tczew 1998, p. 329; *Ziemia wejherowska*, ed. R. Osowicka and J. Gruby, Gdańsk 1980, pp. 197–198.

(10.1 %), 7,433 in Kościerz (12.9 %), 7,809 in Starogard (10.0 %), 16,436 in Tczew (22.5 %), and 18,045 in Wejherowo (19.0 %)<sup>177</sup>.

The situation is similar with Group IV which, applied to a minimum degree by the Nazis, is treated as part of Group III in official documentation and literature. We know that by 1 May 1943 in Wejherowo county, there were 129 people in this category of the *Volksliste*<sup>178</sup>. But if we take the starting figure, mentioned previously, of 2,000 people in Group IV in *Reichsgau Danzig Westpreussen* in January 1944 and divide it by 23, the number of counties in which the DVL is said to have operated<sup>179</sup>, we arrive at a figure of some 100,000 people who were probably included in Group IV of the DVL in *Reichsgau Danzig Westpreussen*.

These statistics do not represent a genuine de-Polonisation of the Polish inhabitants of Pomerania. The German authorities achieved these figures through the use of compulsion. Significantly, the German authorities never exploited these figures for propaganda or party purposes<sup>180</sup>. Even though the Germans realised that their avowed aim of Germanising the conquered peoples had turned into a fiasco, the leader of this venture, Heinrich Himmler, still claimed in May 1944 that a 'Germanic state' would emerge after the war, meant to incorporate 30 million people of Germanic origin from all over the world. Moreover, the Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationhood wanted to create an SS state in the east, contained within a rectangle bordered by the cities of Lublin, Żytomierz, Winnica and Lwów<sup>181</sup>.

Forster's policy of Germanisation gave the Poles in Pomerania a difficult choice: either to enrol in the DVL, in the mistaken conviction that this would

177 W. Jastrzębski, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

178 *Ziemia...*, p. 198.

179 W. Jastrzębski, *op. cit.*, pp. 22–24.

180 E. Ogłóza, *op. cit.*, p. 66. As a result of enforced Germanisation in all of the occupied territories, almost 5.5 million people were formally recognised as Germans (C. Łuczak and C. Madajczyk give a figure of over 4 million; this discrepancy may be because both researchers lowered the number of people Germanised on Polish territory), of whom over 3 million were in Poland (950,000 in Pomerania, 1,290,000 in Silesia, 510,000 in the Wartheland and over 113,000 in the GG), about 500,000 in the Yugoslav territories annexed to the Reich, over 530,000 in Lorraine, about 1 million in Alsatia and over 200,000 in Luxembourg. Only a few percent of the Germanised population waived their previous nationality voluntarily. Those who did so were mainly opportunists or people of low morals. See: C. Łuczak, *Polityka ekonomiczna Trzeciej Rzeszy w latach drugiej wojny światowej*, Poznań 1982,, pp. 100, 103; C. Madajczyk, *Faszyzm...*, vol. II, p. 249; L. Olejnik, *Zdrajcy...*; pp. 27, 31 and 35.

181 C. Madajczyk, *Faszyzm...*, vol. II, pp. 276–277.

give them the same rights as Germans and save them from intimidation, or to assume the status of slaves. Thus, the entire enrolment operation was an “act of despair by a people beset with fear”<sup>182</sup>. The population of Pomerania, never before persecuted, now became the target of permanent pressure, blackmail and intimidation, for the intention of the *Gauleiter* of Gdańsk was to make this area completely German. In the end, his adopted idea of pragmatism called for the Germanisation of everyone, regardless of occupation, age, culture or nationality. Ongoing wartime requirements compelled the Germans to reject applications from people with a clearly pro-Polish disposition, so that in the end they could force everyone to join the *Volksliste*. That was the objective of the broad-scale campaign of re-Germanisation.

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182 C. Madajczyk, *Polityka..*, vol. I, p. 412.



## II The Political, Legal and Social Dimension of Ethnic Rehabilitation and Vetting

Rehabilitation and national vetting took place during a period when the communist left-wing seized power, when the shaping of the new order in the areas occupied by the Soviet Army commenced in 1944<sup>183</sup>. Acting in the name of the National People's Council (*Krajowa Rada Narodowa* KRN), the Polish Committee for National Liberation (*Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego*, PKWN) was transformed into a provisional government at the beginning of 1945, and into the Provisional Government of National Unity in June 1945. The pro-Moscow camp was associated with the Polish Workers' Party (*Polska Partia Robotnicza*, PPR) in Poland, but with the Union of Polish Patriots in the USSR. The political system created at that time was marked by the leading role of a party: first the PPR, and then, from December 1948, the Polish United Workers' Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* PZPR). It is the party that wielded power, whilst the country's development was dictated by ideological considerations<sup>184</sup>. Cultural conditions and the wishes of the majority of Poles were usually ignored. The complete subjugation of social forces to rule by a single party, where the party was said to emanate from society, was the cornerstone of the new system of power<sup>185</sup>. The first years of communist rule in Poland was a time when this power crystallised and became a monopoly<sup>186</sup>. This initial, 'pre-communist' phase, which lasted until the beginning of the 'ideological terror' in 1949, was described as a period of 'ambiguity' (*nieoznaczoność*)<sup>187</sup>.

Regarding political events, the first period singled out in Poland's post-war history is usually 1945–1948, when the left-wing usurped power via, among other things, major political struggles. The first of these was the referendum on 30 June 1946, in which Polish society had to respond to three questions: 1.

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183 In 1946 it was renamed the Soviet Army, although the name Red Army was still used in Polish documents in 1946 and 1947. For more about the period immediately after the war, see E. Dmitrów, *Bilans otwarcia*, Warsaw 1992.

184 Cf.: *Totalitaryzm. Wybrane problemy teorii i praktyki*, ed. T. Wallas, Poznań 2003.

185 J. Staniszkis, *Ontologia socjalizmu*, Warsaw 1989, p. 2; H. Świda-Ziemba, *System totalitarny. Kontrowersje intelektualistów polskich* in: „Przegląd Polityczny”, 2007, No. 84, p. 91.

186 See: K. Kersten, *Narodziny systemu władzy. Polska 1943–1948*, Poznań 1990.

187 H. Świda-Ziemba, *System totalitarny...*; *Ibid.*, *Urwany lot*, Kraków 2003, p. 60.

Are you in favour of the abolition of the Senate? 2. Do you want the inclusion in the future constitution of an economic system preceded by agrarian reform and the nationalisation of the basic branches of the national economy, with the preservation of the statutory prerogatives of private initiative? 3. Do you want the western border of the Polish state to be fixed along the Baltic and along the Oder and Neisse rivers? Decisive was the parliamentary election on 19 January 1947, in which the so-called Democratic Bloc ran, composed of the PPR, Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*, PPS), Democratic Party (*Stronnictwo Demokratyczne*, SD) and the People's Party (*Stronnictwo Ludowe*, SL). Independent election lists were posted by the oppositionist Polish Peasant Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe*, PSL) and the Labour Party (*Stronnictwo Pracy*, SP). But the faking of the election results handed full power to the communist camp and commenced a process of consolidation and expansion of communist rule<sup>188</sup>. From October 1947, after the escape from Poland of deputy prime minister and PSL leader Stanisław Mikołajczyk, who had enjoyed popular support in society, the country's political life became unified. Until then, several parties had engaged in politics, including some opposed to Poland's reconstruction according to the Soviet model<sup>189</sup>. The disintegration of the PSL and the settlement of scores with the PPS faction that had refused to form a united front with the communists turned the PPR into the leading party, which subsequently acquired far greater power in Poland. The final step in the monopolisation of power was the merger of the PPR and PPS into the PZPR at a congress in December 1948<sup>190</sup>. From then on, the PZPR ruled Poland until 1989<sup>191</sup>.

## 2.1 The Indigenous Polish Population during the Initial Period of Communist Rule

On 22 July 1944, the PKWN 'Manifesto', the Polish communists' key political document, was released. Its aims included punishment for German war criminals, as

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188 K. Kersten, *op.cit.*, p. 267.

189 Cz. Osękowski, *op. cit.*, p. 152 et al.

190 K. Kersten, *op. cit.*, p. 405.

191 More about the political situation after 1945 in: *ibid.*, A. Paczkowski, *Polska od 1939 r. do czasów obecnych*, Warsaw 2008; *ibid.*, *Pół wieku dziejów Polski*, Warsaw 2005; A. Friszke, *Polska: losy państwa i narodu 1939–1989*, Warsaw 2003; A. Czubiński, *Historia Polski XX wieku*, Poznań 2003; *idem*, *Polska i Polacy po II wojnie światowej (1945–1989)*, Poznań 1998; J. Eisler, *Zarys dziejów politycznych Polski 1944–1989*, Warsaw 1992.

well as for collaborators and traitors to the Polish nation: “The task of the impartial Polish courts shall be to ensure the rapid exercise of justice. No German war criminal, no traitor to the People may escape punishment<sup>192</sup>.” Apart from the rebuilding of Warsaw and the husbanding of the Regained Territories, anti-Germanness was a key slogan of Polish propaganda intended to spread its influence on society<sup>193</sup>. The German question included the problem of the *Volksliste*. In the collective mind of society, everyone branded with the stigma of membership of a DVL group was considered a *Volksdeutsche*, and therefore suspected of treason against the Polish nation<sup>194</sup>. No effort was made to establish why people had been enrolled on the German National List or to differentiate between the situation and attitudes of people on that list. Society’s generally hostile attitude towards these people often prevented their re-integration and identification with the Polish state<sup>195</sup>.

Another fundamental postulate of the ‘Manifesto’ was territorial reclamation in Germany’s disfavour, with a simultaneous recognition of the country’s future eastern border in compliance with the Soviet Union’s stance<sup>196</sup>. As we know, the course of the post-war eastern border was not just a matter for the Poles, but was a bargaining chip in the contest between the Great Powers. The western allies were willing to accept Stalin’s desire regarding Poland’s eastern territories – together with a shift in her western border – if this would help establish a post-war order guaranteeing peace and security.

The recovery of land in the west was included in the broader, anti-German tactics of the post-war authorities. The theory of the eternal German threat to the Polish *raison d’état* reflected the feelings of most Poles at the time<sup>197</sup>. These tactics included dealing with people who had German citizenship. The PPR had

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192 *PKWN Manifesto*, Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland, No 1, 1944, item. 1.

193 For more about attitudes towards Germanness, see: E. Dmitrów, *Niemcy i okupacja hitlerowska w oczach Polaków. Poglądy i opinie z lat 1945–1948*, Warsaw 1987, p. 218; J. Kiwerska, *W atmosferze wrogości (1945–1970)* [in:] *Polacy wobec Niemców. Z dziejów kultury politycznej Polski 1945–1989*, ed. A. Wolff-Powęska, Poznań 1993, pp. 45–93.

194 Cf.: J. Sawicki, *O prawie sądów specjalnych* [in:] *Wymiar sprawiedliwości w odrodzonej Polsce, 22 VII 1944–22 VII 1945*, Warsaw 1945, p. 55.

195 P. Madajczyk, *Niemcy polscy 1944–1989*, Warsaw 2001, p. 36.

196 *PKWN Manifesto*, Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland, No 1, 1944, item. 1.

197 From a report delivered on 27 May 1945 at the First All-Polish PPR Congress. Article published in *Głos Ludu* on 5 April. Poland’s victory in Potsdam [in:] *O problemie niemieckim. Artykuły i przemówienia*, ed. M. Tomala, Warsaw 1984, pp. 43 and 48; *Granice Polski na Odrze i Nysie są skutecznym zabezpieczeniem przed agresją niemiecką*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 1947, No. 86, p. 1.

no developed concept of action either regarding the impact of Germanisation or regarding the Polish population in the recovered land<sup>198</sup>. In addition, the PKWN failed to formulate any demographic policy, including legislation. The absence of a clear political line towards the indigenous Polish population of post-German territory subsequently became the cause of much grief suffered by that population during rehabilitation. We should note that during the so-called PKWN period, legislation applicable to the indigenous population of areas not yet incorporated into Poland remained pure theory. As we know, it was the Potsdam conference in August 1945 that finally sanctioned the extension of Poland's western borders. In any case, the pro-Moscow camp had no proper knowledge of the situation in the German border zone<sup>199</sup>. It seems that it was not fully aware of the size and complexity of the problem of the indigenous population<sup>200</sup>.

The decisions made at Potsdam gave life to the main principles of western thinking formed at the turn of the 20th century<sup>201</sup>. However, at the same time they opened a new aspect of the German question, whose realisation appeared as a "basic problem, attracting maximum attention from Polish political thinking and Polish diplomacy, realising the policy of the PPR regarding the German question<sup>202</sup>." In the authorities' opinion, the extension of the western border, which the USSR was to guarantee, protected Poland against another attack. Poles were permanently reminded of the exceptional role played by the Red Army in liberating the Polish lands that had been Germanised centuries ago. Now recovered, these lands offered the Polish nation exceptional economic, social and cultural opportunities<sup>203</sup>. This often appeared in the Polish press as the most oft-reported topic. For example, in 1946 page one of the *Dziennik Bałtycki*

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198 Cf.: A. Sakson, *Stosunki narodowościowe na Warmii i Mazurach 1945–1997*, Poznań 1998.

199 G. Strauchold, *Polska ludność...*, p. 15.

200 N. Kołomejczyk, *Ziemie zachodnie w działalności Polskiej Partii Robotniczej*, Poznań 1974, p. 146.

201 Western thinking was a synthesis of three basic elements: underlining the role of the western lands in Polish history, Polish-German relations and the territorial reorientation of Polish society. M. Mroczko, *Polska myśl zachodnia 1918–1939 (kształtowanie i upowszechnienie)*, Poznań 1986, p. 9; Z. Mazur, *op. cit.*, p. 420 et al.

202 B. Pasierb, *c (1942–1948)* [in:] *Polska–naród–państwo. Z badań nad myślą polityczną Polskiej Partii Robotniczej 1942–1948*, ed. M. Orzechowski, Wrocław 1972, p. 221.

203 We should remember that post-war urbanisation and industrialisation occurred in these areas much more intensely than in the rest of Poland, which led to many negative side effects. See: S. Nowakowski, *Więź społeczna na Ziemiach Zachodnich* [in:] „Kultura i Społeczeństwo”, 1960, No. 3, pp. 99–112.



carried an article entitled 'The Regained Lands Before Everything' (*Przed wszystkim Ziemie Odzyskane*<sup>204</sup>). Calling the western and northern areas of post-war Poland 'Regained Territories' imparted positive emotions and created the impression that historical justice had been done<sup>205</sup>. The vision of Poland's return to its ancient borders at the time of the Piast Dynasty imparted a sense of national continuation. By means of such propaganda, the PPR politicians sought to justify the communist system<sup>206</sup>. At the same time, they repeated to society that only friendship with Poland's eastern neighbour could guarantee the permanence of the western border. The mobilisation of political and party work to commit the entire nation to the process of returning the ancient Piast lands to Poland<sup>207</sup> accompanied the creation of the Polish administration east of the Oder and Neisse rivers. An important element of this anti-German ploy was an attempt to reprogramme society away from an eastern mentality, described as Jageellonian, towards a western, Piast mentality. As the eastern borderlands occupied a high place in the hierarchy of Polish values, the communists tried to create the impression that Poland's withdrawal from the east was irreversible<sup>208</sup>. The PPR community in particular criticised pre-war eastern policy, describing it as erroneous. For example, the head of the PPR circle of Gdańsk and Gdynia, Edward Orłowski, accused Józef Piłsudski of having forgotten Gdańsk and Silesia in his foreign policy: "It is difficult to regret the loss of the eastern lands when one compares them with the lands gained in the west," he said<sup>209</sup>. In a report entitled *On the Western Lands (O Ziemie Zachodnie)* delivered at a meeting of the PPR cell attached to the Voivodship of Gdańsk, an activist called Wesołowski said that Poland's interests before 1939 had suffered heavily from a faulty eastern policy, which he described as expansionist. Another PPR member, Podraszko, stressed the moral value of the recovery of the western lands, stating with satisfaction that: "we have regained what once was ours"<sup>210</sup>.

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204 *Przed wszystkim Ziemie Odzyskane*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 1946, No. 6, p. 1.

205 Cf.: *Ziemie Zachodnie–bezpieczeństwo i dobrobyt Polski–pokój świata*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 1947, No. 102, p. 2.

206 More on the subject of the legitimacy of communist power in: M. Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce*, Warsaw 2005.

207 W. Gomułka, *Artykuły i przemówienia*. vol. 1, Warsaw 1962, p. 224.

208 G. Strauchold, *Polska ludność...*, p. 25.

209 AP Gd, PP Voivodship Committee in Gdańsk 1945–1948 (hereinafter KW PPR), 2598/134, *Protokoły koła PPR Straży Portowej Gdańsk-Gdynia*, 29 X 1946, k. 66.

210 AP Gd, KW PPR in Gdańsk, 2598/266, *Protokoły zebrań ogólnych PPR przy Urzędzie Wojewódzkim w Gdańsku* (hereinafter UWG), 30 III 1946, k. 64.

Another anti-German propaganda ploy to justify the communist system was a reference to reaching to Polish roots: "Piaś tradition meant a return to a Slav and national community, to the myth of the creation of the Polish state, to the myth of a mono-ethnic state<sup>211</sup>." On this foundation, the pro-Moscow camp built its identity to which it constantly referred. Thus, already in the summer of 1944 the government newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* referred to the "lost western testament of the Bolesław kings," saying that Poland's future and power lay on the Oder and Baltic<sup>212</sup>. Cultivating the vision of Poland's return to its historic Piast borders gave a feeling of national continuation. With such propaganda, the PPR politicians sought a chance to gain social credibility. They exploited the factor of ethnic identification, which already existed during the war, as a means with which to realise the concept of a mono-ethnic state<sup>213</sup>. The acquisition, settlement, and management of the western and northern territories was an issue in which the authorities could count on the support of most of society, even that part of it that mistrusted Poland's new system<sup>214</sup>. The integration of the Regained Territories was considered in terms of the Polish *raison d'état*, as a phenomenon justifying socialist modernisation and the existence of People's Poland in an economic, demographic and social dimension. It also made up for the lack of support for the new socialist reality. The new authorities could count on limited collaboration from political opponents<sup>215</sup>. The application of this nationalist ideology by the communists no doubt served as an axis around which to integrate the new society. The work of re-Polonising the Regained Territories again played a particularly important role. The integration of the Regained Territories determined the work of the authorities and social attitudes towards them<sup>216</sup>. The agrarian reform decreed by the PKWN on 6 September 1944 was one of the elements intended to consolidate the position of the left-wing authorities. Granting land to peasants

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211 M. Zaremba, *Próba legitymizacji władzy komunistycznej w latach 1944–1947 poprzez odwołanie się do treści narodowej* [in:] *Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i materiały*, vol. 2, Warsaw 1997, p. 34.

212 G. Strauchold, *Polska ludność...*, p. 25.

213 K. Kersten, *Kształtowanie się stosunków ludnościowych* [in:] *Polska Ludowa 1944–1950. Przemiany społeczne*, ed. F. Ryszka, Warsaw 1974, p. 127; T. Szarota, *Upowszechnienie kultury* [in:] *Polska Ludowa...*, pp. 460–470.

214 See, e.g. A. Paczkowski, *Referendum z 30 czerwca 1946 r.: przebieg i wyniki*, Warsaw 1993.

215 K. Kersten, *Przybycie i odejście. Ziemie Zachodnie i Północne* [in:] „Borussia”, 1998, No. 16, pp. 225–231.

216 *Istotny sens repolonizacji*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 1946 No. 173, p. 3.

without land or with only small areas of land was intended to gain that sector of society's support for the new political order<sup>217</sup>.

Arousing a national movement of integrating "Poland's ancient lands on the Oder and Baltic", PPR politicians sought to secure the communist camp's leading role first in operational groups of government plenipotentiaries, and next in state administrative structures. Addressing the PPR Central Committee plenum in May 1945, Władysław Gomułka explained: "One of the reasons for basing the government on society is the question of the German lands. This combines and neutralises various elements. Expansion to the west and agrarian reform are connecting the people to the system. Retreat will weaken our position in the country<sup>218</sup>." So-called people's power was born to the sound of slogans for a democratic party apparatus and on the basis of ideological-political criteria.

However, the broadly-professed vision of remaking the Regained Territories Polish did not reflect the needs of the Polish population there. They remained without civic and property rights. As mentioned above, the PKWN failed to produce any concrete demographic policies for these areas<sup>219</sup>. In his report to the PPR Plenum in February 1945, W. Gomułka did not even mention the indigenous Polish population<sup>220</sup>. Likewise, his speech at the IX session of the National People's Council on 31 December 1945 did not include the indigenous Polish population among the main problems of the Regained Territories. Instead, Gomułka considered the most urgent task to be the expulsion of Germans as a hostile and alien people<sup>221</sup>. At the first PPR Gdańsk Voivodship conference in Sopot on 12–13 May 1946, Mieczysław Mazur, a member of the PPR Central Committee, called for "defending the western and northern borders" against Germany, and indicated the alliance with the USSR as the only guarantee of the "development of the Polish state and of a defence of its borders<sup>222</sup>." But the processes of national vetting and rehabilitation, already in progress, were not touched upon.

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217 J. Eisler, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

218 *Dokumenty do dziejów PRL. Protokół z obrad KC PPR z maja 1945 r.*, ed. A. Kochański, Warsaw 1992, p. 11.

219 Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz...*, p. 15.

220 G. Strauchold, *Autochtoni polscy...*, p. 43; *Ibid.*, *Polska ludność...*, p. 21.

221 *Z przemówienia wygłoszonego 31 grudnia 1945 r. na IX Sesji KRN [in:] O problemie...*, pp. 85–86.

222 AP Gd, KW PPR in Gdańsk, 2598/1, *Protokół I Konferencji Wojewódzkie*, 12–13 V 1946, k. 1.

The question of including people on the *Volksliste* in the ranks of the PPR was a problem for that party<sup>223</sup>. It was believed that not every rehabilitated person would grow accustomed to being Polish, especially in the new territories<sup>224</sup>. However, in some cases people who had already been accepted into the party and were in the process of rehabilitation were subsequently accused of collaborating with the Germans and were expelled from the party<sup>225</sup>. These included people in high positions in the party, such as the secretary of a PPR cell or county cell<sup>226</sup>. The cleansing of party ranks applied mainly to *Volksdeutsche*, pre-war officials and peasants with farms larger than ten hectares<sup>227</sup>. As early as 1945, the members of all political parties in Kartuzy were ordered to inform their party personnel vetting committees if anyone had tried to conceal his or her membership of Group II during the war by claiming to belong to Group III<sup>228</sup>. The ban on the holders of *Ausweises* joining the PPR served to swell the ranks of the Polish Socialist Party. For example, in Kościerzyn all of the railway employees belonged to the socialist party. A station master in that town and a PPR member, Kościcki, who had moved from Krakow, encountered a “PPS bloc resulting from the fact that members of Group III had been banned from our ranks, and because 100 % of the employees here had been in Group III, they all joined the PPS<sup>229</sup>”.

Thus, in the initial period after the war, the PPR's concept was to make the former German lands Polish and rebuild the Polish state on the basis of national criteria. As a basic condition for fulfilling this concept, the German population was to be expelled from the territories annexed to Poland<sup>230</sup>. To realise the concept of Poland as a mono-ethnic state, it was considered necessary to include in legislation that Polish nationality was the basic criterion for granting Polish citizenship to persons residing in the Regained Territories, of which more will be

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223 C. Obracht-Prondzyński, *Kaszubi. Między...*, pp. 655–657

224 AP Gd, KW PPR in Gdańsk, 2598/279, *Protokoły kół PPR przy Wojewódzkim Urzędzie Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego w Gdańsku* (hereinafter WUBP), 23 IV 1946, k. 54.

225 AP Gd, KW PPR in Gdańsk, 2598/297, *Protokoły i uchwały Wojewódzkiej Komisji Kontroli Partyjnej*, 18 V 1948, k. 105.

226 AP Gd, KP (County Committee) of the PPR in Elbląg, 2599/3, *Komitet Miejski i Countyowy PPR w Elblągu*, 19 X 1948., k. 177.

227 AP Gd, KP PPR in Kartuzy 2600/3, *Protokoły posiedzeń Egzekutywy*, 8 November 1948, k. 120–121.

228 AP Gd, KP PPR in Kartuzy, 2600/6, *Protokoły i sprawozdania Międzypartyjnej Komisji Porozumiewawczej Stronnictw Politycznych w Kartuzach*, 27 VI 1945, k. 16.

229 AP Gd, KP PPR w Kościerzyn, 2601/2, Minutes of plenary sessions, *Protokół z nadzwyczajnego zebrania z okazji przybycia delegata KC PPR Brodzińskiego*, k. 26.

230 M. Hejger, *Polityka narodowościowa...*, pp. 32–33.

said later. In official statements by PPR politicians, especially until summer 1945, the indigenous Polish population was used as an argument in favour of Poland's entitlement to the new territories, especially in the context of the Potsdam conferences and the territorial decisions expected to be reached there<sup>231</sup>.

As the political struggle progressed, the Polish communists recognised the indigenous Polish population as a potential electorate<sup>232</sup>. An increasing number of people in government circles postulated a liberal course of action in the Regained Territories. A priority was to induce those subject to rehabilitation to vote in the above-mentioned referendum.

Two days before the referendum, the legislation governing rehabilitation was relaxed. The same applied to the regulation governing vetting, which was finally regulated in April 1946. The following legal instruments were an expression of so-called broad vetting: the directive by the Ministry of the Regained Territories of 6 April 1946 *On the procedure for determining the Polish nationality of persons residing in the regained territories*, and the act of 28 April 1946 *On the citizenship of persons of Polish nationality in the regained territories* (both of these are examined in greater detail below). These were intended to gain support for the new authorities from as many residents of the Regained Territories as possible. Earlier, Władysław Gomułka had summed up the debate on the criteria for vetting thus: "Even those who had been Germanised over the years should be restored to Poland<sup>233</sup>." The above laws closed the first stage of creating a general concept of state policy towards the indigenous Polish population, and their final share was no doubt influenced by the tense situation of the people in the new territories and by the effort of the authorities to expand their influence in these areas by gaining the support of those who had been positively vetted. Work in this regard intensified following Winston Churchill's remarks at the Fulton conference in 1946 questioning Poland's western border.

The conditions for holding the referendum in the Regained Territories were not the same as in the middle of the country, due to continuing migrations<sup>234</sup>, the

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231 According to estimates based on pre-war Polish statistics, there were 1.5–2 million indigenous Poles in the eastern territories of Germany. See: G. Strauchold, *Autochtoni polscy...*, pp. 26–27.

232 It is worth stressing that research into real socialism undermines the justification for including such concepts as the electorate, which are more appropriate to western culture and political reality. See: J. Staniszkis, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

233 *Miasta i wsie czekają na osadników. Wicepremier Gomułka o sytuacji na Ziemiach Odzyskanych*, „Dziennik Zachodni”, 1946, No. 69, p. 1.

234 For more on this subject, see K. Kersten, *Repatriacja ludności polskiej po II wojnie światowej (studium historyczne)*, Wrocław 1974; Z. Dulczewski, *Społeczne aspekty*

absence of established interpersonal ties, less sense of stability and the need to create Polish social, political and economic groups from scratch<sup>235</sup>. In addition, the continuing processes of ethnic rehabilitation and vetting, the geographical position along the border, stricter reporting requirements, restrictions on residence and pressure from the authorities to accept without question the incorporation of the eastern German lands into Poland, all provided additional pretexts to apply force on the population<sup>236</sup>.

From the PPR's point of view, apart from facilitating the seizure of political control over Poland, the referendum was meant to "prove to foreign countries that the Polish people are determined to faithfully guard the benefits of democracy." At a meeting of PPR and PPS circles in Gdańsk in April 1946, before the referendum, the following significant and prophetic remark was made: "One can boldly say that the results of the referendum are a foregone conclusion: the majority of citizens will answer 'yes' to all of the questions. In this way, our international position will strengthen: we shall prove to foreign nations that we are an internally consolidated people, prepared to guard our rights steadfastly<sup>237</sup>."

However, for the broad masses of society, voting was an increasingly rare opportunity to express their opinion of communist authority. The inhabitants of Gdańsk voivodship, among other places, used it to express their distrust and dislike of the socio-political changes in their country. It transpired that there was a particularly large number of 'no's' in response to the third question in the referendum on Poland's new western border. In a strictly confidential circular of 30 July 1946, voivode Mieczysław Zrałek directed village heads and mayors to examine these votes. The messages 'Nein' or 'Heil Hitler' on ballot papers contained spelling mistakes, leading to suspicions of secret organised

*migracji na ziemiach zachodnich*, Poznań 1964; L. Kosiński, *Procesy ludnościowe na Ziemiach Odzyskanych w latach 1945–1960*, Warsaw 1963.

235 Cf.: *Przygotowania do referendum ludowego na Wybrzeżu*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 1946, No. 138, p. 3.

236 Cf.: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/64, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne miesięczne*, III 1947, k. 236; 1164/67, *Sprawozdanie z działalności Wojewódzkiej Rady Narodowej (hereinafter: WRN) w Gdańsku i jej organów*, II quarter 1950, k. 23–24; MRN-ZMG, 1165/1354, memoranda, *Pismo UWG do starostów countyowych i prezydentów miast*, 24 VIII 1949, pp. 279–282, *Obwieszczenie wojewody gdańskiego z 7 X 1948 r. w sprawie zasięgu terytorialnego pasa granicznego na terenie województwa gdańskiego oraz ograniczeń w pasie granicznym*, k. 380–382. Cz. Osękowski, *op. cit.*, s. 155.

237 AP Gd, KW PPR in Gdańsk, 2598/266, *Protokoły zebrań ogólnych PPR przy Gdańskim Urzędzie Wojewódzkim*, 27 IV 1946, k. 71.

German agitation<sup>238</sup>. According to Z. Kostrzewski, deputy commandant of the Civic Militia in Pruszcz Gdański responsible for political affairs, the indigenous Polish population's negative attitude to the referendum reflected their disapproval of the new government in Poland. It was estimated that almost 80 % of the people in that group had said no to the questions in the referendum. The highest number of 'no's' was recorded in those districts of the county of Gdańsk with the highest number of people who had been vetted. The districts in question included Łostowice, Mierzeszyn, Przywidz and Trąbki Wielkie<sup>239</sup>. However, the authorities of the county of Tczew believed that the highest number of negative responses came from *Volksdeutsche* who had already been rehabilitated by the courts. Therefore, to improve ethnic relations, it was recommended that these people be resettled in the centre of Poland<sup>240</sup>. Similar opinions on the participation of vetted persons in the referendum reached the Voivodship Command of the Civic Militia in Gdańsk from the county of Bytowo. It was deemed the result of "vetting people and making Poles out of them for 30 zlotys<sup>241</sup>." Last but not least came news from the county of Kartuzy, where counter-propaganda was spread among families where, according to militia reports, every third family had sheltered soldiers repatriated from England, usually former members of the *Wehrmacht*. The results of the referendum there were so dismal that even local officials were taken aback. Rehabilitated persons provided the greatest disappointment: "These Poles of ours are not pleased. They wanted rehabilitation with such humble hearts, but now they have turned out to be our secret enemies<sup>242</sup>."

The editors of *Zrzesz Kaszëbsko* caused misgivings. That paper carried only one article about the referendum, one that did not sufficiently hail the affirmative answers to the first two questions. It transpired that despite 185 mass meetings at

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238 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, Voivodship Vetting Board (WKW), *Okólnik no. 69*, 30 VII 1946, k. 126. See also: AP Gd, KW PPR in Gdańsk, 2598/280, *Protokoły kół PPR przy WUBP w Gdańsku*, 5 VII 1946., k. 32.

239 AIPN Gd, 05/54/9, *Pismo Countyowego Komendanta MO w Pruszczu Gdańskim do Wydziału Polityczno-Wychowawczego Wojewódzkiej Komendy MO*, 13 VII 1947, k. 103; AIPN Gd, 05/54, t. 29, *Sprawozdania okresowe i miesięczne Komitetu Countyowego MO w Pruszczu Gdańskim*, 12 V 1945–31 XII 1946., k. 138.

240 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/88, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP (SP) w Tczewie za lata 1945–1951*, VII 1946, k.59.

241 Vetted persons were described thus due to cases where vetting certificates had been obtained for money. AIPN Gd, 05/54/9, *Pismo Countyowej Komendy MO w Bytowie do Komendy Wojewódzkiej MO w Gdańsku*, 5 VII 1946., k. 4.

242 AIPN Gd, 05/54, t. 35, *Sprawozdanie miesięczne i okresowe Komendy Countyowej MO w Kartuzach*, 7 VI-7 VII 1946, k. 43.

the local level and two rallies in Wejherowo and Puck, state officials were unable to gain the population's support for the new government<sup>243</sup>.

The results of the vote showed that the construction of a political system based on the proposals of the communists was a mistake. They also clearly demonstrated the failure of Polish ethnic policy in the Regained Territories, especially regarding the indigenous population. It is worth noting that the participation of rehabilitated and vetted people in the referendum was discussed at party circles, especially those attached to the security apparatus<sup>244</sup>.

Before the next election campaign, this time to the Sejm<sup>245</sup>, the central authorities again attempted to win over people who had not yet been rehabilitated<sup>246</sup>. The voting regulations adopted on 22 September 1946 granted voting rights to the indigenous population, including those who had been compelled to enrol on the *Deutsche Volksliste* and who had already completed their rehabilitation procedure. This met with society's disapproval. In any case, the stance of the security apparatus, depriving 30,000 vetted people in Gdansk voivodship of the right to vote, reflected the mood of the population at large. In the county of Kartuzy alone, out of 31,000 eligible voters, 5,000 were barred from voting in the election. "Voting rights were taken away mainly from those who had taken advantage of German privileges in the past and who now had in their families former members of Anders' army already in Poland or still in England<sup>247</sup>."

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243 Cf.: C. Obrach-Prondzyński, *Kaszubi. Między....*, p. 447.

244 AP Gd, KW PPR w Gdańsku, 2598/275, *Protokoły zebrań kół PPR przy KW MO*, 15 III 1946, p. 314.

245 It was accompanied by intense propaganda in the form of rallies and readings extolling the services of the local population which, despite the long years of bondage, had maintained the Polishness of these areas. But in September 1946, at the IX session of the National People's Council, there was a dispute between the PSL, PPR and PPS over draft election rules proposed by the latter two parties, calling for the abolition of the principle of universal elections. It also called for the granting of voting rights to that part of the indigenous population and the population of the Regained Territories who had been coerced into joining the *Volksliste*. Cz. Osękowski, *Wybory do sejmu z 19 stycznia 1947 r. w Polsce*, Poznań 2000; M. Skoczylas, *Wybory do Sejmu Ustawodawczego z 19 stycznia 1947 r. w świetle skarg ludności*, Warsaw 2003; *Falszerstwa wyborcze 1947 r.*, ed. M. Adamczyk and J. Gmitruk, vol. I i II, Warsaw 2000 and 2002.

246 *Autochtoni głosują na listę Bloku Stronnictw Demokratycznych*, "Dziennik Bałtycki", 1947, No. 6, p. 3.

247 AIPN Gd, 05/54/10, *Sprawozdania miesięczne i raporty sytuacyjne Komitetu Wojewódzkiego MO w Gdańsku*, 9 I 1947, k. 2.



This was therefore an interesting case of two conflicting tendencies. On the one hand, in their aim to eliminate the separation of the Kashubians from the rest of society, the central authorities recommended that Polish citizenship be granted on as broad a scale as possible (so-called broad vetting). On the other hand, the local authorities feared anti-government attitudes and disqualified a considerable number of Kashubians from voting. Furthermore, the indigenous population displayed little interest in voting, and those who did vote expressed their support largely for the opposition PSL, which had promised the Kashubians their own local self-governing body. In response, the so-called Democratic Bloc posted in Gdynia constituency No. 24 a 'Kashubians List'. The security authorities hoped that this would make the Kashubians vote for the people on the Kashubian List rather than for the PSL<sup>248</sup>. Despite an extensive propaganda campaign, the Kashubians continued to be very distrustful of the government side<sup>249</sup>. After the elections, supposed to be a great triumph for the PPR, its impact in the field was deemed to be weak. Even the staff of the Voivodship Office in Gdańsk in March 1947 included only a few 'party' people<sup>250</sup>. However, as we know, this situation soon changed after the enforced single-front campaign.

Finally, the adoption of the amnesty on 20 July 1950, abolishing the sanctions and restrictions imposed on citizens who had declared themselves German, in great haste (two weeks after the signing of the Zgorzelec accord)<sup>251</sup>, was certainly intended to eliminate those features of communist policy which might have blurred the official picture of friendly relations with the German Democratic Republic (GDR)<sup>252</sup>. This was the last legislative instrument to liquidate the effects of the *Volksliste*. However, the PZPR Central Committee resolution, also adopted on in July 1950 and entitled *On tasks among the indigenous population, and on the struggle against distortions to the party line in this sphere* reduced the problem of the indigenous population to its integration with incoming settlers on the basis of the class struggle. It contained most of the hitherto postulates regarding the indigenous Polish population, connected with its social status, economic situation and possibility of involvement in political and educational life. However,

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248 Ibid.

249 Ibid., k. 3.

250 AIPN Gd, 05/54/10, *Sprawozdania miesięczne i raporty sytuacyjne Komitetu Wojewódzkiego MO w Gdańsku*, 8 III 1947, k. 104–105.

251 The Zgorzelec accord *On the establishment of a firm state border on the Oder and Neisse rivers* was signed by Poland and the German Democratic Republic on 6 July 1950. For more on this subject, see E. Basiński, *Od Lublina do Zgorzelca*, Warsaw 1979.

252 L. Olejnik, *Zdrajcy...*, pp. 210–211.

sabotaged by the security services, military authorities and the party and administrative apparatus, this resolution had no possibility of being implemented<sup>253</sup>.

The next step along the road to winning the indigenous population of the Regained Territories for political purposes after the unsuccessful referendum campaign was the Central Congress of the Indigenous Population in August 1946, and regional congresses of the indigenous population. No doubt the authorities also desired a vital link between the indigenous Polish population and the Polish state in the face of opinions undermining the justification for extending the western border in August 1946. These included a speech by US Secretary of State James Byrnes in Stuttgart and by British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin in the House of Commons on 22 October 1946<sup>254</sup>. Of course, an equally important objective was to gain the support of this sector of the population in the forthcoming Sejm elections. Therefore, the congress was meant to demonstrate the Polishness of the western territories to foreign society and support for the PPR bloc to Poland itself<sup>255</sup>.

The tasks set for the Congress in Warsaw were:

1. To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Polish Western Union.
2. To symbolically accept into the bosom of the fatherland the population of the Regained Territories.
3. To launch anti-German slogans as a way of defending Poland's western border.

The resolutions adopted at the Congress in Warsaw on 9 November of that year were recorded in a spirit of praise for the Polish-Soviet alliance. The question of ethnic vetting was considered the most burning issue in the Regained Territories. It was emphasised that the representation of the indigenous population at various levels of public authority did not correspond to its numerical strength or local significance<sup>256</sup>.

According to the 500-strong delegation from Gdańsk voivodship, the Congress of the Indigenous Population did not fulfil its tasks<sup>257</sup>. There was criticism that

253 Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz...*, pp. 111–114; Cz. Osękowski, *Spoleczeństwo...*, p. 116.

254 K. Kersten, *Narodziny...*, p. 266.

255 Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz...*, p. 75.

256 Archives of New Files (AAN), Ministry of the Regained Territories (MZO), 196/67, settlement, post-German assets, *Rezolucja kongresu Polaków-autochtonów z Ziemi Odzyskanych w Warszawie*, 9 XI 1946., k. 94–97; 196/68a, indigenous population, k. 7–14; See also: IZ, dok. V–15.

257 The delegation included a choir, representatives of the Kashubian people, and Polish activists from Sztum.

the prime minister and the minister of the Regained Territories were not punctual, the congress was poorly organised, government representatives were absent from the hall during speeches by field delegates, and there were no personal contacts between members of the government and congress participants. It was pointed out that the presence of the indigenous population at the Congress and the very issue of the indigenous population of the Regained Territories had been downplayed. And yet, as mentioned above, one of the tasks of that exceedingly important Congress was to “symbolically accept into the bosom of the fatherland the population of the Regained Territories<sup>258</sup>.”

In the face of these shortcomings, the Congress and the Voivodship Vetting Board (VVB) assumed that the Polish indigenous population had contributed many positive qualities to socio-political life, such as organisational skill, punctuality, initiative, patriotism, an appreciation of the essence of democracy, and cooperation. The population settled from outside did not in the Board's opinion possess these qualities. Moreover, the indigenous Polish population's reluctance to participate in party life, which they associated with Hitlerism, was stressed. It was noted that in the face of the integration of various demographic groups, a feeling of collective national identity was important for the indigenous population. It was most unfortunate that Minister Gomułka claimed that the indigenous population of the Regained Territories was one million. This figure reflected the vetted population, omitting minors who, had they been considered, would have put the population figure at 1.5 million. Apart from the vetted population, the Regained Territories also included a large number of rehabilitated persons, who should also be regarded as part of the indigenous population<sup>259</sup>. Press coverage by both national and local media was also criticised for omitting the speeches of regional delegates and concentrating on the speeches of the Prime Minister and Minister of the Regained Territories, and on the border issue<sup>260</sup>.

However, the resolutions adopted by the Congress of the Indigenous Population of Gdańsk Voivodship on 20 October 1945 mainly concerned the equal participation of this section of Poles in the socio-political life of the country. The point was their proportional representation in the people's councils at all levels and in the state and local administration. An important resolution passed by the Congress was a motion addressed to the voivode of Gdańsk to

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258 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365,WKW, *Sprawozdanie*, 25 XI 1946, k. 158.

259 AAN, MZO, 196/68, Indigenous population, *Sprawozdanie WKW*, 25 XI 1946, k. 111–114. See also: Obracht-Prondzyński, *Kaszubi. Między...*, pp. 454–455.

260 Leon Lenzion's account recorded in June 2005. In the author's possession.

exchange the existing vetting certificates for Polish citizenship certificates. An interesting point of this resolution was that vetted persons should be placed into categories, with Polish citizenship certificates being granted first to persons with a high level of national consciousness and a sense of belonging to the Polish state. These included former members of the Association of Poles in Germany and the Community of Poles of the Free City of Gdańsk. In addition, indigenous Poles in Gdańsk asked the Polish government to help repatriate persons of Polish descent who had been resettled to Germany along with Germans.

On 2 November 1946, the Congress of the Indigenous Population of the Malbork region was held in Sztum. The VVB claimed that it was held “to a high standard, with the mass participation of the indigenous population<sup>261</sup>.” The first Kashubians Congress was held in Wejherowo in January of that year and attended by over 2,000 people<sup>262</sup>. Its purpose was to manifest the Polishness of the Kashubians and their readiness to cooperate with the government, as well as to display the cultural achievements of Kashubia<sup>263</sup>. In his welcoming speech, Leonard Wierzbicki, chairman of the Voivodship People’s Council in Gdańsk, assured his audience: “You are citizens with full rights, and no one in office may do you harm (...) for any offences committed. I shall hold the perpetrators responsible<sup>264</sup>.”

Next, the Congress of Delegates of the Indigenous Population was held in Poznań on 4 and 5 December 1946, and attended by activists of the former Association of Poles in Germany, the former Polish community in Gdańsk, and the Polish Western Union. The congress elected an Advisory Council for Nationality Issues for the Government of National Unity, composed of 15 members representing all of the Regained Territories. The chairman of the Council was Zygmunt Moczyński, head of the Nationality Unit of the Voivodship Office of Gdańsk. This was an auxiliary body of the Foreign Ministry and the

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261 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Rezolucje uchwalone jednogłośnie na kongresie delegatów-autochtonów województwa gdańskiego*, 20 XI 1946, k. 152–154. Cf.: 1164/361, Rehabilitation issues, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne UWG miesięczne*, za X 1946, k. 42 and 67. AAN, MZO, 196/68, Indigenous population, *Sprawozdanie WKW*, 25 XI 1946, k. 111.

262 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/50, Organisational issues of authorities and institutions, *Sprawozdanie z inspekcji organizacyjno-instrukcyjnej SP w Wejherowie*, 8-16 I 1946, k. 18. See also: *Zrzesz Kaszëbsko*, 1946, No. 2, p. 1; C. Obracht-Prondzyński, *Kaszubi. Między...*, p. 450.

263 *Kaszubi awangardą narodu polskiego*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 1946, No. 13, p. 1.

264 *Nie ma Kaszeb bez Polonii a bez Kaszeb Polści*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 1946, No. 14, p. 1.

Ministry of the Regained Territories. The subject of the Council's work included the repatriation of Poles in Germany. The 11 resolutions adopted by the congressional Political Committee included a postulate to the government to delegate representatives to the Polish communities in Germany of the indigenous population as experts on German relations<sup>265</sup>. The Congress resolved formally to abolish the Association of Poles in Germany and transfer all of its powers to the Polish Western Union. It called upon the central authorities to vet, as quickly as possible and ex-officio, all those Poles who had not yet applied to be vetted. In November 1946, the number of such people was estimated to be 60,789<sup>266</sup>. Another resolution stressed the importance of the Polish-Soviet alliance in the expansion of Poland's western border and in the integration of Polish nationals residing in the eastern German territories annexed to Poland. The consolidation of democratic rule was described as the sole guarantee for the realisation and permanence of these objectives. Therefore, the indigenous Polish population was called upon to vote for the Democratic Parties Bloc in the forthcoming Sejm elections. It was hoped that this bloc would guarantee the indigenous population a suitable number of seats in the Sejm and guarantee the fulfilment of that population's demands regarding its integration with the entire nation<sup>267</sup>. This illustrated the increasingly ideological and political structure of the Polish Western Union in support of the changes sought by the communist centre. However, perhaps in the minds of its members this was the only way to fulfil the hopes of the indigenous Polish population. The Congress appealed to the Democratic Parties Bloc to "guarantee the Polish indigenous population a suitable number of seats in the Sejm and the fulfilment of that population's demands regarding its integration with the entire Polish nation<sup>268</sup>."

Piotr Madajczyk has correctly noted that the policy pursued towards the population of the Polish-German border zone was an important element of the

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265 AAN, MZO, 196/68a, Indigenous population, *Uchwały konferencji działaczy byłego Związku Polaków w Niemczech, byłej Gminy Polskiej w Gdańsku oraz Polskiego Związku Zachodniego w sprawie społecznego działania na Ziemiach Odzyskanych w Poznaniu, Uchwały Komisji Politycznej*, 4 and 5 XII 1946, k. 23. See also: Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz...*, p. 78.

266 J. Misztal, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa...*, p. 232. But M. Ujdał says that the number of unvetted people at that time was 57,789. M. Ujdał, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

267 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Sprawozdanie*, XII 1946, k. 165.

268 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/50, Organizational issues of the authorities, *Sprawozdanie sytuacyjne*, XII 1946, k. 165.

integration processes (in Polish society and the state) or disintegration (integration with the German minority and isolation from the Polish environment)<sup>269</sup>.

## 2.2 The Beginnings of Gdańsk Voivodship

The incorporation of Gdańsk into the Polish state occupied an important place in the speeches of politicians about the western issue. The decree of the Provisional Government on the creation of Gdańsk voivodship<sup>270</sup> was described as a “deed of historic magnitude” and as a “step towards the elimination of all the harm suffered by the Polish nation through the centuries since the times of the rapacious Prussians as well as a guarantee of long-term peace for Poland after the present war<sup>271</sup>.” Thus, the incorporation of the ancient Polish city was regarded as compensation for harm and as a guarantee of peace not only for Poland, but also for mankind<sup>272</sup>. We should note that from the legal angle, the territory of the Free City of Danzig was treated separately from the Regained Territories<sup>273</sup>. The reasons for this separation were that the problem of Gdańsk was a separate subject in the international arena and that the Third Reich had unilaterally violated the status of that city set forth in the Treaty of Versailles. The Provisional Government regarded this area included in Poland’s post-war borders as a former state that had broken international accords and did not guarantee Polish prerogatives on this territory<sup>274</sup>.

As the influx of new residents to Gdańsk was much more intense and spontaneous than to other cities in the Regained Territories, the city occupied a place in the Polish propaganda of settlement in these territories<sup>275</sup>. Nevertheless, from

269 P. Madajczyk, *Polish Germans 1944–1989*, Warsaw 2001, p. 11.

270 Official Journal of the Republic of Poland No. 11, 1945, item. 107; J. Siekierzyński, *Tworzenie administracji państwowej w województwie gdańskim (1945–1950)*, Gdańsk 1978, pp. 11–18.

271 *Przemówienie na manifestacji...*, p. 37.

272 See also: *Godzina wielkich rozstrzygnięć. Przemówienie radiowe premiera Rządu Tymczasowego RP, Edwarda Osóbki-Morawskiego z 2 kwietnia 1945 r.* [in:] *Powrót Polski nad Bałtyk 1920–1945. Antologia tekstów historycznych*, ed. M. M. Drozdowski, Warsaw 1997, pp. 225–227.

273 IZ, doc. V–10, *Ziemie Odzyskane w świetle prawa międzynarodowego*.

274 L. Zieliński, *op. cit.*, p. 16; J. Siekierzyński, *Grupy operacyjne jako załączek polskiej administracji na Pomorzu Gdańskim po zakończeniu II wojny światowej* [in:] *Przemiany społeczne w regionie gdańskim w powojennym 30-leciu*, ed. K. Podolski, Gdańsk 1977, p. 29.

275 Cf.: AIPN Gd, 0046/250, *Sprawozdanie Wojewódzkiego Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego w Gdańsku*, 28 XI 1945 k. 16.

a local angle Polishness was a frequent postulate in the first months after the war. One of the texts written at that time states: “Gdańsk is not just the brightest jewel in Poland’s crown, but most of all it is Poland’s lungs<sup>276</sup>.” Such thinking was meant to underscore the legitimacy of the Polish presence in Gdańsk. Deputy Mayor Franciszek Chudoba addressed the new residents of Gdańsk directly, again ignoring the role of the existing Polish population there: “We are already the people of Gdańsk, we who have arrived here from all corners of Poland to live here and, with our work, to lay the foundations of the maritime state emerging here<sup>277</sup>.” Writers like Jan Kilariski and Marian Pelczar, later director of the Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Gdańsk, certified in their work the legitimacy of the Polish presence in this settled area<sup>278</sup>. An awareness of the city’s original Polishness, deliberately erased during the Prussian era, was meant to help the new residents set down roots in the city. Frequent reference was made to the city’s medieval history, describing it as, e.g., “the ancient heritage of the dukes of Pomerania and an ancient Polish bulwark<sup>279</sup>.” The Polishness of Gdańsk was often underscored by denying its German associations, a primitive form of historiography performed at that time. The renaming of all public spaces into Polish was designed to erase all German symbols of Gdańsk. The city’s pre-war Polish community attempted to assert its rights to Polish Gdańsk. For example, at a meeting on 3 June 1945, over 1,000 members of the former Polish Community, the Association of Poles in Gdańsk, adopted two resolutions: 1. on the granting of care to the “remnants of the Polish indigenous corpus remaining on these lands following the Teutonic onslaught,” and 2. on the “settlement of nationality, civic and ownership issues<sup>280</sup>.” In turn, in March 1946 activists of the Rehabilitation Vetting Board protested against a remark by Mayor F. Kotus-Jankowski that: “The first Poles have arrived in Gdańsk only recently<sup>281</sup>.”

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276 J. Friedrich, *Gdańsk 1945–1949. Oswajanie miejsca* [in:] *Gdańsk–pomnik historii II*, Gdańsk file 4, ed. P. Najmajer, Gdańsk 2001, p. 28.

277 Ibid.

278 Both of them talked about the past of Gdańsk on Polish Radio in Gdańsk. Cf.: M. Walicka, *Próba wspomnień. Gdańsk 1945–1946*, Gdańsk 1968, p. 115.

279 J. Kilariski, *Listy gdańskie*, „Dziennik Bałtycki” 1945, No. 130, p. 5.

280 *Manifestacje w polskim Gdańsku*, „Dziennik Bałtycki” 1945, No.16, p. 3.

281 This remark was noted in the guide to Gdańsk issued by the Democratic Party. The Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences (hereinafter BPAN), Ms 5524, Internal issues of the Vetting Board in Gdańsk, *Uchwała Komisji Weryfikacyjnej do Spraw Rehabilitacji*, 18 III 1946, p. 15.

As mentioned earlier, the Gdańsk voivodship was created by a decree dated 30 March 1945. As we have seen, it covered areas that had belonged to three state and administrative authorities between the wars. It consisted of 13 counties, including three municipal ones, with a total area of 10,725 km<sup>2</sup>, of which 5,654 km<sup>2</sup> were old counties and 5,071 new ones<sup>282</sup>. The formation of so-called mixed voivodships, composed of both former (old) and regained (new) counties, was meant to encourage more rapid assimilation of the new counties into the rest of the country<sup>283</sup>.

This territorial structure created a very complex ethnic mixture in the voivodship. Those areas that had been Polish before the war were inhabited by the indigenous Polish population, culturally homogenous in Kashubia and Kociewie, but diversified in Gdynia since the 1930s. Germans predominated in the Regained Territories and in the area of the former Free City of Gdańsk, but ethnic Poles also lived there. Different regions had different socio-economic, cultural and linguistic characteristics and traditions, as well as different degrees of national consciousness<sup>284</sup>. The greatest concentration of Poles with a high degree of national awareness was in the county of Sztum<sup>285</sup>. These factors made it very difficult for the Gdańsk authorities to formulate a uniform path of ethnic policy, including regarding the indigenous Polish population.

It is difficult to determine whether, during the initial period after the war, the indigenous population was considered a regional ethnic group or as an ethnic minority. It seems that in the new counties in particular, the indigenous population was regarded as German; in other words, an ethnic minority. However, the official stance of the Gdańsk voivodship authorities towards the indigenous Polish population became uniform as early as in the first half of 1945. Rehabilitated and vetted persons were to be treated as Polish citizens with equal rights. However, the practical realisation of this concept was completely different, as we shall see.

At this point, it is worth quoting an official of the Security Service in the Voivodship Office, who described how the area in question functioned in the mind of society, and not only the security services:

“Arriving in Pomerania, we encountered circumstances different from other voivodships. For the first time we heard of Eingedeutsche of various categories, of citizens of Gdańsk

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282 *Rocznik statystyczny GUS*, Warsaw 1947, pp. 14–16.

283 H. Rybicki, *Powrót pogranicza...*, p. 53.

284 I. Sobczak, *Procesy demograficzne w województwie gdańskim w latach 1945–1965*, Gdańsk 1970, pp. 19 and 22.

285 Cf.: B. Maroszek, *Kształtowanie się nowego...*, pp. 24–25.



and many other categories of people. Polish legislation at that time was still incomplete, the code of procedures did not cover this topic and, worst of all, despite several letters and requests, we received no instructions from the Ministry, not a word. During the initial period of our work, we encountered purely German elements, there were no Poles, and no one was willing to remain there because of the colossal destruction of the city. During the first few days, the Soviet authorities together with the Civic Militia staged raids and shut people in prison without reason. Straight after taking over our offices, we proceeded to carry out filtering work, but the professional resources were so meagre that it was impossible to keep up with the pressure of work, but still we managed not too badly<sup>286</sup>.”

The first field authorities on the territories occupied by the Soviets, both in the voivodship of Gdańsk and in Poland at large, were the military *kommandaturas* of the Red Army<sup>287</sup>. In the Gdańsk area, these were formed out of units separated from the II Byelorussian Front and operational groups of the NKVD<sup>288</sup>. *Kommandaturas* were created mainly in cities and other places of strategic significance, and in larger population centres. There were provincial (voivodship), municipal, regional (county) and district *kommandaturas*<sup>289</sup>. On 30 March 1945, a regional *kommandatura* was formed, headed by General-Lieutenant Siemion Mikulski. According to the agreement of 26 July 1944 between the PKWN and USSR, the tasks of *kommandaturas* included safeguarding the front, exercising civilian authority and securing property left by the Germans<sup>290</sup>. It gave the Soviets jurisdiction over Polish citizens in areas close to the front. A major part of the activities of the Soviets was unlawful, such as the seizure of property not

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286 AIPN Gd, 0046/250, *Pismo Sekcji Śledczej Wojewódzkiego Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego do kierownika WUBP w Gdańsku, płk. Grzegorza Korczyńskiego*, 22 XI 1945, k. 7.

287 Cf.: M. Łach, *Status prawny komendantur wojennych Armii Czerwonej na ziemiach zachodnich i północnych Polski w 1945 r.* [in:] *Ziemie Odzyskane pod wojskową administracją radziecką po II wojnie światowej*, ed. S. Łacha, Słupsk 2000, pp. 85–94; P. Kołakowski, *Komendantury wojenne Armii Czerwonej na ziemiach polskich 1944–1945* [in:] *Przemiany społeczno-polityczne na Pomorzu Środkowym w latach 1945–1956*, ed. Z. Kachnicz, Koszalin 2001, pp. 117–129.

288 N. Kołomejczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

289 A. Magierska, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

290 Z. Kachnicz, *Armia Czerwona i jej stosunek do ludności i mienia na Pomorzu Zachodnim w 1945 roku* [in:] *Ziemie Odzyskane...* Cf.: J. Siekierzyński, *Grupy operacyjne...*, p. 12; G. Baziur, *Armia Czerwona na Pomorzu Gdańskim 1945–1947*, Warsaw 2003, pp. 17–18.

needed for the front and the detention of people who had not protested against the Red Army<sup>291</sup>.

The composition of the *kommandaturas* included a deputy commandant for economic affairs and a deputy commandant for political affairs. Soviet officers were to help organise public life in a given area until such time as the Polish authorities took over. The *kommandaturas* arranged the protection of industrial plants and agricultural property, and managed the lives of the civilian population<sup>292</sup>. For this purpose, an auxiliary administration (village heads, mayors and civic committees) was sometimes formed from the local populace<sup>293</sup>. For example, a Municipal Board was formed in Lębork, comprising local Poles and Germans, members of the *Komunistische Partei Deutschlands*<sup>294</sup>. Needless to say, the Soviet administration did not respect the rights of the Poles to assume authority and administer assets left behind by the Germans<sup>295</sup>. Soviet soldiers engaged in uncontrolled theft of machinery and equipment, especially in ports and shipyards. This occurred on the basis of a secret agreement signed on 26 March 1945 between the Provisional Government and the Soviet military command. It authorised the Soviets to dispose of German assets at their discretion. In addition, the feeling of heroism in defeating the Third Reich and the treatment of the Gdańsk area and the local population purely as a former part of Germany made it seem natural for the Soviets to help themselves to the spoils of war.

The presence of the Red Army in the voivodship of Gdańsk involved more than merely dismantling entire military plants and moving them to the USSR. The arrival of Red Army units on the territory of East Prussia in January 1945 commenced a several-month period of lawlessness in that area, marked by a destabilisation of social life and the local population's fear for their lives and property<sup>296</sup>. The Soviets evicted residents and settlers from the houses they

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291 M. Golon, *Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych wobec ziem nowych i starych w latach 1945–1947 na przykładzie Pomorza Nadwiślańskiego* [in:] *Ziemia Odzyskane...*, p. 130.

292 L. Belzyt, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

293 H. Rybicki, *Powstanie i działalność władzy ludowej na zachodnich i północnych obszarach Polski 1945–1949*, Poznań 1976, p. 27.

294 G. Baziur, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

295 See, e.g. AP Gd, State Office of Repatriation (PUR), 1167/677, reports on urban and rural settlement, *Sprawozdanie Punktu Etapowego PUR w Gdańsku*, V 1945, pp. 14–15.

296 A. Jaracz, *Żołnierze Armii Czerwonej a polska ludność autochtoniczna na Pomorzu Środkowym w 1945 r.*, in: *Przemiany społeczno-polityczne...*, pp. 49–61; J. Śniadecki,

occupied and committed mass acts of lawlessness, robbery, pillage and rape<sup>297</sup>. Rural dwellers were deprived of their farming implements, animal feed, electric cables and other assets. For example, in the county of Sławno in January 1945, the Soviets seized most of the farms and turned them into *sovkhazes*<sup>298</sup>.

Furthermore, Red Army soldiers took advantage of the Germans remaining in the new Polish counties, stirring them up against the Polish authorities and using them to steal property that had once been theirs<sup>299</sup>. Favouritism towards Germans was a frequent phenomenon in Gdańsk voivodship<sup>300</sup>. There was a Commission for Polish-Soviet Affairs attached to the Voivodship Office, to which delegates of the Soviet military staff, Marshal Konstantin Rokossovsky and Major Dobrodomienko, belonged. In September 1946, the Commission considered 26 contentious issues concerning the transfer of previously German farms to new settlers and the provision of houses to persons entitled to them, and also investigated cases of vetted people employed in Soviet units in order

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*Z badań nad stosunkiem Armii Czerwonej do ludności Pomorza Środkowego w latach 1945–1946, in: ibid., pp. 87–100.*

- 297 AP Gd, PUR, 1167/150, field reports on settlers, *Sprawozdanie UWG z przebiegu akcji osiedleńczej*, VIII 1945, k. 45–51. See also: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/72, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne Pełnomocnika Obwodowego Rządu Rzeczypospolitej (hereinafter PO) w Miastu i Starostwa Powiatowego (SP) w Miastku*, 1945, k. 2, 19; 1164/80, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Gdańsku 1945–1947*, XII 1945, k. 67; 1164/87, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Sztumie 1945–1951*, X 1945, k. 13; 1164/89, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Wejherowie 1945–1950*, VIII 1945, k. 4; AAN, Ministry of Public Administration (hereinafter MAP), 199/51, situation reports by the voivode of Gdańsk, *Raport z przebiegu akcji osiedleńczej na terenie countyu Elbląg*, 15–30 IX 1945, k. 121. The independent Polish underground also reported the destruction and removal of German assets from Gdańsk. Cf. M. Turlejska, *Te pokolenia żałobami czarne... Skazani na śmierć i ich sędziowie*, Warsaw 1990, p. 81.
- 298 AAN, MAP, 199/51, situation reports by the voivode of Gdańsko, *Pismo Obwodowego Komitetu Osiedleńczego w Sławnie do Wydziału Osiedleńczego Urzędu Wojewódzkiego w Gdańsku*, 6 VIII 1945, k. 248.
- 299 Memoirs of Halina Sokolek, in: *Danzig/Gdańsk 1945. Erinnerungen nach 50 Jahren/ Wspomnienia 50 lat później*, red. P. Oliver Loew, E. Rusak, R. Zekert, Gdańsk 1997, p. 73. Some Germans remaining in Gdańsk claimed that relations between the Russians and the Germans improved following the Polish takeover. See: Memoirs of Klaus Stamm, in: *ibid.*, p. 265.
- 300 AAN, MAP, 199/52, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne wojewody gdańskiego*, vol. I, *Dane odnośnie obszaru i zaludnienia*, 1 XI 1945, k. 8–9.

to release them from obligatory work<sup>301</sup>. In addition, sources suggest a series of measures by the Soviets encumbering the work of the Polish administration<sup>302</sup>.

In this way, the Polish administration developed a feeling of animosity towards the Soviet authorities and the rule they had imposed on Poland<sup>303</sup>. Cases of robbery and murders of civilians were reported until summer 1946. This happened the longest in the coastal and Słupsk county<sup>304</sup>. But in the remaining counties of Gdańsk voivodship and in Gdańsk itself, raids, thefts and evictions seemed to have stopped by that time. It was also noted that “the Polish population has learned how to handle Red Army representatives in situations of direct contact<sup>305</sup>”.

A particularly poignant issue was the arrest of Germans and indigenous Poles and their deportation into the depths of Russia, reported by the above-mentioned security service official. Ethnic aliens were subject to an order of the NKVD dated 5 February 1945, requiring the registration and detention of German males aged from 17 to 50 and capable of bearing arms. But in practice, age and gender restrictions were ignored<sup>306</sup>. Some 25,000 people of Polish descent were deported from Gdańsk voivodship during this prolonged phase following the end of hostilities<sup>307</sup>.

301 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/61, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne UWG za 1946 r.*, IX 1946, k. 44. See also: 1164/62, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne PO w Łęborku za lata 1945–1950*, X 1945, k. 5; AAN, MAP, 199/52, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne wojewody gdańskiego*, t. I, za X 1945, k. 27.

302 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/84, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Łęborku 1945–1947*, VII 1945, k. 2; 1164/87, *Raport z przebiegu akcji osiedleńczej*, X 1945, k. 1.

303 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/62, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne UWG 1945–1946*, II 1946, k. 149. See also: 1164/80, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Gdańsku 1945–1947*, za IX 1945, k. 35.

304 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/73, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne PO w Słupsku 1945–1946*, VII 1946, k. 33.

305 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/63, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne UWG 1946–1946*, II 1946, k. 150. Zob. także AP Gd, UWG, 1164/63, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne UWG 1946–1947*, XI 1946, k. 415.

306 Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz...*, p. 16; B. Nitschke, *Wysiedlenie czy wypędzenie? Ludność niemiecka w Polsce w latach 1945–1949*, Toruń 2000, p. 64; K. Strykowski, *op. cit.*, p. 155; the direct basis for the mass arrests of the civilian population by the NKVD was an order from Beria on 11 January 1945 *On purging the rears of fronts of hostile elements*. M. Golon, *op. cit.*, p. 130; S. Jankowiak, *Armia Czerwona a problem wysiedlenia ludności niemieckiej z Polski*, in: *Ziemia Odzyskana...*, pp. 178–179.

307 K. Ciechanowski, *Drogi Polaków z Pomorza do radzieckich obozów w latach 1939–1945*, in: S. Janke, E. Szczesiak, *Kolce syberyjskiej róży*, Gdańsk 1990, pp. 60–75. See also G. Baziur, *op. cit.*, M. Golon, *Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych na*

They were sent to over a dozen camps run by the NKVD Chief Administration for POW and Internee Issues in the *oblasts* of Donetsk, Kharkov, Chelyabinsk, Chkalov, Kemerovo, Kurgansk, Moscow, Sverdlovsk, Tulska, and Zaporozhets, as well as in Bashkiria, Lithuania and Latvia. The basic purpose of deporting Pomeranians and other East European residents to the USSR was to use them for labour<sup>308</sup>.

The catalyst for this was inclusion on the German National List. The Soviet authorities did not consider the reasons why a person was on the list, although they are believed to have known these details from Poles who had been drafted into the *Wehrmacht* and subsequently ended up in Soviet bondage<sup>309</sup>. Nevertheless, according to Stanisław Zimny, vice mayor of Kościerzyna, the Red Army caused much bitterness among the Kashubian population because it failed to understand the consequences of the war on this ethnic group<sup>310</sup>.

It has been said that were it not for the *Deutsche Volksliste* (especially Group III), the Russians would have found it much more difficult to find a pretext to arrest people described as 'socially dangerous elements'<sup>311</sup>. In fact, the arrests and deportations by the NKVD, which increased in Pomerania in February and March 1945, had nothing to do with the removal of people considered a military danger, as evidenced by the high number of arrests for petty infractions such as not being in the possession of documents, or the absence of interrogations and fair investigations<sup>312</sup>. Exploiting the effects of the policy of Germanisation on Pomerania and Silesia, the Russians gained several tens of thousands of additional workers for the labour camps<sup>313</sup>.

The NKVD also deported German citizens of Polish descent living on the territory of the new voivodship, e.g. in Powiśle, Lębork and Bytowo counties, and in

*Pomorzu Nadwiślańskim w latach 1945–1947*, Toruń 2001; W. Jastrzębski, *W dalekim obcym kraju. Deportacje Polaków z Pomorza do ZSRR w 1945 r.*, Bydgoszcz 1990.

308 M. Golon, *Polityka radzieckich...*, p. 141. See also *ibid.*, *Od Pomorza Gdańskiego do Górnego Śląska–deportacje ludności cywilnej z ziem polskich do obozów pracy e ZSRR w 1945 r.*, in: *Deportacje Górnoślązaków do ZSRR w 1945 r.*, ed. A. Dziurok, M. Niedurny, Katowice 2004, pp. 11–34; M. Orski, *Ostatnie dni obozu koncentracyjnego Stutthof. Styczeń-maj 1945*, Gdańsk 1998, pp. 36–41.

309 W. Jastrzębski, *W dalekim...*, pp. 22–25; M. Golon, *Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych...*, pp. 83–85.

310 AP Gd, KP PPR w Kościerzynie, 2601/2, *Protokoły posiedzeń plenarnych*, k. 26.

311 M. Golon, *Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych...*, pp. 88 et. seq.

312 B. Zwarra, *Wspomnienia gdańskiego bówki*, vol. 4, Gdańsk 1996, pp. 30–31; K. Strykowski, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

313 M. Golon, *Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych...*, pp. 91–92.

Gdańsk city. At least several hundred Poles were removed from the four counties in Powiśle and Lębork county<sup>314</sup>. From Sztum county, at least 233 out of the 351 Germans and Poles arrested there were deported<sup>315</sup>. There is also a list of the names of 44 Poles arrested in Bytowo county, at least ten of whom died during their deportation<sup>316</sup>. As in the case of the deportation of people on the *Volksliste*, Polish descent was no reason not to persecute and deport these people. Those arrested included members of the Association of Poles in Germany: “Soviet intimidation was the first step to Poland’s ‘loss’ of a considerable part of her indigenous population<sup>317</sup>”

Before being deported to the USSR, the victims were placed in transit camps in, among other places, Ciechanów, Działdowo, Poznań and Grudziądz<sup>318</sup>. In addition, there were prison and labour camps in Poland accommodating people included on the German National List and German citizens of Polish descent. The largest number of camps was in Upper Silesia, including the central camp in Jaworzno. The largest camp in northern Poland was the Central Labour Camp at Potulice, near Nakło<sup>319</sup>. In Gdańsk voivodship itself, the largest labour camp for Germans was at ‘Narwik’ in Gdańsk<sup>320</sup>. It was formed in March 1945 as a transit point of the State Repatriation Office (*Państwo Urząd Repatriacyjny*, PUR), which received transports of Poles being repatriated. It probably operated until the end of 1947. According to divergent sources, the number of people

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314 Ibid., p. 106.

315 A. Lubiński, *Armia Czerwona i NKWD w powiecie sztumskim a sytuacja ludności polskiej w 1945 r.* [in:] *Powojenne losy konspiracji na Pomorzu*, ed. E. Zawacka, R. Kozłowski, Toruń 1995, pp. 5–11.

316 J. Wolski, *Deportacje ludności polskiej autochtonicznej z Pomorza Zachodniego w 1945 r. do obozów w ZSRR i jej losy* [in:] *Polacy z Pomorza Gdańskiego w ZSRR: internowani, jeńcy wojenni i więźniowie obozów pracy przymusowej. Materiały z sesji naukowej w Gdańsku 17 września 1991 r.*, Gdańsk 1991, p. 55 et seq.

317 M. Golon, *Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych...*, p. 108.

318 Ibid., *Polityka radzieckich...* [in:] *Ziemie Odzyskane...*, pp. 133–135; K. Strykowski, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

319 State Archives in Bydgoszcz (AP Bd), Voivodship Office of Pomerania (UWP), 851/565, *Spis obozów koncentracyjnych i obozów pracy na terenie województwa pomorskiego*, k. 5. Average employment in the Labour Camp in Potulice, active from January 1940 to 21 January 1945, was 7,000.

320 AP Gd, ZMG, 1165/1109, the repatriation of Polish nationals from the USSR and Germany to Poland, *Pismo Inspektoratu Osiedleńczego przy ZMG do Komendy MO w Gdańsku*, 9 I 1946, k. 270.

staying there varied between several thousand to over ten thousand people<sup>321</sup>. In Western Pomerania, there was a labour camp in Złotowo. Country estates employing the indigenous population (Germans and Poles being treated equally in this category) also served as labour camps. Formally, however, these people were registered in, e.g. Potulice. The security forces sometimes put people in camps without the knowledge of the judiciary<sup>322</sup>. The labour camps dotted all over Poland also accommodated Poles from Gdańsk voivodship who had not had time to acquire Polish citizenship.

It is assumed that the Soviets handed over camps containing German citizens to the Polish county and voivodship security authorities in July 1945<sup>323</sup>. But both the security services and administrative authorities continued their repression and intimidation of the indigenous population of Gdańsk voivodship, as we shall see later.

Very soon, as early as spring 1945, the Polish authorities made an effort to bring back Poles who had been deported to the USSR. The deportation of the indigenous Polish population contradicted official state policy regarding the country's reconstruction. The deportations meant a loss of manpower required for the economy. The legal norms adopted in the rehabilitation and vetting of the Polish indigenous population suggested that the Polish authorities expected the deportees to return. Moreover, an important factor accelerating the return of deported Poles was strong pressure from society, especially from families who had applied for the release of their relatives. The institutions engaged in the repatriation of deported Poles were the Ministry of the Regained Territories and the Repatriation Mission in Moscow. In Gdańsk voivodship, applications for the repatriation of indigenous Polish deportees were accepted by the above-mentioned Voivodship Vetting Board, which cooperated with the Ministry of the Regained Territories (*Ministerstwo Ziem Odzyskanych* MZO), the Ministry of Public Administration, the Plenipotentiary for Repatriation from the USSR in Warsaw, the Polish Red Cross, and the Search Bureau at the Presidium of

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321 W. Stankowski, *Obozy i inne miejsca odosobnienia dla niemieckiej ludności cywilnej w Polsce w latach 1945–1950*, Bydgoszcz 2002, p. 188. See also: R. Sudziński, *Transfer ludności niemieckiej z Wybrzeża Gdańskiego po II wojnie światowej (1945–1959)* [in:] *Migracje polityczne i ekonomiczne w krajach nadbałtyckich w XIX i XX w.*, ed. J. Borzyszkowski, M. Wojciechowski, Toruń-Gdańsk 1995.

322 W. Stankowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 175–238.

323 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, *Sprawy rehabilitacyjne*, za VII 1945, pp. 123–125.

the National People's Council<sup>324</sup>. According to MZO figures as at February 1947, their number was 3,959, mostly deportees to the USSR<sup>325</sup>.

The main wave of Poles returning from the USSR lasted from July 1945 to October 1947<sup>326</sup>. In July 1946, the Gdańsk authorities believed that in the Soviet occupied zone of Germany there was a large group of Poles, concentrated mainly in Wismar in Mecklenburg and in Berlin. They included individuals with outstanding services to and for the sake of Polishness in the annexed lands and numerous relatives of persons already vetted, deported by the Soviet or Polish authorities. They lived in miserable conditions, with frequent deaths from disease and malnutrition. The voivode of Gdańsk asked Major Dobrodzienko for permission to send a few delegations to Germany to intervene in the matter of Poles in those areas, either interned in camps or living freely. He was referred to the NKVD liaison officer at the Voivodship Security Service in Gdańsk<sup>327</sup>.

A considerable number of Poles died as a result of the actions of NKVD operational groups in Gdańsk. Some of them died while under arrest, others on the journey to a camp or prison. Still others died during transportation. But the largest group perished in the camps. Most of those who died in exile did so between February and May 1945. At least several of them, whose details are not known, came from the counties of Tczew, Starogard, Kartuzy, and Kościerz, while the numbers of victims from Gdańsk, Sopot, Elbląg and the counties of Malbork, Sztum, Kwidzyn, Bytowo and Lębork amount to several thousand, both Germans and Poles, out of a total exceeding ten thousand<sup>328</sup>.

The record of the victims of Soviet maltreatment includes those who suffered rape, robbery or confiscation of property, resulting in malnutrition and child mortality. A report by Gdańsk City Council for 1945 states: "Food and all other commodities are controlled by the army (...) The military authorities are removing great quantities of these items from Gdańsk, and even the furniture and furnishings in apartments occupied by Poles on the basis of permission granted by the City Council<sup>329</sup>." As late as autumn 1946, the Russians had still not handed back many houses they occupied in the area. They often did so only when the Polish authorities intervened, and the houses were often in a deplorable

324 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/56, *Sprawy konferencji międzywydziałowych z udziałem wojewody, Notatka dla wojewody na zebranie WRN*, k. 115.

325 M. Ujdak, *op. cit.*, pp. 91–91; M. Musielak, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

326 M. Golon, *Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych...*, pp. 182–184.

327 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do WUBP w Gdańsku*, 1 VII 1946., k. 408.

328 M. Golon, *Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych...*, pp. 185–190.

329 G. Baziur, *op. cit.*, p. 152.



condition. Several thousand people died at hands of the Soviet between January 1945 and 1947. The consequences of Soviet deportation included a burning hatred of the USSR and fear of the new authorities. No doubt this served to weaken opposition to the consolidation of communist rule. This also made it possible to maintain the division of society into those who had enrolled on the *Volksliste* and those who had not, for, as we have seen, most deportees had been on the list<sup>330</sup>.

The Soviet military command was stationed in Gdańsk until June 1946, leaving unpaid bills for electricity, water, fuel, local provisions, the services of German workers, and for damage to industrial and agricultural premises belonging to Gdańsk City Council<sup>331</sup>. The Soviet authorities in the voivodship commenced the handover of power to Poland at the end of April 1945. The last Soviet garrison in the voivodship, in Malbork, did not leave until 1948<sup>332</sup>.

The Soviet *kommandaturas* did not conduct any particular ethnic policy, mainly because the Polish population was subjected to the same terror and discrimination as the German population. The chief motives for Soviet conduct were economic considerations<sup>333</sup>.

In March and April 1945, operational groups began to arrive in Gdańsk voivodship as the first organisational forms of the Polish administration<sup>334</sup>. Their task was to take over power from the Soviets. The operational groups formed part of the Voivodship Operational Group of the Ministry of Public Administration and were answerable to the Council of Ministers Economic Committee<sup>335</sup>.

Operational groups for Gdańsk voivodship were formed in February 1945 in Warsaw for the new territories and in Bydgoszcz for the old territories. Each of them was headed by a director, whilst authority in the field was acquired by a chief executive (*starosta*) or government plenipotentiary appointed by the voivode of Pomerania, Henryk Świątkowski, or by the director of the Voivodship Operational Group. In Gdańsk, his latter office was held by Bohdan Podhorski-Piotrowski, who arrived in the city on 31 March 1945<sup>336</sup>. The first operational

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330 Cf.: M. Golon, *Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych...*, p. 191.

331 G. Baziur, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

332 P. Szczuchniak, *Armia Czerwona na Powiślu w latach 1945–1946* [in:] *Ziemie Odzyskane...*, p. 128.

333 L. Belzyt, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

334 L. Zieliński, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

335 J. Siekierzyński, *Grupy operacyjne...*, p. 17.

336 Idem, *Tworzenie administracji...*, p. 19; M. Stryczyński, *Gdańsk w latach 1945–1948. Odbudowa organizmu miejskiego*, Wrocław 1981, p. 50.

group of the Ministry of Public Administration arrived on the same day. Headed by an activist from the Polish community in Gdańsk, Kazimierz Banaś-Purwin, this 18-man team proceeded to create the structures of a voivodship state administration. Mieczysław Okęcki, the first voivode of Gdańsk, arrived in the city to find its basic administrative structures already in place<sup>337</sup>. Towards the end of March, the Ministry of Public Administration appointed a second operational group for the needs of Gdańsk, this time to appoint municipal authorities. On 4 April, a 16-man group of local government employees arrived to organise the Provisional City Council. The city's first mayor, appointed by the minister of public administration, was Franciszek Kotus-Jankowski<sup>338</sup>. Apart from the central city council, district authorities were set up in Nowy Port, Wrzeszcz, Oliwa<sup>339</sup>, Orun, and Stogi. The Town Council of Gdynia was appointed on the same day, with Col. Anatol Zbaraski as its first chairman, and on 21 April 1945 Henryk Zakrzewski was appointed mayor. On 31 March 1945, the first post-war mayor of Sopot, Henryk Michniewicz, appointed the Town Council<sup>340</sup>. The new officials came equipped with the necessary documents (applicable to Polish and post-war German legislation), Official Journals, signs, state emblems, stamps and armbands for all of the group members.

The first county authorities were in Starogard county as early as on 15 March 1945, and its chief executive was Tadeusz Ziółkowski. At the same time, a Town Council was appointed, headed from October 1945 by Ludwik Żalik<sup>341</sup>. On 19 March, Witold Pawłowski commenced organising a local council in Koscierz county. In Kartuzy county, Zdzisław Piasecki was appointed chief executive, also in March. The first chief executive of Tczew county was Paweł Pucek, appointed on 20 March, but his place was subsequently taken by Jan Krassowski. On 18 March, the county authorities of Wejherowo commenced work, headed by Janem Oderowski, and the mayor of Wejherowo was Bernard Szcześniey. The mayor of Puck was Byczkowski<sup>342</sup>. County operational groups and people's councils were also appointed between March and August 1945.

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337 J. Siekierzyński, *Tworzenie administracji...*, p. 33

338 *Ibid.*, *Grupy operacyjne...*, p. 20; M. Stryczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

339 Initially after the war, Oliwa was an independent municipal district with its own mayor. AP Gd, UWG, 1164/59, Monthly situation reports. *Notatka służbowa Wydziału Samorządowego dla wojewody w sprawie Oliwy*, V 1945, k. 390.

340 J. Siekierzyński, *Grupy operacyjne...*, p. 22; Por.: M. Walicka, *op. cit.*, pp. 39–41.

341 W. Odyniec, *Ziemia starogardzka*, Gdańsk 1974, p. 114.

342 *Historia Pucka*, ed. A. Groth, Gdańsk 1998, pp. 276–277.

The organisation of the administration in the old counties proceeded smoothly because of the Polish population, but the situation in the new counties was different. On 14 March 1945, the Council of Ministers appointed a Plenipotentiary General for the Regained Territories, who was also the minister of public administration. The task of regional (voivodship) and local (county) plenipotentiaries was to set up Polish offices and institutions and to conduct settlement<sup>343</sup>. As mentioned earlier, the Ministry of the Regained Territories was formed in November 1945. Its authority covered the lands annexed to Poland in 1945. It managed areas composed entirely of the Regained Territories and mixed voivodships. The chief executive for the old counties was answerable to the Minister of Public Administration, while for the new counties the chief executive was a government plenipotentiary answerable to the Minister for the Regained Territories<sup>344</sup>.

In Powiśle, the heads of the local administrations were appointed the Polish government plenipotentiary for Masuria and formed part of the Maritime Operational Group answerable to the Minister of Trade and Industry. The mayor of Elbląg was Waclaw Wysocki, appointed in March 1945, whilst the regional plenipotentiary was Aleksander Kunicki. In April and May, the regional plenipotentiaries for Malbork and Sztum were appointed, Adam Szpręga and Romuald Marmurowicz, respectively. The county council of Sztum commenced work on 20 April 1945. The first regional plenipotentiary in Kwidzyn was Włodzimierz Szeinike. The first chief executive of Gdańsk county, divided into two administrations, Pruszcz and Nowy Staw, was Marian Klenowicz.

The process of forming an administration was most difficult in the western counties of Gdańsk voivodship. It depended on Polish settlements, especially in rural areas, whose density was poor due to the low level of security. In Lębork, the city and county authorities were appointed in April 1945. The regional plenipotentiary was Jan Nowakowski, and the mayor was Stanisław Zajączkowski<sup>345</sup>. At the same time, the regional plenipotentiary in Bytowo was Jerzy Chrzczonowicz, and the mayor was A. Kaźmierczak<sup>346</sup>. In Miastko the regional plenipotentiary was Waclaw Kowalski, and in Słupsk Jan Kraciuk. Finally, in Sławno, the post

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343 H. Rybicki, *Powrót pogranicza...*, p. 50.

344 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

345 A. S. Dubiel, *Ziemia Łęborska 1945–1975*, Lębork 1982, p. 32; H. Rybicki, *Polska ludność...*, p. 197.

346 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/77, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP Bytowie, Pismo do wojewody gdańskiego*, 19 VII 1945, H. Rybicki, *Administracja i stosunki społeczno-polityczne w latach 1945–1969* [in:] *Dzieje Ziemi...*, pp. 366–367; *Ibid.*, *Polska ludność rodzima...*, p. 197.

of regional plenipotentiary was Józef Czarnecki, appointed in May 1945, at the same time as which Waclaw Buchelt was appointed mayor and Grześkowiak was appointed head of the county<sup>347</sup>.

The above-mentioned decree of 29 May 1946 abolished the previous districts (*okręgi*), transforming them into voivodships (*województwa*) and communities (*obwody*), which now became counties (*powiats*). The plenipotentiaries became voivodes and chief executives (*starosts*)<sup>348</sup>.

On 30 March, the first team of the Maritime Operational Group, formed at the Pomeranian Voivodship Office of Gdańsk in Bydgoszcz and answerable directly to the Ministry of Trade and Industry, arrived in Gdańsk. Led by Władysław Szedrowicz, the group was given the task of taking over the shipping industry. Another important function of this group was cooperation in establishing local administrative authorities, supplying the newly acquired towns with food, and setting in motion power stations and the gas and water supply<sup>349</sup>.

Political life began to be organised in Gdańsk in April 1945<sup>350</sup>. Operational groups of party committees arrived from Warsaw and Bydgoszcz, secretaries were appointed, voivodship and municipal authorities were set up, congresses of delegates were organised, and trade unions were launched. The development and possibilities of action of the various parties reflected the phenomena that were typical of Poland's entire post-war political life. The leading role, of course, was played by the Polish Workers' Party, even though in April 1945 it only had 366 members in the entire voivodship<sup>351</sup>. At the end of August 1945, the leadership of the PPR Voivodship Committee was formed<sup>352</sup>. In May 1948, there were 1,643 PPR circles in Gdańsk voivodship, gathering 38,593 members<sup>353</sup>. The Polish Socialist Party, possessing a certain influence in Gdańsk, attempted to preserve its own identity with varying success. The Polish Peasant Party and Democratic Party, formed in August 1945, remained in opposition to field representatives of the centre of power, but these parties did not have much of an impact on the

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347 *Dzieje Sławna*, ed. J. Lindmajer, Słupsk 1994, pp. 318–319. For more about the organisation of the Polish administration in Gdańsk voivodship, see: L. Zieliński, *op. cit.*, pp. 12–25.

348 H. Rybicki, *Powrót pogranicza...*, p. 54. Cf.: L. Zieliński, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

349 J. Siekierzyński, *Grupy operacyjne...*, p. 22–28.

350 *Organizatorzy życia politycznego na Wybrzeżu*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 1946, No. 97, p. 4.

351 R. Wapiński, *Pierwsze lata...*, p. 29.

352 J. Siekierzyński, *Grupy operacyjne...*, p. 18.

353 AP Gd, KW PPR w Gdańsku, 2598/295, Circulars, instructions, reports, *Sprawozdanie Wojewódzkiej Komisji Kontroli Partii–KW PPR w Gdańsku*, V 1948.

reality at the time. All the parties of the above-mentioned Democratic Bloc – PPR, PPS, SL, and SD – formed part of the Municipal People's Council whose first meeting was held on 9 July 1945.

The interests of the Polish communist centre were guarded by field structures of the Public Security Office. An operational group of the Ministry of Public Security, led by Col. Grzegorz Korczyński, came to Gdańsk on the last day of March 1945<sup>354</sup>. Acting as political police, this institution completed the process of forming its structures in Gdańsk voivodship in May 1945. As with the rest of Poland, the work of the Voivodship Public Security Office involved eliminating any initiatives that lay outside the sphere of interests of the PPR. From the end of 1945, the communist authority's apparatus grew in number and seized control of an ever-increasing sphere of social and political life.

Among others, operational groups from the Ministry of Post and Telegraph, the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform and the Ministry of Education arrived in Gdańsk in early 1945<sup>355</sup>. The greatest difficulty in the work of the administrative structures was the absence of trained staff. Helpful here was 'patronage' from central cities over cities in the west and north of Poland<sup>356</sup>. Łódź and Bydgoszcz assumed patronage over Gdańsk. The help of the employees in these two cities for the entire voivodship of Gdańsk played a major role in the development of economic and administrative life<sup>357</sup>.

### 2.3 National Polish Legal Solutions Regarding Rehabilitation

Initially after the war, the question of citizenship was regulated by the Act on State Citizenship of 1920<sup>358</sup>. The ethnic relationships in post-war Poland caused by the German occupation and the extension of the western border required new legislation to deal with ethnic issues<sup>359</sup>.

While the war was still on, political groups in Poland in exile produced concepts on how to deal with people who had committed treason against the

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354 M. Stryczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

355 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

356 S. Łach, *Osadnictwo miejskie na ziemiach odzyskanych w latach 1945–1950*, Słupsk 1996, pp. 149–162.

357 N. Kołomejczyk, *op. cit.*, pp. 123–128.

358 Dz.U. RP, No. 7, 1920, item 44; J. Rados, *op. cit.*, p. 57; W. Czapliński, *Obywatelstwo w procesie normalizacji stosunków RFN–PRL i RFN–NRD*, Poznań 1990, p. 117.

359 W. C., *Obywatelstwo polskie na Ziemiach Odzyskanych* [in:] „Demokratyczny Przegląd Prawniczy”, 1946, No. 5–6, p. 44

Polish nation. The Polish underground had information about Germanisation operations in the occupied territories. It was aware that enrolment on the *Volksliste* was a complicated issue that had not merely a legal aspect, but political, social and moral ones as well. It was known that solving the *Volksliste* issue would be a difficult and responsible task, especially in those areas annexed to the Third Reich. Therefore, the administrative structures of the Polish Government at home proposed ways of eliminating the effects of enrolment on the German National List in those areas<sup>360</sup>.

The end of the war and the unconditional capitulation of the Third Reich commenced a period of settling scores for German atrocities and war crimes. In the countries that had been occupied, special criminal legislation was drafted to deal with those who had collaborated with the occupants<sup>361</sup>. We should note that the situation in Poland, i.e. the country's subservience to the USSR, prevented judgment for Soviet atrocities during the war. The communist political centre that was being formed could not and would not press charges against the guarantor of their power in Poland. Hence, provisional Polish legislation and jurisdiction dealt solely with crimes committed by one occupier: the Third Reich.

The new doctrine of criminal law centred on the adoption of numerous penal regulations justified by the 'liberation' of Polish territory from the terror of Nazi occupation<sup>362</sup>. The post-war authorities adopted separate penal regulations for war crimes and for collaboration with the German occupier<sup>363</sup>. The first legal instrument meant to eliminate the effects of the war and the occupation was the decree by the PKWN of 31 August 1944 "*On the dispensation of justice for Fascist-Hitlerite criminals guilty of murder and of persecuting the civilian population and prisoners of war, and for traitors to the Polish Nation*"<sup>364</sup>. In literature,

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360 The same problem occurred in Silesia. AMS, Kolekcja z, K-1-16, *Problem niemiecki na Śląsku (Przyczynki do likwidacji niemczyzny w Polsce)*, pp. 18–34. Cf: Z. Boda-Krężel, *Koncepcje rozwiązania problemu niemieckiej listy narodowościowej przez polskie środowiska polityczne i władze konspiracyjne w okresie okupacji* [in] „Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka”, 1969, No. 3, pp. 341–344.

361 A. Pasek, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

362 W. Wolter, *Prawo karne. Zarys wykładu systematycznego. Część ogólna. Ustawa karna i przestępstwo na tle kodeksu karnego z 1932 r., kodeksu karnego Wojska Polskiego z 1944 r. oraz dekretów od 1944 do 1946 r.*, Warsaw 1947, p. 18.

363 For more about post-war criminal legislation, see: Z. A. Ziemia, *Prawo przeciwko społeczeństwu. Polskie prawo karne w latach 1944–1956*, Warsaw 1997.

364 Dz.U. RP, No. 4, 1944., item. 16. This decree took effect on 13 September 1944 and was amended by a decree of 10 December 1946: Dz.U. RP, No. 69, 1946, item 377.

this decree is also described as the ‘August decree’<sup>365</sup>. It is this criminal law instrument adopted by the new authorities that was to resolve responsibility for war crimes and for various forms of cooperation with the Germans. The August decree also permitted the persecution of foreign citizens, not just Polish citizens, who had collaborated with the Germans and committed ‘active treason’<sup>366</sup>. The offences it covered included murder, torture, intimidation of civilians and prisoners of war, and harming persons on the territory of the Polish State, especially those who had been sought or persecuted by the Germans. For these offences, the decree set forth the death penalty, imprisonment of up to 15 years or for life, loss of civic rights, and confiscation of the accused’s property and even the property of his or her family. The offences covered by the August decree were to be considered by Special Criminal Courts appointed under a PKWN decree of 12 September 1944<sup>367</sup>. These courts existed until 17 October 1946 as part of the Courts of Appeal, whereupon their competencies were assumed by the District Courts<sup>368</sup>. The August decree was applied to crimes committed after 31 August which, because this was a breach of the principle of *lex retro non agit*, aroused certain doubts among lawyers<sup>369</sup>. However, the application of this rule was deemed impossible because it would conflict with the basic principles of morality<sup>370</sup>. Nevertheless, emphasis was placed on the social need to treat Nazi criminals and collaborators with particular harshness and punish them with particularly severe penalties<sup>371</sup>. Needless to say, from a philosophical angle efforts to heal the

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365 K. Strykowski, *op. cit.*, p. 403.

366 M. Muszkat, *Wymiar sprawiedliwości w stosunku do przestępców wojennych a walka o utrwalenie pokoju* [in:] „Demokratyczny Przegląd Prawniczy”, 1946, No. 11/12, p. 15.

367 Dz.U. RP, No. 4, 1944, item 21. For more about this decree, see: B. Kopka, *Obozy pracy w Polsce 1944–1950. Przewodnik encyklopedyczny*, Warsaw 2002, pp. 32–33. See also: *Sąd Specjalny Karny w Gdańsku*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 1946, No. 84, p. 4.

368 Dz. U. RP, No. 59, 1946, item 324; See also: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, AAN, 199/766, rehabilitation of people on the German National List—the stance of the state authorities and society. Directives, surveys, declarations of loyalty, correspondence, *Pismo MAP do Konsulatu RP w Lyonie*, k. 129.

369 See: J. Sawicki, T. Cyprian, *Prawo polskie w walce z hitleryzmem i kollaboracjonizmem* [in:] „Demokratyczny Przegląd Prawniczy”, 1946, No. 11–12, pp. 14–15; L. Kubicki, *Zbrodnie wojenne w świetle prawa polskiego*, Warsaw 1963, pp. 69–72; A. Pasek, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–49.

370 A. Landau, C. Wasilkowski, *Odpowiedzialność za zbrodnie czasu wojny w prawie polskim* [in:] „Demokratyczny Przegląd Prawniczy”, 1946, No. 11/12, p. 35.

371 J. Sawicki, B. Walawski B., *Zbiór przepisów specjalnych przeciwko zbrodniarzom hitlerowskim i zdrajcom narodu z komentarzem*, Kraków 1945, p. 18; L. Kubicki, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

shortcomings in public life by adopting numerous laws and permitting the law to act retrogressively are harmful. This creates illusory satisfaction and a false conviction that the problem has been solved. It leads to a destabilisation in the legal environment, unexpected loopholes in the law, and an ignorance of legal rules not just by citizens, but also by officials. Excessive legislative activity causes uneasiness, reduces respect for law, and also expresses a distrust of society<sup>372</sup>.

The decree in question did not directly cover persons who had waived Polish nationality in 1939–1945. Nevertheless, in post-war legislation it was considered ‘passive treason’ punishable under separate legal regulations<sup>373</sup>. Nevertheless, in compliance with the above legal construct designed to punish as many war criminals as possible, the August decree was applied to both active and passive treason. At the same time, the problem of waiving Polish nationality was permanently present during the collection of evidence against Polish citizens in cases covered by the August decree. This decree, as well as subsequent legislation, was used to solve simply the problem of the *Volksliste* and to persecute those perceived as dangerous<sup>374</sup>. On the basis of criminal law, it was explained that the August decree was a “more synthetic legal construction, applying a legal principle to a specific social phenomenon<sup>375</sup>.” And it is this *collective* legislative concept that made the decree an effective instrument for severely punishing not only war criminals but, most of all, collaborators with the occupiers<sup>376</sup>. What exactly constituted ‘active treason’ was only established in post-war jurisdiction. Theoretically, the August decree applied only in the area of ‘Lublin Poland’; but we know that on its basis the Soviet authorities deported from Gdansk voivodship not only German nationals, but anyone proved to have been included on the German National List.

The waiver of Polish nationality and jurisdiction against persons who had done so was the subject of a decree by the PKWN adopted on 4 November 1944, entitled *On security measures towards traitors to the people*<sup>377</sup>. In this decree, ‘traitors the People’ were Polish citizens who, during the German occupation, had claimed to be German nationals or of German descent, and had used their

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372 M. Szyszkowska, *Związki filozofii polityki z filozofią prawa* [in:] *Elementy filozofii polityki*, ed. M. Szyszkowska, Warsaw 1992, pp. 60–61.

373 See J. Sawicki, *O prawie sądów...*, p. 58; *ibid.*, T. Cyprian, *Prawo polskie...*, p. 15.

374 A. Piasek, *op. cit.*, pp. 36–38.

375 L. Kubicki, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

376 A. Piasek, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

377 Dz.U. RP, No. 11, 1944, item 54. The decree took effect on 13 November 1944; L. Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa Polski w latach 1944–1960*, Łódź 2003, p. 147.



German nationality or descent in order to gain rights and privileges. Anyone aged over 13 and suspected of crimes falling under this decree was to be interned in an isolation centre (camp) for an indeterminate period and subject to compulsory labour. Detention and referral to a labour camp were ordered by the Special Prosecutor of a Criminal Court<sup>378</sup>. The security services were obliged to carry out and comply with these orders immediately<sup>379</sup>. ‘Traitors to the people’ forfeited their public and civic rights, and their assets (and those of their family) were subject to confiscation by the State Treasury<sup>380</sup>. The decree also foresaw the death penalty or life imprisonment for helping anyone arrested and charged with waiving Polish nationality<sup>381</sup>. Activists belonging to underground organisations who had assumed German nationality in order to perform conspiratorial work were exempt from criminal responsibility<sup>382</sup>.

In autumn 1944, following consultations between representatives of the PKWN and KRN in Moscow, it was decided to accelerate the liquidation of all opposition to the authorities and to the disenfranchisement of society. Measures were taken to isolate socially and persecute persons included on the *Volkliste*. On 21 October 1944, Stanisław Radkiewicz, head of the Ministry of Public Security, issued a directive to set up camps for people on the *Volkliste*<sup>383</sup>. On 30 October of that year, he issued an *Instruction to detain and send traitors to the people, the so-called Volksdeutsche, to labour camps*. The instruction was received by the voivodship, county and municipal Public Security Offices and precincts of the Civic Militia (police)<sup>384</sup>. All *Volksdeutsche* aged over 13 were to be detained and sent to labour camps. The relatives of the detained persons were to have

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378 The prosecutor was obliged to place minors in the care of district or municipal people’s councils, if necessary. The prosecutor’s duties also included applying to the appropriate tax office to seize both movable and immovable assets, which were then placed in the provisional custody of the people’s council.

379 The executive regulations to the November decree were issued by the Ministries of Justice, Public Security, and National Economy and Finances on 30 November 1944, but took effect on 13 December of that year. Dz.U. RP, No. 14, 1944, item. 75.

380 The security authorities temporarily detained suspects and their families and secured their assets.

381 Dz.U. RP, No. 11, 1944, item 54.

382 M. Piekarski, *Wyłączenie wrogich elementów ze społeczeństwa polskiego i rehabilitacja. Zarys wyjaśniający*, Gdynia 1946, p. 91.

383 A. Kochański, *Polska 1944–1991. Informator historyczny*, vol. I, Warsaw 1996, p. 39; L. Olejnik, *Zdrajcy...*, p. 74; W. Stankowski, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

384 L. Olejnik, *Zdrajcy...*, p. 74.

their identity papers stamped 'relative of a Volksdeutsche'<sup>385</sup>. At the same time, the PPR Central Committee Politburo released a draft decree that people on the DVL were to be arrested by 11 November 1944 and placed in internment camps<sup>386</sup>.

And it is in such an atmosphere of hostility towards everything German and of revenge for wrongs suffered, to the accompaniment of a war which was not yet over, that the above-mentioned first legal instruments appeared, meant to regulate waivers of Polish nationality. Even during the rehabilitation campaign, the political climate was deemed unsuitable for subtle legislative work<sup>387</sup>. It was also observed that there was excessive haste in passing new laws and an inadequate research of the topic<sup>388</sup>. At the same time, Poland was hailed as a pioneer in the sphere of anti-Nazi legislation<sup>389</sup>.

These PKWN decrees and the first moves by the authorities show that the prime move of the post-war authorities towards people on the *Volksliste* was to isolate them from the rest of society. The lack of a precise meaning of the term 'isolation' would suggest that there was no firm concept of a legal solution to deal with these people. The wording of the November decree shows that the main principle applied was 'security measures'<sup>390</sup>. It seems that the legislators were guided mainly by public opinion, i.e. fluctuating views by a society with uncertain national attitudes during a war that had only just ended<sup>391</sup>.

An attempt was made to correct the shortcomings of the legislation on the subject of the people on the German National List, especially people in Pomerania and Silesia, by adopting the decree *On the exclusion of hostile elements from society* dated 28 February 1945<sup>392</sup>. This document guaranteed the automatic return of Polish citizenship to Polish citizens enrolled on the DVL after 31 August 1939 in areas annexed to the Third Reich and in the Free City of Danzig. A distinction was made between those included in Groups III and IV and those in Group II<sup>393</sup>.

385 Ibid., *Polityka narodowościowa...*, pp. 146–147; E. Mironowicz, *Polityka narodowościowa PRL*, Białystok 2000, p. 35.

386 *Protokoły z posiedzeń Biura Politycznego KC PPR 1944–1945*, ed. A. Kocharński, Warsaw 1992, p. 48.

387 M. Muszkat, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

388 A. Landau, C. Wasilkowski, *Zagadnienie tzw. volksdetschów w świetle prawa* [in:] „Demokratyczny Przegląd Prawniczy”, 1946, No. 9/10, p. 6.

389 L. Chajm, *Kiedy Lublin był Warszawą*, Warsaw 1964, pp. 41–42.

390 A. Landau, Cz. Wasilkowski, *Zagadnienie tzw. volksdetschów...*, p. 6.

391 J. Sawicki, T. Cyprian, *Prawo polskie...*, p. 16.

392 Dz. U. RP, No. 7, 1945, item 30; J. Rados, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

393 R. Wapiński, *Pierwsze lata...*, p. 68.

However, people included in Group I (*Reichsdeutsche*) were excluded because they represented the German people. The rehabilitation of *Eingedeutsche* was to take place before an administrative official of the first instance, and that of *Volksdeutsche* before a municipal court<sup>394</sup>. Anyone who refused rehabilitation was placed in detention for an undetermined period, subjected to compulsory labour, and deprived of his or her property and civic rights. To achieve rehabilitation, it was necessary to prove that one had been coerced to enrol on the *Volksliste* and had not acted against the Polish state and people during the occupation. In addition, those wishing to regain full civic rights had to sign a *Declaration of loyalty to the People and to the democratic Polish State*. For ten years after the granting of rehabilitation, the court could reconsider an applicant's case if previously unknown circumstances came to light.

This decree did not assume force of law because of its excessively lenient treatment of Germanised people, allowing them automatic integration with the Polish people and state, thus preventing the rapid isolation of 'enemies to the Polish cause'<sup>395</sup>. These doubts were expressed mainly towards the area of the pre-war Polish-German border zone<sup>396</sup>, i.e. including the voivodship of Gdańsk. No doubt such objections were connected with an ignorance of the conditions under which the population of the area in question found itself under Nazi occupation. This ignorance on the part of officials and society aroused the suspicion of the people included on the DVL.

Other legal initiatives to normalise the situation of people on the DVL included a document by the Office of Western Territories, created in the Council of Ministers in February 1945<sup>397</sup>. The proposals this document contained related to areas incorporated in the Reich and to the Free City of Danzig. The document proposed rehabilitation and restitution of civil rights for people in all four group

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394 It is worth noting that members of the PPR leadership called for individual court consideration of cases of people included on the DVL. See: E. Gierek, *Smak życia. Pamiętniki*, Warsaw 1993, p. 60.

395 This decree lost the force of law via a decree of the Ministry of Justice of 7 May 1945. Dz.U. RP, No. 17, 1945., item. 96. It was explained that it was not approved because it had not been placed before the National People's Council. M. Musielak, *op. cit.*, pp. 239–240.

396 Cz. Osękowski, *Spółceństwo...*, p. 100.

397 AAN, MAP, 199/2387, draft decrees and directives on the Regained Territories, *Projekt dekretu o warunkach i sposobie rehabilitacji osób, które zgłosiły swą przynależność do narodu niemieckiego lub innej narodowości uprzywilejowanej przez okupanta*, 1945, pp. 32–35.

of the *Volksliste*, on condition that they proved they had been compelled to enlist and that they had preserved their Polish identity throughout the occupation. It was also planned to rehabilitate members of independence organisations.

Another legal instrument dealing with the rehabilitation of people on the DVL, this time adopted without reservation, appeared on 6 May 1945<sup>398</sup>, and its executive regulations were issued on 25 and 26 May that year<sup>399</sup>. The passing of the law *On the exclusion of hostile elements from society* was preceded by draft directives from the Ministry of Public Administration: *On the exclusion of hostile elements* and *On the rehabilitation of persons entered in the third and fourth groups of the German National List and in the group of so-called Leistungspolen*<sup>400</sup>. Even though this law allowed the application of the security measures called for in the November decree, it is considered a “step towards the adoption of solutions appropriate to general criminal law<sup>401</sup>.”

The directive applied to Polish citizens enrolled after 31 August 1939 in areas annexed to the Third Reich, apart from the voivodship of Białystok, in Groups II, III and IV of the DVL, in the group of *Leistungs-Polen*, and in groups privileged by occupants, who were aged over 14 on 1 January 1945. As with the May law, people in Group I were omitted. The directive was also extended to the area of the former Free City of Danzig<sup>402</sup>.

398 Dz.U. RP, No. 17, 1945, item 96.

399 Dz.U. RP, No. 21, 1945, item. 128: MAP decree of 25 V 1945 on the rehabilitation of persons in groups three and four of the German National List and in the group of *Leistungspolen*; Dz.U. RP, No. 21, 1945, item 130: directive of the Minister of Justice of 26 May 1945: Dz.U. RP, No. 21, 1945, item 129. See also: AAN, MAP, 199/766, Rehabilitation of persons on the German National List, *Rozporządzenie Ministra Administracji Publicznej z 25 V 1945 r.*, pp. 49–52, *Rozporządzenie Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego w sprawie wykonania ustawy z 6 V 1945 r. o wyłączeniu ze społeczeństwa polskiego wrogich elementów w przedmiocie zastępczych dowodów tożsamości*, pp. 47–48; AP Bd, UWP, 851/555, *Wydział Społeczno-Polityczny*, 25 V 1945, pp. 5–8.

400 AAN, MAP, 199/766, Rehabilitation of persons on the German National List, *Projekt rozporządzenia o wyłączeniu wrogich elementów*, 1945, *Projekt rozporządzenia MAP z IV 1945 r. w sprawie rehabilitacji osób wpisanych do trzeciej i czwartej grupy niemieckiej listy narodowej lub go grupy tzw. Leistungspole*. See also: *uwagi do projektu MAP w sprawie rehabilitacji osób wpisanych do trzeciej i czwartej grupy niemieckiej listy narodowej lub go grupy tzw. Leistungspole*, 1945.

401 A. Piasek, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

402 M. Piekarski, *op. cit.*, pp. 39 and 116–117.

The act distinguished between enrolments on the DVL in areas annexed to the Reich, where the adoption of German nationality was obligatory, and enrolments in areas where there was no such obligation (the former *Reichsgau Wartheland*) and part of northern Mazovia, (*Provinz Ostpreussen*). In the latter case, those enrolled on the DVL had to prove that they had been enrolled against their will. The Ministry of Public Administration determined and announced those areas where people had been forced to enrol on the list and those areas where they had not. The entire voivodship of Gdańsk was recognised as an area where people had been forced to apply for inclusion on the *Volksliste*<sup>403</sup>.

Rehabilitation proceedings were of an individual nature and involved exoneration from charges of disloyalty to the Polish state because of inclusion on the DVL. The final deadline for submitting declarations was fixed for 31 August 1945, but people deported abroad by the Germans could apply for rehabilitation within one month of their return to Poland, but no later than one year after the end of the war. The field administrations were asked to cooperate with public security offices in conducting rehabilitations<sup>404</sup>. However, the May act omitted people who had enrolled on the *Volksliste* on orders from a pro-independence organisation.

A person successfully rehabilitated received a provisional certificate valid for six months, guaranteeing him or her civic rights. During this six-month period, the names of rehabilitated persons were posted in public places. Significantly, the announcements called on society to tell the Public Security Office or the Criminal Prosecutor if they knew that the rehabilitated person had collaborated with the Nazis. After this trial period, a final certificate was issued. Anyone who failed to apply for rehabilitation by the deadline was subjected to the 'security measures' set forth in the November law: detention for an indefinite period, compulsory work, loss of civic and personal rights, and confiscation of property.

Persons in Group II of the *Volksliste* could be rehabilitated through the courts, as envisaged in the February law. During the court proceedings, they had to demonstrate that despite being in the group they had preserved their Polish nationality<sup>405</sup>. If the court verdict was positive, apart from restoring civic rights the

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403 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, rehabilitation matters, *Pismo wojewody gdańskiego do MAP*, 17 VIII 1945. Parts of Krakow, Pomerania, Silesia-Dąbrowa, Warsaw, and Poznań were also covered by compulsory enrolment. L. Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa...*, p. 157.

404 AP Gd, MRN-ZMG, 1165/379, vetting and vetting regulations, *Rozporządzenie MAP z 25 V 1945*.

405 People in Group III of the DVL not deprived of their German nationality by the Germans and *Eingedeutsche* and *Volksdeutsch* were also obliged to apply for rehabilitation to the courts. „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 1945, No. 9, p. 3.

court also released the applicant's property. If the court rejected the application for rehabilitation, it referred the matter to a Special Criminal Court, which investigated whether an offence had been committed under the decree entitled *On the dispensation of justice for Fascist-Hitlerite criminals*<sup>406</sup>. As with the February law, the decree set forth a ten-year period during which the security authorities or a prosecutor could apply to have the case reconsidered due to the emergence of new circumstances<sup>407</sup>.

In a decree dated 6 June 1945<sup>408</sup>, the costs of court rehabilitation proceedings were set at 500 zlotys, to be paid when submitting the application. In addition, when issuing a positive verdict, the court could charge a further 100 to 5,000 zlotys. The Ministry of Public Security permitted the rehabilitation of people staying in prison, camps, or detention centres. Officials sent by the authorities collected loyalty declarations from these detainees<sup>409</sup>.

The May law was amended three times, the first time by a decree of 24 August 1945<sup>410</sup>, which, instead of the provisional certificates, introduced permanent Polish citizenship certificates. The abolition of the provisional certificates also abolished the six-month interim period for announcing the names of rehabilitated persons. This was the initiative of a group of deputies from the voivodship of Silesia-Dąbrowa<sup>411</sup>.

The second amendment to the law occurred on 30 October 1945<sup>412</sup>. It permitted the retention of the assets of rehabilitated persons, who could apply for compensation from the State Treasury. In fact, this amendment merely sanctioned the status quo because it allowed settlers and repatriated persons to retain the properties they had taken over before 1 August 1945<sup>413</sup>.

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406 M. Romaniuk, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

407 The May law envisaged death or up to five years in prison for anyone who provided help to persons on the *Volksliste* who had not applied for rehabilitation by the deadline or whose applications had been refused.

408 Dz.U. RP, No. 25, 1945, item 150.

409 AAN, MAP, 199/766, Rehabilitation of persons on the German national list, *Pismo MBP do MAP*, 8 IX 1945, k. 63, *Pismo MAP do wojewodów, pełnomocników okręgowych*.

410 Dz.U. RP, No. 34, 1945, item 203; M. Ujdał, *op. cit.*, pp. 106–107.

411 J. Gołębiowski, *Kwestia narodowościowa w polityce władzy ludowej w województwie śląsko-dąbrowskim (1945–1947)* [in:] „Kwartalnik Historyczny”, 1964, No. 2, p. 396.

412 Dz. U. RP, No. 55, 1945, item 307.

413 Zob.: A. Pasek, *op. cit.*, p. 125; C. Wasilkowski, *Skutki odstępowania od narodowości w czasie wojny w zakresie praw majątkowych* [in] „Demokratyczny Przegląd Prawniczy”, 1947, No. 5, p. 37.

The Law Commission of the Silesian Institute prepared a draft law *On the uniform settlement of issues involving treason to the Nation and State during the Nazi occupation of Poland*<sup>414</sup>. Its proposals were largely reflected in the third amendment to the law of 6 May 1945, adopted on 22 February 1946<sup>415</sup>, which permitted partial rehabilitation whereby civic rights could be suspended for up to five years. This period of suspension allowed the courts in the meantime to consider all the circumstances of the case, especially the applicant's attitude during the German occupation and whether he or she had received any benefits from being included on the list<sup>416</sup>. At the same time, secret investigations into a case were permitted; in other words, it could be examined in the applicant's absence<sup>417</sup>. If a court considered an applicant's presence necessary, it could have him or her brought from the camp. This amendment to the May law was a kind of bridgehead between the application of security measures and the principle of judgment and punishment commensurate with the offence<sup>418</sup>. It came into force four months later with the issue on 28 June 1946 of the decree *On criminal responsibility for forsaking nationality during the second world war*<sup>419</sup>. This act satisfied postulates which the Ministry of Justice had prepared in the form of a memorandum in April that year<sup>420</sup>. This decree called for the standardisation of the rules on rehabilitation throughout Poland.

The decree covered people on the *Volksliste* from the voivodship of Silesia-Dąbrowa. A Council of Ministers decree of 19 September 1944 extended its applicability to the whole country. It relieved the first instance administrative authorities of responsibility for conducting rehabilitation. Henceforth, all rehabilitation applications were to be referred to the prosecutors in the District Courts, while the Special Criminal Courts were abolished.

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414 AAN, MAP, 199766, rehabilitation of persons on the German National List, *Projekt Komisji Prawniczej Instytut Śląskiego ustawy o jednolitym uregulowaniu zagadnień zdrady Narodu i Państwa w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej w Polsce*, 1946.

415 Dz. U. RP, No. 11, 1946, item 73; M. Ujdał, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

416 A. Landau, C. Wasilkowski, *Zagadnienie tzw. volksdetschów...*, p. 10. See also: A. Pasek, *op. cit.*, pp. 126–127.

417 M. Romaniuk, *op. cit.*, pp. 61–62.

418 A. Landau, C. Wasilkowski, *Zagadnienie tzw. volksdetschów...*, p. 8.

419 Dz. U. RP, No. 41, 1946, item 237. Zob. też: AAN, MAP, 199/766, rehabilitation of persons on the German National List, *Dekret o odpowiedzialności karnej za odstępstwo od narodowości w czasie wojny 1939–1945*; AP Gd, ZMG, 1165/1358, *Przepisy i zarządzenia odnoszące się do osób pozbawionych obywatelstwa polskiego oraz rejestr osób pozbawionych obywatelstwa*, *Dekret*.

420 Z. Boda-Krężel, *Sprawa Volkslisty...*, pp. 105–106; M. Romaniuk, *op. cit.*, pp. 65–66.

Thus, as of 21 October 1946, i.e. when the decree was published in the Journal of Laws<sup>421</sup>, the regulations calling for the application of security measures against traitors to the nation and on the exclusion of hostile elements from society, became void in the whole country.

The liberalisation of the law consisted in the exclusion from criminal liability of the following categories of people included on the DVL:

1. Those who intended to act in the interests of the Polish state or for the sake of a Polish liberation organisation.
2. Those who sought to avoid severe persecution by the German authorities if persecution could not have been avoided by other means.
3. Those who had voluntarily joined the army or a military organisation in order to combat the Germans in liberation struggles at home or abroad.
4. Those who had helped Polish society at risk to their lives and freedom.

Persons who had enrolled on the DVL for reasons other than those above were subject to up to ten years in prison, fines, the loss of all or part of their property, and the loss of civic and personal rights. However, a sentence could be mitigated if enrolment on the DVL was the result of ignorance or the absence of a mature civic attitude. In this way, 'limited rehabilitation' was introduced<sup>422</sup>. The June decree is said to have limited the groups of people against whom charges of treason could be directed and that it was addressed to persons who were assumed to be Poles<sup>423</sup>.

The final legislative instrument to abolish the effects of the *Volksliste* was the amnesty law of 20 July 1950 *On the abolition of sanctions and restrictions towards citizens who had declared German nationality*<sup>424</sup>. This law suspended the launch of proceedings against Polish citizens who had declared themselves to be German nationals or of German descent from 1 September 1939 to 9 May 1945, or had claimed membership of another privileged group. Any proceedings already in progress were cancelled, and sentences already handed down and decisions on the deprivation of civic and personal rights were annulled. However, sentences on the confiscation of property before the law took effect remained in force. Nevertheless, if the property remained in the hands of the owner during this period, it could be released from custody<sup>425</sup>. The law did not cover offences

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421 Dz. U. RP, No. 53, 1946, item 300.

422 M. Ujdak, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

423 L. Olejnik, *Zdrajcy...*, p. 185.

424 Dz. U. RP No. 29, 1950, item 270; AIPN Gd, 0046/233 vol.1.

425 Council of Ministers directive of 26 July 1950 on the amnesty law of 20 July 1950: Dz. U. RP No. 32, 1950, item 294.



judged on the basis of the August decree. These offences were regulated later by the amnesty law of April 1956<sup>426</sup>.

A further step towards the final settlement of the fortunes of those still devoid of Polish citizenship but residing in Poland was the resolution of 18 July 1951 by the Presidium of the Council of Ministers<sup>427</sup>. It allowed the presidiums of the voivodship people's councils to annul verdicts that had deprived people of their Polish nationality, provided that the person had not held any position in the NSDAP, police or any other Nazi formation or organisation<sup>428</sup>. Finally, people entered on the *Deutsche Volksliste* and residing in Poland at least since 9 May 1945 could apply to the State Council for Polish citizenship on the basis of the Polish Citizenship Act of 8 January 1951<sup>429</sup>. This eliminated the distinction between Polish nationality and citizenship.

Between 1944 and 1950, a total of 27 laws, decrees and directives on the subject of treason to the nation and the waiver of Polish nationality were issued<sup>430</sup>. The high number of these legal instruments aroused numerous questions and doubts about the process of rehabilitation at voivodship and county level. This issue concerning the voivodship of Gdańsk is the subject of a detailed analysis further below.

## 2.4 National Polish Legal Solutions Regarding Ethnic Vetting

Under the terms of the Yalta and Potsdam conferences in 1945, Poland's western border was extended<sup>431</sup> to include the eastern territories of Germany. The areas

426 L. Olejnik, *Zdraycy...*, p. 214.

427 Ibid., *Polityka narodowościowa...*, p. 186.

428 In May 1951, there were still over 14,000 non-rehabilitated persons in Poland. Ibid., p. 216. See also: B. Nitschke, *Wysiedlenie...*, p. 117.

429 Dz.U. RP No. 4, 1951, item 25.

430 M. Motas, *Przegląd przepisów karnych 1944–1956* [in:] „Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej”, Warsaw 1992, pp. 142–144.

431 See: K. Kersten, *Jałta w polskiej perspektywie*, Warsaw 1989; *Jałta wczoraj i dziś. Wybór publicystki 1944–1985*, London 1985; *Jałta: szkice i polemiki: zbiór studiów*, ed. M. M Drozdowski, Warsaw 1996; W. T. Kowalski, *Jałta i Poczdam*, Warsaw 1970; *ibid.*, *Poczdamski ład pokojowy*, Warsaw 1986; *II wojna światowa i jej następstwa*, ed. A. Czubiński, Poznań 1996; L. Pastusiak, *O Polsce w Poczdamie* [in:] *Ziemie zachodnie i północne Polski w półwieczu 1945–1995*, ed. R. Rybiński, Toruń 1997, pp. 9–18; M. Orzechowski, *Odra-Nysa Łużycka-Bałtyk w polskiej myśli politycznej okresu II wojny światowej*, Wrocław 1969; A. Klafkowski, *Granica polsko-niemiecka po II wojnie światowej*, Poznań 1970; *ibid.*, *Podstawy prawne granicy Odra-Nysa na*

annexed to Poland – Lower Silesia, Western Pomerania and Warmia-Masuria – accounted for 33 % of the country's new area<sup>432</sup>. The communist authorities soon labelled the new areas the Regained Territories<sup>433</sup>. Insofar as the rapid settlement and management of the new areas became a political priority<sup>434</sup>, the Polish population in them did not become part of the communist camp's sphere of interests until later. Meanwhile, people who had lived in the Third Reich until 1945 possessed German citizenship and were German nationals.

As mentioned earlier, during the occupation and after the war, studies into the Regained Territories and into their Polish communities were conducted by such institutions as "Ojczyzna" (*Fatherland*), the Polish Western Union (PZZ), the Masurian Institute, the New Territories Office of the Home Army Main Command, and the Office of the New Territories (Office of the Western Territories) (BZZ)<sup>435</sup>. The programme of the last of these called for administrative

*tle umów jałtańskiej i poczdamskiej*, Poznań 1947; *ibid.*, *Umowa poczdamska z dnia 2 VIII 1945*, Warsaw 1960; J. Kokot, *Umowa poczdamska a sprawy polskie 1945–1979*, Poznań 1970; *idem*, *Logika Poczdamu*, Katowice 1957; G. Labuda, *Polska granica zachodnia. Tysiąc lat dziejów politycznych*, Poznań 1970; B. Wiewióra, *Granica polsko-niemiecka w świetle prawa międzynarodowego*, Poznań 1957; *ibid.*, *Granica na Odrze i Nysie Łużyckiej w polityce zachodu*, Poznań 1958; K. Skubiszewski, *Zachodnia granica Polski*, Gdańsk 1969.

- 432 Cz. Osękowski, *Spółczesność...*, p. 30; I. Sobczak, *Obraz demograficzny województw nadmorskich Polski w latach 1946–1990*, Gdańsk 1992, p. 33.
- 433 The areas due to be annexed to Poland after the war were called the *returning lands*, *postulated lands*, and the *new lands*. On 14 March 1945, the Council of Ministers divided the new lands into four regions: Opole Silesia, Lower Silesia, Western Pomerania and East Prussia, and appointed their plenipotentiaries. However, the territory of the former Free City of Danzig was not included in the annexed lands, and the voivodship of Gdańsk was created by a decree dated 30 March 1945. See: G. Strauchold, p. 17; P. Dziurzyński, *Osadnictwo rolne na Ziemiach Odzyskanych*, Warsaw 1983, p. 21; H. Rybicki, *Powstanie i działalność...*, pp. 121–130.
- 434 For more on the takeover of German territory, the start of political life, and the functioning of Polish administration, see H. Rybicki, *Powstanie i działalność...*; *ibid.*, *Pierwsze lata władzy ludowej na zachodnich i północnych obszarach Polski*, Koszalin 1978; A. Magierska, *op. cit.*; M. Jaworski, *op. cit.*
- 435 The Office of Western Territories (BZZ) was linked to the Department of Internal Affairs of the Polish Government Domestic Delegation. Its task was to produce draft legislation for the future Polish authorities regarding the 'western countries'. At its head was Zygmunt Wojciechowski, associated with the National Democrats. After the war, he was a director of the Western Institute in Poznań, and as also a member of the Academic Council for the Regained Territories. After the war, many BZZ employees worked for the Ministry of the Regained Territories, formed in November

methods of establishing Polish nationality and the complete removal of people of German origin from the annexed territories. Re-Polonisation was proposed, taking into account the varying degrees of national consciousness<sup>436</sup>. The Masurian Institute proposed that every Pole inhabiting the new territories be won over to the reborn Poland and that the local population be active politically<sup>437</sup>. The PZZ also expressed a stance on the Polish indigenous population in the new territories, calling for their conversion to Slavism and the removal of German settlements<sup>438</sup>. The Union of Polish Patriots in the USSR, which also took a stance on this issue, called for the addition of the new territories to Poland but ruled out the possibility of their full re-Polonisation<sup>439</sup>. The 'western issue' was also a subject of interest in émigré circles<sup>440</sup>. To impart to the question of the Regained Territories the dimension of an academic analysis, a Bureau of Resettlement Studies and an Academic Council for the Regained Territories was formed<sup>441</sup>. As early as December 1944, operational groups were formed to take over administration of the new territories<sup>442</sup>. On 11 April 1945, a General

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1946, which adopted the BZZ's work results. See: M. Musielak, *op. cit.*, pp. 35–38; G. Strauchold, *Polska ludność...*, pp. 12–13; M. Dymarski, *Ziemie postulowane (ziemie nowe) w prognozach i działaniach polskiego ruchu oporu 1939–1945*, Wrocław 1997, p. 20; M. Hejger, *Polityka narodowościowa...*, p. 34; W. Wrzesiński, *Prusy Wschodnie w polskiej myśli politycznej w latach 1864–1945*, Olsztyn, 1994, pp. 416–429.

436 G. Strauchold, *Polska ludność...*, p. 13.

437 *Ibid.*, p. 15; *Ibidem*, *Autochtoni polscy...*, pp. 29–30; Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz...*, pp. 13–15; L. Belzyt, *op. cit.*, pp. 44–45; P. Madajczyk, *Przyłączenie Śląska Opolskiego do Polski 1945–1948*, Warsaw 1996, p. 118.

438 Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz...*, p. 13; See also: G. Strauchold, *Autochtoni polscy...*, p. 24; M. Musielak, *op. cit.*, p. 214; M. Ujda, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

439 M. Orzechowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 133–134; W. Wrzesiński, *Warmia i Mazury polskiej myśli politycznej 1864–1945*, Warsaw 1984, p. 381.

440 See: W. Wrzesiński, *Polska emigracja polityczna w Wielkiej Brytanii a sprawy Śląska (1940–1945)* [in:] *Śląsk, Polska, Niemcy*, ed. K. Matwijowski, W. Wrzesiński, Wrocław 1990.

441 Both of these institutions were formed in July 1945. The Council comprised scholars in the field of economics, history and demography, as well as underground activists who had produced concepts for husbanding the Regained Territories. See: G. Strauchold, *Mysł zachodnia i jej realizacja w Polsce Ludowej w latach 1945–1957*, Toruń 2003, p. 137–138; M. Magierka, *op. cit.*, pp. 73–74; M. Musielak, *op. cit.*, p. 216; Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz...*, p. 51.

442 G. Strauchold, *Autochtoni polscy...*, pp. 31–32. See also: E. Basiński, *W jednym organizmie. Podstawy i przebieg procesu integracyjnego nad Odrą i Bałtykiem*, Warsaw 1977, p. 129.

Plenipotentiary for the Regained Territories was appointed, whose original duty was to unify the work of regional plenipotentiaries, but later was given responsibility for 'repatriation and settlement'<sup>443</sup>. Ultimately, the whole of western policy, including population policy, became the task of the Ministry of the Regained Territories, formed on 13 November 1945. The idea of creating a separate administrative office for dealing with the western lands came from the PZZ<sup>444</sup>. The appointment of deputy premier and PPR leader Władysław Gomułka to the post of Minister of the Regained Territories reflected the great importance which the communist centre attached to the settlement and management of the lands annexed to Poland.

The absence of measures to regulate the citizenship of the indigenous Polish population induced the Polish Western Union to adopt a stance on this matter. From February 1945 onwards, its activists directed several memoranda to the authorities that called for a settlement of the legal status of Polish and German citizens who inhabited both the new territories and Poland's pre-war territory. The need was stressed to conduct ethnic vetting in order to assimilate the indigenous Polish population as quickly as possible, this being one of the chief interests of the state and nation<sup>445</sup>. However, the authorities indicated the liquidity of demographic regulations which prevented specific legal solutions being reached<sup>446</sup>.

Meanwhile, the difficulty of realising the more important objective of the post-war authorities – the removal of Germans across the Oder river – became increasingly clear. Pomerania, Silesia and Warmia and Masuria made known their border status and the difficulties which the programme of integrating these lands and their Polish population with the rest of the country would encounter. The authorities realised the need to formulate suitable criteria for separating the Polish population from the German population, and for the proper treatment of people with varying degrees of national consciousness<sup>447</sup>. The procedure they adopted was ethnic vetting: an individual check of a person's current attitudes and past behaviour<sup>448</sup>.

443 H. Rybicki, *Powstanie i działalność...*, p. 74.

444 H. Rybicki, *Powstanie i działalność...*, pp. 81–102; M. Jaworski, *op. cit.*; G. Strauchold, *Autochtoni polscy...*, pp. 146–157.

445 See: IZ, doc. V-11 and 58.

446 M. Ujdał, *op. cit.*, pp. 28–29; M. Musielak, *op. cit.*, pp. 215–216; G. Strauchold, *Autochtoni polscy...*, pp. 36–38; *ibid.*, *Polska ludność rodzima...*, p. 18.

447 G. Strauchold, *Autochtoni polscy...*, p. 41.

448 J. Misztal, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa...*, p. 5.

The general methods of post-war ethnic policy, including regarding people permanently settled in the Regained Territories, were decided by the PPR Central Committee Politburo. In March 1945, the Ministry of Administration produced the draft of a decree called *On the Slav reconversion of the Regained Territories*, professing the need to remedy the wrongs done to the Polish nation over the centuries. Patterned on the German National List, this document divided German citizens in the new territories into three rather than four categories. The first category was people conscious of their Polish nationality, speaking Polish as their mother tongue or a language of the western Slav tribes. The second category contained people speaking neither Polish nor any other Slav language, but who wished to regain an awareness of their national Slav statehood. Both of these groups were subject to the process of Slav conversion, the final stage of which was to be the conferral of Polish citizenship. The third category comprised people earmarked for resettlement or labour camps<sup>449</sup>.

In June 1945, the Presidium of the National People's Council decided that the legal regulations regarding statehood and nationality were premature on account of the continuing migration of people to the western and northern territories, but resolved to leave this matter to the care of the state administrative and public security authorities. It was also decided that the best time to determine Polish citizenship would be after the signing of the peace treaty sanctioning the incorporation of the eastern German territories into Poland<sup>450</sup>.

The first step towards resolving the problem of people of Polish origin inhabiting the Regained Territories was a memorandum from the Ministry of Public Security of 20 June 1945, which set forth the rules for granting provisional three-month certificates of Polish nationality<sup>451</sup>. Eligible to receive these certificates were persons who had been residing in the newly-acquired Polish territories on 31 August 1939 and were Polish nationals, who had not belonged to the NSDAP, and who had not been subject to the sanctions envisaged in the above-mentioned decree of 31 August 1944<sup>452</sup>. This memorandum did not specify who was to be considered a Polish national, but contained a clear warning that everyone applying for vetting was to be considered a potential German

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449 Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz polskich wobec ludności niemieckiej na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945–1958* [in:] *Pomorze...*, pp. 205–206.

450 *Warmiaci i Mazurzy w PRL. Wybór dokumentów. Rok 1945*. Prepared for printing by T. Baryła, Olsztyn 1994, pp. 43–44.

451 W. Ramus, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

452 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, Rehabilitation issues, *Instrukcja MAP*, 20 VI 1945; Z. Izdebski, *Rewizja pojęcia narodowości*, Katowice 1947, p. 20.

collaborator. The certificates were to be issued under procedures established by individual voivodes<sup>453</sup>. Freedom of interpretation of the rules, the weakness of local authorities, the arbitrary selection of personnel, and a failure by the state authorities to comprehend the complexity of the issue all contributed to a failure of the vetting campaign, at least during its initial period.

At the beginning of 1946, the National People's Council, holding its ninth session, discussed the problem of granting Polish citizenship to the indigenous population, but not until February 1946 did the Council's Committee on Religion and Nationality resolve to confer Polish citizenship on the indigenous population after vetting had been completed and the German population removed. At the same time, the Committee said that in view of the need for the indigenous population to be involved in political life as quickly as possible, the government's work should be completed before the elections<sup>454</sup>. Thus, the question of vetting was closely linked to the eviction of the German population from Poland's new territory<sup>455</sup>. This was also reflected in the first directives from the Ministry of the Regained Territories on the subject of the indigenous population, including the directive of 15 January 1946 on the appointment of Vetting Boards at locations where Germans being resettled were gathered<sup>456</sup>. In a resolution of 12 June 1945, it was decided that until such time as its citizenship was established, the indigenous population could only have the right to manage and use their real estate<sup>457</sup>.

Treating vetting as the prelude to a policy of Polonisation, efforts were made to keep most of the Polish population of the Regained Territories in Poland<sup>458</sup>. The Polish Western Union described this vetting operation thus:

"Vetting is not meant to determine the Polish characteristics required of Polish citizens or even Volksdeutsche. The purpose of the vetting is to restore to Poland the population of the Regained Territories which was forcefully separated from the Polish State and incorporated into Germany through terror. Restoring this population to Poland does not mean formally keeping them within the state's frontiers, but joining them in

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453 W. Czaplinski, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

454 H. Rybicki, *Powrót pogranicza...*, pp. 150–151; Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz...*, pp. 55–56.

455 Under the terms of the Potsdam agreement of 2 August 1945 and an agreement by the Control Council for Germany of 20 November 1945, Germans remaining in Poland were to be resettled in German territory. W. Ramus, *Instytucje prawa o obywatelstwie polskim*, Warsaw 1980, p. 75.

456 L. Belzyt, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

457 G. Strauchold, *Autochtoni polscy...*, p. 43.

458 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

an honest union with the Polish nation and involving them in the creative process of the nation's development and the State's reconstruction<sup>459</sup>. It has been said that: "The PZZ regarded vetting as a further element in the Polish-German struggle to win over segments of the population not fully possessing a national awareness. The main purpose of the vetting was to identify not persons of Polish origin – that was easy – but persons capable of Polonisation because of their culture, descent or undecided national awareness<sup>460</sup>".

Formally, the institution of ethnic vetting was launched by the following instruments:

The directive from the Ministry of the Regained Territories of 6 April 1946 *On the manner of establishing the Polish statehood of persons residing in the Regained Territories*<sup>461</sup>.

The law by the National People's Council of 28 April 1946 *On the citizenship of persons of Polish nationality in the Regained Territories*<sup>462</sup>.

In a circular dated 4 May of that year, the Ministry of the Regained Territories explained that the legislators' intention was to automatically grant Polish citizenship to everyone who passed the vetting procedure. Under the above law, the main reason for rejecting an application for vetting was a hostile attitude towards Poland during the occupation. However, vetting was not automatically refused to persons who had belonged to the NSDAP or its youth offshoots, as long as they had not held senior positions. Everyone else, even those who had been Germanised, could be *restored* to Poland. The idea of 'broad vetting' also applied to people not currently residing in Poland, meaning those evacuated with the German army, deported to the USSR, or who were languishing in prison camps<sup>463</sup>.

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459 AAN, 199/765, MAP, The indigenous population—economic and legal situation, vetting, attitudes towards state authorities and repatriated persons, *Memoriał w sprawie polskiej ludności autochtonicznej na Ziemiach Odzyskanych oraz Regulamin powoływania i funkcjonowania Obywatelskich Komisji Weryfikacyjnych*, 1946. See also IZ, doc. V-12; Cf. M. Tomczak, *Ludność rodzima na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych w latach 1945–1952*, [in:] „Przegląd Zachodni”, 1999, No. 3, p. 145.

460 P. Madajczyk, *Przyłączenie...*, p. 183.

461 Dz.U. RP, No. 4, 1946, item 26; ZMG, 1165/1101, *Zarządzenia Ministerstwa Ziemi Odzyskanych w sprawach repolonizacji i weryfikacji*, W. Czapliński, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

462 Dz.U. RP, No. 15, 1946, item 106; W. Czapliński, *op. cit.*, p. 125; W. Ramus, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

463 G. Strauchold, *Autochtoni polscy...*, p. 58; Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz...*, pp. 57–58.

The Vetting Boards were to be composed of representatives of the administrative authorities (to be the chairmen), and representatives of the people's councils and political parties, the Union of Polish Teachers, the Polish Western Union, the Peasants' Self-Help Association, trade unions and the local population. In justified cases, the Boards could reconsider previous applications for vetting, but generally the provisional citizenship certificates already issued were considered final. The deadline for applications was fixed at 1 July 1946, and the Boards were asked to commence their work by 1 August of that year.

The April act on citizenship was meant to be the culmination of the work on regulating the situation of the indigenous Polish population inhabiting the areas annexed to Poland. The legal solutions adopted in spring 1946 marked the end of the basic stage of formulating the policy of the post-war authorities towards the indigenous Polish population. However, in a legal sense, the process of creating an ethnically uniform Polish state was closed by the above-mentioned law on citizenship of 8 January 1951. By resolution No. 479 dated 18 July 1951, the Government Presidium extended the applicability of this law to anyone who had not been vetted earlier<sup>464</sup>.

Due to the specific nature of the former Free City of Danzig and the fact that its population had their own citizenship, the post-war authorities introduced separate legal regulations applicable to them. As from the legal perspective the Free City of Danzig was not part of the Regained Territories, Polish citizenship here was regulated by a decree dated 22 October 1947 *On citizenship of the Polish State by Polish nationals residing on the territory of the former Free City of Danzig*<sup>465</sup>. It was interpreted similarly to that of the April law<sup>466</sup>.

The outcome of successful ethnic vetting extended to property rights. On the basis of a decree dated 8 March 1946 *On abandoned and post-German property*, the property of citizens of the German Reich and of the former Free City of Danzig became the property of the State Treasury, except for the property of persons of Polish nationality and of other nationalities persecuted by the Germans<sup>467</sup>. An executive regulation by the Minister of Justice dated 21 May 1946 recognised as Polish nationals citizens of Germany and of the former Free City of Danzig, residing on the Regained Territories, who had already declared or were due to be declared Polish nationals under the terms of the law of 28 April 1946<sup>468</sup>. In turn,

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464 W. Czaplinski, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

465 Dz.U. RP, No. 65, 1946, item 378.

466 Cf.: W. Ramus, *op. cit.*, pp. 74 and 79.

467 Dz.U. RP, No. 13, 1946, item 87.

468 Dz.U. RP, No. 28, 1946, item 182.



the decree of 6 September of that year *On the agrarian system and on settlement on the Regained Territories and the former Free City of Danzig* provided that an owner of property which had been confiscated in his or her absence was entitled to compensation<sup>469</sup>.

The above-mentioned decree of 13 September 1946 *On the exclusion of persons of German nationality from Polish society* was aimed at persons who had retained their German nationality<sup>470</sup>. It deprived persons who professed German nationality of Polish citizenship, with a view to their resettlement in Germany. No doubt this decree was meant to be an additional guarantee of the success of national vetting and to ensure the realisation of the concept of a mono-ethnic state.

Apart from the political, legal and social conditions which constitute the next point in this treatise, the conferral of civic rights on the indigenous Polish population of the Regained Territories, which finalised the process of vetting, was a tactic designed to cement the inviolability of the post-war geographical changes.

## 2.5 The Social Conditions for Rehabilitation and Vetting

Apart from a political and legal dimension, the processes of rehabilitation and ethnic vetting also had a closely connected social aspect, involving the deportation of the German population, waves of resettlement and the difficulties of everyday life. The dual nature of this phenomenon has characterised the whole of Poland's recent history.

Intensive research into the social changes in the new territories was conducted during the era of the Polish People's Republic<sup>471</sup>. It focused on the course and

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469 J. Misztal, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa...*, p. 152.

470 Dz.U. RP No. 55, 1946, item 310.

471 See: *Ziemie zachodnie w granicach Macierzy. Drogi interpretacji*, red. G. Labuda, Poznań 1966; *Przemiany społeczne na ziemiach zachodnich*, ed. W. Markiewicz and P. Rybicki, Poznań 1967; *Ziemie Zachodnie w polskiej literaturze socjologicznej. Wybór tekstów*, selected and edited by A. Kwilecki, Poznań 1970; Z. Dulczewski, *op. cit.*; B. Chmielewska, *Spoleczne przeobrażenia środowisk wiejskich na ziemiach zachodnich*, Poznań 1965; Idem, *Spoleczne uwarunkowania oraz konsekwencje migracji i zasiedlenia*, Słupsk 1981; L. Kosiński, *Procesy ludnościowe na Ziemiach Odzyskanych w latach 1945–1960*, Warsaw 1963; A. Kwilecki, *Rola społeczna nauczyciela na Ziemiach Zachodnich w świetle pamiątek nauczycieli-osadników*, Poznań 1960; W. Markiewicz, *Przeobrażenia świadomości narodowej reemigrantów polskich z Francji*, Poznań 1960; *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie. Integracja i rozwój Ziemi Zachodnich i Północnych*, ed. B. Jałowicki and J. Przewłocki, Katowice 1980; K. Żygulski, *Repatrianci na ziemiach zachodnich. Studium socjologiczne*, Poznań 1962; Regarding individual regions of the *regained territories* see: Z. Dulczewski, K. Golczewski,

conditions of the social changes caused by the shift of the country's borders and the migrations of people. After the war, people of different cultural traits found themselves together in the various regions and localities. Regional origin was used as the criterion on which to separate categories of people. Reflections on the changes taking place in the Regained Territories were dominated by indicating the great progress with integrating the new societies<sup>472</sup>. Integration was taken to mean the "process of overcoming regional barriers, levelling cultural differences, establishing social ties and creating a homogenous society out of a multitude of regional groups<sup>473</sup>." The main regional groups comprised the indigenous Polish population, settlers from central Poland, and persons resettled from beyond the river Bug. Ideological-political considerations prohibited describing the situation of the indigenous Polish population on account of the rehabilitation and vetting operations. Hence, discrimination against the indigenous population of the new territories was ignored, and yet this affected social relationships, with the result that this group was wrongly showed as the one that had best preserved the continuity of social life and had best adapted to the changing conditions<sup>474</sup>. Not until the political transformation in 1989 was it possible to re-examine the socio-political changes in the Regained Territories after 1945<sup>475</sup>. The research that appeared examined issues of the Polish indigenous population and the process of ethnic vetting. They showed how much previous analyses had been tainted with ideology<sup>476</sup>.

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K. Kersten, *Przeobrażenia społeczne na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945–1947*, Poznań-Słupsk 1964; ; J. Konieczny, *Tworzenie się nowego regionu kulturalnego (na przykładzie województwa zielonogórskiego)*, Poznań 1960; K. Kwaśniewski, *Adaptacja i integracja kulturowa ludności Śląska po drugiej wojnie światowej*, Wrocław 1969; B. Maroszek, *Kształtowanie się nowego...*; S. Nowakowski, *Adaptacja ludności na Śląsku Opolskim*, Poznań 1957.

472 Cf.: W. Łukowski, *Spółeczne tworzenie ojczyzn. Studium tożsamości mieszkańców Mazur*, Warsaw 2002, pp. 46–72.

473 *Ziemie Zachodnie...*, p. 339.

474 *Ibid.*, p. 428.

475 It is said that despite fresh research and interpretations, the changes in 1989 did not radically alter attitudes towards the question of the Regained Territories, or especially towards social integration. W. Łukowski, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

476 See: A. Sakson, *Nowe paradygmaty w badaniach Ziemi Zachodnich i Północnych. Czy i jak badać Ziemię Zachodnią i Północną? (Dyskusja)* [in:] „Przegląd Zachodni”, 1998, No. 3, pp. 34–40.

The changes to the ethnic and demographic structures of post-war Gdańsk and Gdańsk voivodship affected the countenance of these areas<sup>477</sup>. The structure of territorial groups and social relations here was characteristic for the Regained Territories. However, a specific nature of Gdańsk voivodship was that its territory included the former Free City of Danzig, with a group of indigenous Poles known as the Gdańsk Polonia, as well as Poles who had migrated to the Free City from inside Poland before 1939. A second feature peculiar to the voivodship was a social structure where one of its elements comprised the indigenous Polish population living in areas that had belonged to Poland before the war, but which were then annexed to the Third Reich during the war. This population was broken down into two ethnic regional groups: the Kashubians and the Kociewiaks. Most of them were enrolled in the *Deutsche Volksliste*, but even so the social structure of the old counties of the former Gdansk voivodship was not greatly disturbed. The second element comprised newly arrived Poles who settled in the new counties in the Gdańsk voivodship<sup>478</sup>.

The first stage in the formation of the new post-war society of Gdańsk, and at the same time one of the chief tasks of ethnic policy, was the resettlement of the German population<sup>479</sup>. On 10 August 1945, the voivode of Gdańsk, Mieczysław Okęcki, issued an instruction on the manner of resettling the German population and on the recruitment of German specialists. This action was coordinated

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477 Cf. S. Bykowska, *Między communitas a strukturą–początki społeczności gdańskiej po 1945 r.*, „Tożsamość gdańszczan. Budowanie na (nie)pamięci”, ed. M. Mendel, A. Gdańsk 2010, pp. 125–147.

478 B. Maroszek, *Kształtowanie się nowego...*, pp. 6–7.

479 For more about the removal of the German population following the Potsdam accords, see: S. Banasiak, *Przesiedlenie Niemców z Polski w latach 1945–1950*, Łódź 1968; S. Jankowiak, *Wysiedlenie i emigracja ludności niemieckiej w polityce władz polskich w latach 1945–1970*, Warsaw 2005; B. Nitschke, *Wysiedlenie ludności niemieckiej z Polski w latach 1945–1949*, Zielona Góra 1999; Z. Romanow, *Ludność niemiecka na ziemiach zachodnich i północnych w latach 1945–1947*, Słupsk 1992; K. Skubiszewski, *Wysiedlenie Niemców po II wojnie światowej*, Warsaw 1968. Regarding individual regions, see: T. Białecki, *Przesiedlenie ludności niemieckiej z Pomorza Zachodniego po II wojnie światowej*, Poznań 1969; Z. Łempiński, *Przesiedlenie ludności niemieckiej z województwa śląsko-dąbrowskiego w latach 1945–1950*, Katowice 1979; B. Pasierb, *Migracja ludności niemieckiej z Dolnego Śląska w latach 1944–1947*, Wrocław 1969; R. Sudziński, *Transfer ludności niemieckiej z Wybrzeża Gdańskiego po II wojnie światowej (1945–1949)* [in:] *Migracje polityczne i ekonomiczne w krajach nadbałtyckich...*; S. Żyromski, *Procesy migracyjne w województwie olsztyńskim w latach 1945–1949*, Olsztyn 1971.

by the Inspectorate of Resettlement with the help of the Civic Militia, which drew up lists of resettled Germans and issued them with passes allowing free transport from Gdańsk to the Polish border<sup>480</sup>. The Germans were allowed to take essential personal items with them. At first, they were given 2 kg of bread for the journey, but this support was later withdrawn. The Germans were to report voluntarily to one of two information offices for German emigrants operating in Gdańsk. Persons who had signed the *Declaration of loyalty to the Polish nation and state* or who had filed for rehabilitation were exempt from resettlement. The remaining German population was divided into three categories: 1. Specialised workers hired by the employment board of the Office for Resettlement, remaining in Gdańsk until Polish workers could be found; 2. Persons capable of working on the land, resettled to state farms in the voivodship; 3. People unable to work, who were pressurised into “fast voluntary resettlement”. The removal of “burdensome foreigners” from Gdańsk was overseen by the security services and army. The Security Office approved requests to hire German workers and resettlement plans, often applying brutal measures on stubborn Germans to make them had over their property. The first transports from Gdańsk to Germany left in July 1945. The largest concentrations of Germans at the end of 1945 were in the new areas: the city and county of Gdańsk, the county of Elbląg, and Lębork, where Germans accounted for almost two thirds of the population. But in the old areas, the greatest number of German was to be found in the coastal county and Tczew county<sup>481</sup>. The decisions reached at the Potsdam conference in August resulted in more vigorous resettlement, approved by instructions from the voivode of Gdańsk. To prevent the looting of property left by the Germans, the resettlement of Germans was coordinated with the settlement of Poles and overseen by the Resettlement Board of the Voivodship Office. Obstacles which became apparent during resettlement were only the result of a failure by some local authorities to cooperate. Property left by the Germans was secured by the District Liquidation Office. In some cases, Poles who held certificates of rehabilitation and vetting were forced to join the deportation transports. The resettlement of Germans

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480 AP Gd, MRN-ZMG, 1165/1109, repatriation of Polish nationals from the USRR and Germany to Poland, *Opracowanie Inspektoratu Osiedleńczego przy ZMG o przeprowadzeniu akcji repatriacji ludności niemieckiej z terenu miasta Gdańska do Rzeszy*, 27 VIII 1946235.

481 B. Maroszek, *Kształtowanie się jednolitego społeczeństwa w województwie gdańskim w latach 1945–1964* [in:] *Województwo gdańskie w XX-leciu Polski Ludowej. Księga referatów i materiałów sesji naukowej z 11–12 maja 1965*, ed. A. Bukowski, Gdańsk 1965, p. 93.

symbolised the end of the previous world whose agony had lasted for almost the whole of the first half of the 1940s. In the mind of Poles, this agony was suppressed from 1945 onwards by the mass influx of Poles, laying for themselves the foundations of a new civilisation, culture and economy<sup>482</sup>.

The place of the Germans departing from Gdańsk voivodship was taken by the Poles being settled there as part of the resettlement operation. Filling the Gdańsk area with Poles was an energetic and lively process. Gdańsk was seen as a city of great opportunities for commercial advancement, and was therefore the main destination of incoming settlers<sup>483</sup>. The first wave of Polish settlement occurred soon after the front had passed. Before the organisation of Polish administration, houses previously occupied by Germans were simply taken over by local residents of the old counties of Gdańsk voivodship and by new arrivals from inside Poland. The Resettlement Division of the Polish Western Union in Gdańsk, set up in March 1945, organised the return of Gdańsk residents whom the Germans had removed to the General Government. Some 20,000 people in Gdańsk benefited from this. Prisoners of war held by the Germans also returned before the arrival of an operational group of the State Office for Repatriation (*Państwowy Urząd Repatriacji*, PUR) on 16 April 1945. By the end of 1945, some 30,000 Poles had settled in Gdańsk in a disorganised manner. At the same time, organised transports of Poles arrived from central and south-eastern Poland and from the eastern parts of pre-war Poland ceded to the USSR. As mentioned above, the rapid settlement of German territory with Poles was one of the priorities of the post-war authorities. To intensify and improve the resettlement operation, a Settlement Committee was formed in Gdańsk in June 1945. The greatest influx of Poles occurred in the summer and autumn of 1945. As early as November 1945 the Polish population of Gdańsk voivodship was greater than the German population. Out of a total population of 925,528, Poles accounted for 542,718 and Germans 382,810<sup>484</sup>.

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482 See B. Okoniewska, *Refleksje nad rokiem 1945*, [in:] *Gdańsk 1945*, ed. M. Mroczko, Gdańsk 1996, p. 12.

483 For more on the subject of Polish settlement on the regained territories and Gdańsk voivodship, see: S. Łach, *op. cit.*; *Ibid.*, *Osadnictwo wiejskie na ziemiach zachodnich i północnych Polski w latach 1945–1950*, Słupsk 1983; P. Dziurzyński, *Osadnictwo rolne na Ziemiach Odzyskanych*, Warsaw 1983; W. Wach, *Osadnictwo i działalność władzy ludowej na Zachodnich i Północnych obszarach Polski 1945–1949*, Poznań 1976; A. Ogrodowczyk, *Nad Odrą i Bałtykiem. Osadnictwo wojskowe na zachodnich i północnych ziemiach Polski po drugiej wojnie światowej*, Warsaw 1979; M. Stryczyński, *op. cit.*, pp. 125–139.

484 AAN, MAP, 199/52, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne wojewody gdańskiego*, vol. I, 1 XI 1945.

**Tab. 1:** Population figures for Gdańsk voivodship as at 1 November 1945.

<b>Counties and separated cities</b>	<b>Poles</b>	<b>Germans</b>	<b>Total</b>
Coastal	66,047	9,290	75,337
Kartuzy	68,287	1,212	69,499
Kościerz	41,922	1,540	43,462
Starogard	62,973	3,080	66,053
Tczew	52,050	4,450	56,500
Gdańsk	18,867	27,030	45,897
Elbląg	2,500	450	7,000
Malbork	8,758	6,987	15,745
Sztum	5,211	4,857	10,068
Kwidzyn	14,229	3,892	18,121
Lębork	17,520	30,000	47,520
Słupsk	15,772	101,410	117,182
Sławno	6,231	35,637	41,868
Miastko	2,286	20,094	23,180
Bytowo	11,798	9,877	21,675
<i>Total</i>	<i>394,451</i>	<i>264,656</i>	<i>659,107</i>
Gdynia	81,714	2,287	84,001
Sopot	15,154	6,000	21,154
Gdańsk	46,058	93,029	139,087
Elbląg	5,341	16,838	22,179
<i>Total</i>	<i>148,267</i>	<i>118,154</i>	<i>266,421</i>
<b>Total for the voivodship województwo</b>	<b>542,718</b>	<b>382,810</b>	<b>925,421</b>

Source: AAN, MAP, 199/52, k. 8.

The chief obstacles to efficient settlement were the simultaneous creation of a Polish administration, which had no information about the capacity of Gdańsk, which until 1947 was inhabited by the German population that was gradually being resettled. Moreover, the calm influx of the Polish population was effectively disturbed by the Soviet army, whose command, as we have said, was stationed here until June 1946. The eviction of Polish settlers from apartments and the requisition of their property, practised not just by the Red Army but also by Polish officials, compelled the settlers to seek new locations in which to settle. A duplication of tasks and conflicts of responsibilities between

the organisations engaged in resettlement resulted in an organisational mess, made worse by the unscheduled arrival of additional transports of Poles from the east. Poles from beyond the Bug river displayed great initiative in finding accommodation themselves, leaving it to PUR employees to deliver their belongings from the railway carriages. Many people unable to find employment remained in the city for a number of months. Whole families vegetated among the ruins in terrible conditions. On 30 October 1945, Stanisław Zrałek, voivode of Gdańsk, ordered public management over all premises in the cities. In spring 1946, resettlement assumed a clearer organisational shape when the municipal administration assumed supervision over it. The Resettlement Committee was replaced by a Resettlement Department, in addition to which a Resettlement Board was appointed as a social advisory body, composed of representatives of the political parties, social and professional organisations, and institutions and offices engaged in settlement. The influx of Poles to Gdańsk city and voivodship lessened during 1947, and in February 1948 the voivodship branch of PUR recommended a complete halt to the resettlement operation.

A notable majority of the new arrivals knew little about Gdańsk. In the minds of Poles, Gdańsk was primarily the site of Westerplatte, the scene of a heroic defence. The choice of Gdańsk as a person's new abode was usually dictated by a conviction that the city was undeniably Polish. Due to its status as a port, many settlers viewed it as a source of rapid commercial gain. Thus, the influx of new settlers was much larger than to other cities in the Regained Territories<sup>485</sup>.

An operational group of PUR, dispatched from Łódź, arrived on 14 April 1945 and set up a PUR voivodship division<sup>486</sup>. It commenced work amidst a shortage of food, water and transport, no help from organisations that were only just being formed, and a raging typhoid epidemic. PUR's responsibilities included managing the entire resettlement traffic and looking after the new arrivals. From

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485 J. Załęcki, *Przestrzeń społeczna Gdańska w świadomości jego mieszkańców. Studium socjologiczne*, Gdańsk 2003, p. 60. For more on how the first arrivals experienced Gdańsk as a new place, see: *Wspomnienia z odbudowy Gdańska*, vol. 1, ed. I. Trojanowska, and vol. 2, red. I. Greczanik-Filipp, Gdańsk 1997; A. Panasiuk, *Miasto i ludzie. Wspomnienia z lat powojennych*, Gdańsk 2000.

486 Until 1945, PUR in Gdańsk operated as two institutions: The Regional Inspectorate for Resettlement and the Stage Point.

the east arrived transports of Poles who were stripped of their patrimony and granted the status of 'repatriated people'<sup>487</sup>.

For the settlers, PUR was the first point of contact with the new location where they were to recommence their lives from scratch. The decisions reached in this institution concerning the choice of accommodation, workplace, etc. were very often decisions for life. Many new arrivals claimed that PUR was the most important authority active at the time<sup>488</sup>. This opinion was shared by an employee of the PUR legal department, who wrote in a report: "(...)The State Office of Repatriation, an institution that has performed work of primary importance in the reborn democratic Poland, must be recorded in bold letters as an institution without equal in Poland's history."

"With the help of this institution, the 'migration of people' in Poland has been resolved. The Regained Territories have been resettled and repopulated. (...) Almost everyone living in Gdańsk, or in the district, or in the county, has visited this office or probably had some business to settle in it<sup>489</sup>."

PUR employees helped arrange permits to occupy vacant apartments, mediated in finding employment, recreated lost documents and issued new ones. Many new arrivals even spent several months in a PUR Transit Centre, where they received food, lodging and medical care. Propaganda and cultural activity were also available.

As mentioned above, in the beginning the voivodship of Gdańsk was inhabited by lesser or greater social groups between which there were conflicts rather than ties. One of these groups was the indigenous Polish population of the new counties, which often comprised the core of the local community; the indigenous Polish population of the old counties: the two regional communities of the Kashubians and Kociewiaks, also an internally cohesive category of inhabitants; and territorial groups of newcomers. This last group included: settlers, mainly from the Bydgoszcz, Warsaw and Poznań regions; persons repatriated from beyond the Bug river, settlers under 'Operation Vistula', and people returning from abroad<sup>490</sup>. Settlers from Pomerania and Wielkopolska usually took over

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487 See AP Gd, 1167/150, *Sprawozdanie ogólne z działalności osadniczej PUR w Gdańsku*, 20 VIII 1945.

488 A. Panasiuk, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

489 AP Gd, PUR, 1167/154, *Sprawozdania z działalności Referatu Prawnego PUR. Oddział w Gdańsku*, 31 XII 1947.

490 B. Maroszek, *Kształtowanie się jednolitego...*, p. 86.



workshops and engaged in trade, whereas those from Małopolska and the eastern territories occupied the farms<sup>491</sup>.

Even after 1945, permanent Polish residents of Gdańsk voivodship decided to move elsewhere, especially to the newly-annexed territories (internal migration)<sup>492</sup>. The chief executive of Tczew county reported a strong trend in this direction in a confidential report in 1945, saying that over 100 permits had been issued to persons anxious to settle in the Regained Territories<sup>493</sup>. Likewise, 250 such permits were issued in Stargard county by November 1946<sup>494</sup>. There were cases where the original settlers, coming from the indigenous Polish population of the voivodship, were removed and replaced by settlers from central Poland or from abroad, to whom the Land Office and PUR allocated farms. At the same time, it was noted that the Kashubians were hostile towards those arriving from the old counties to the new counties of Gdańsk voivodship, who considered themselves 'better' Polish citizens. The Kashubians demonstrated their dislike of the newcomers from beyond the Bug river by distributing leaflets with the message: "Kashubia only for Kashubians<sup>495</sup>."

Thus, post-war Gdańsk city and voivodship became a point of contact for groups of people from various circles of civilisation<sup>496</sup>. Each of them had its own characteristics, shaped by economic, political and cultural factors<sup>497</sup>. Each of them also had a different experience of the war. People in one group often had negative preconceptions and stereotypes about members of other groups<sup>498</sup>. Moreover, the population of Gdańsk voivodship, as a border society, had its own specific characteristics. The confluence of widely different social groups

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491 AAN, MAP, 199/51, Situation reports by the voivode of Gdańsk, *Raport z przebiegu akcji osiedleńczej na terenie countyu łęborskiego*, 15 VIII–30 IX 1945.

492 Cf.: H. Rybicki, *Polska ludność rodzima...*, p. 198.

493 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/88, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Tczewie*, XII 1945.

494 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/86, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjna SP w Stargardzie Gdańskim za lata 1945–1951*, XI 1945.

495 AAN, MZO, 196/1068, Situation reports by the voivode of Gdańsk, *Protokół z posiedzenia powiatowej Komisji Ziemskiej w Wejherowie*, 23 II 1946.

496 Cf.: J. Burszta, *Kategorie ludności i ich typ kulturowy* [in:] *Przemiany społeczne...*, p. 35. The author states: "The most interesting phenomena occur when these culturally different groups begin to form a single local community."

497 Cf.: S. Bykowska, *Kultury (nie)pamięci powojennego Gdańska*, „Kultura i Edukacja”, No. 3 (77), Toruń 2010, pp. 156–171.

498 Cf.: J. Załęcki, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

under the difficult post-war conditions created fresh differences and hostility<sup>499</sup>. Settlers from Warsaw, Lwów, Wilno and Łódź lived next door to farmers from Bydgoszcz or Lublin or from the regions of Polesie and Wolhynia. The major cultural differences within groups of settlers and between settlers on the whole and the local population made it difficult to establish new neighbourly and social relationships. Other differences included dialect, occasionally a lack of Polish, as well as customs and clothing<sup>500</sup>.

The above division of the population into different categories according to their origins – central and south-east Poland, from beyond the Bug river – persists in the minds of the communities of Gdańsk to this day. Mutual distrust between groups and a tendency for each group to keep itself to itself created such stereotypes as ‘barefoot Anthony’ (*bosy Antek*), ‘lazy Russian’ (*leniwy Rusek*) and *Volksdeutsche*. These labels were often applied to one group by members of the other groups that formed the post-war society of Gdańsk. For example, the newcomers labelled the indigenous Pomeranian as Germans, i.e. collaborators, at a time when the term ‘German’ carried much stigma<sup>501</sup>. In turn, the Pomeranians, including in Gdańsk, viewed the people from beyond the Bug river as peasants incapable of overcoming their social differences<sup>502</sup>. Both communities provided pretexts for dual identification. The indigenous Pomeranians were seen as Germans, often with little or no Polish, whereas the settlers from the eastern borderlands were ridiculed for speaking a different dialect or only Russian. The people in the west branded the people from the east as poor, whereas those from the east condemned the people in the west as snobbish because they were at a ‘higher level’ of civilisation<sup>503</sup>.

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499 See: B. Maroszek, *Kształtowanie się nowego...*, p. 11. An analysis of the antagonism between groups was made by A. Sakson, indicating the various factors of cultural diversity. A. Sakson, *Stosunki narodowościowe...*, p. 155.

500 AAN, MAP, 199/54, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne wojewody gdańskiego*, III 1946.

501 H. Galus, *Syndrom niemiecki u ludności rodzimej i napływowej na Pomorzu Wschodnim*, „Przegląd Zachodni”, 1991 No. 2, pp. 61–71. Similar phenomena occurred in Silesia and the former East Prussia. The Ukrainians resettled under Operation Vistula were also branded as sympathisers of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

502 Cf.: S. Nowakowski, *Procesy adaptacji i integracji w środowisku wiejskim i miejskim Ziemi Zachodnich* [in:] *Przemiany społeczne...*, pp. 178–214.

503 A factor that largely reduced the significance of former divisions, prejudices and attachments to one’s origins was the modernisation of Poland imposed by the post-war authorities, said to be particularly visible in the new territories. See: W. Łukowski, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

The strongest links were among the indigenous population, who became closer because their ecological position had been disturbed by the loss of their property and other cases its discrimination. The weakest links were among those settlers who constantly sought 'something better'. Among the indigenous population, the smallest cultural differences were among the inhabitants of Powiśle and settlers from neighbouring parts of Bydgoszcz voivodship, and between the inhabitants of Łębork county and settlers from neighbouring Kashubian counties<sup>504</sup>.

Tensions between the groups were often reported in official correspondence. For example, the *starosta* of Gdańsk, B. Nowakowski, pointed out that those who had been vetted were very suspicious of the settlers, regarding them as intruders. In turn, the intruders did not like the indigenous population, who did not conceal their Germanness and awaited political changes<sup>505</sup>. Worth noting is the *starosta*'s use of the term "local community" when referring to Polish settlers and the term indigenous, which at that time possessed a pejorative undertone, when referring to vetted persons. This may illustrate a deliberate trend to erase the category of Polish indigenous population from people's minds and reduce their status in the face of the new arrivals. But in connection with the research conducted on the subject of the new territories, the use of the term 'local community' towards Polish settlers seems to support Zygmunt Dulczewski's theory regarding the growing independence of the newcomers in these areas<sup>506</sup>.

The indigenous Polish population, whom the settlers encountered in their new city, had a higher level of social development and national awareness than the settlers. The indigenous inhabitants of Gdańsk voivodship reacted to the newcomers with disdain, a reaction to people with different behaviours to their own. As a result, in some cases the newcomers identified the indigenous inhabitants with Germans. Certain groups of inhabitants of Gdańsk voivodship had specific attitudes brought on by their position in the social hierarchy. Worth particular mention is an analysis of the post-war population of Warmia and Masuria by Andrzej Sakson. This researcher's conclusions possess a universal

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504 B. Maroszek, *Kształtowanie się jednolitego...*, pp. 113–114.

505 AAN, MAP, 199/759, The German population in individual voivodships. Statistical data, reports, lists, *Pismo SP w Gdańsku do WSP UWG*, 11 XII 1947/19.

506 Z. Dulczewski, *Socjologiczne studium porównawcze o Ziemi Lubuskiej* [in:] *Społeczeństwo Ziem Zachodnich. Studium porównawcze wyników badań w województwie zielonogórskim w latach 1958–1960 i 1968–1970*, red. Z. Dulczewski, Poznań 1971, pp. 7–28; *Ibid.*, *Pszczew. Procesy autochtonizacji ludności* [in:] *Społeczeństwo...*, pp. 29–104.

nature and concern a border society, so therefore have a bearing on the situation in Gdańsk voivodship after the war. Thus, to use the terminology he uses, the indigenous Polish population's justification for its actions was the "mentality of harm", which took the place of the previous "mentality of being master". The indigenous Poles felt disappointment in the Polish state and Polish settlers, personified during the first months after the war by shabby people from the eastern borderlands. This isolated many members of this society from the settlers and made many of them move to Germany<sup>507</sup>. Some groups of settlers displayed a 'pioneering spirit' and 'an eagerness to play a leading role'. This applied mainly to settlers from the Bydgoszcz and Warsaw areas, who considered themselves better Poles. Numerous rivalries and conflicts also occurred among this group. The settlers from the east, however, were guided by an 'mentality of harm'; an aim to make good their losses. They regarded their new home as compensation for the loss of their homelands beyond the Bug river. They even considered themselves rightful masters in the territory in which they had settled, causing bitterness amongst those who had come from central Poland<sup>508</sup>. However, the indigenous Polish population felt that their property was being taken over by land commissioners. "Throughout the voivodship of Gdańsk, lawless acts are being committed through the relocation of settlers and the allocation of farms to them. In many cases, it has been noted that the land commissioners are depriving Poles and Kashubians of their age-old patrimony and delivering it to the settlers<sup>509</sup>."

From a sociological angle, this was a situation where there were: "two groups, one of which had a firmly established centuries-old ecological position, and the other was in the process of establishing such a position, with intensive support from the state<sup>510</sup>."

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507 In a letter to the Political Department of MAP dated 20 January 1950, the head of the Socio-Political Faculty of Gdansk University reported an increase in the number of applications from vetted persons to emigrate to Germany to be united with their relatives, especially from the counties of Sztum and Gdańsk and from Gdańsk City. AAN, MAP, 199/765, the indigenous population-economic and legal situation, vetting, attitudes towards the state authorities and settlers, *Pismo UWG do MAP*, 20 I 1950.

508 A. Sakson, *Stosunki narodowościowe...*, pp. 157–189. The author also identified an 'ideology of isolation' applicable to the Ukrainian and Lemko communities deported to the northern and western territories.

509 BPAN, Ms 5525, Vetting-Rehabilitation Board for Poles of Gdańsk, *Pismo do wojewody gdańskiego, M. Okęckiego oraz Delegata Rządu dla Spraw Wybrzeża, Kwiatkowskiego*, 3 XII 1945, k. 9–10.

510 B. Maroszek, *Kształtowanie się nowego...*, p. 86.

The confluence of Poles from different parts of the country created the usual problems that occur when a new society is formed. Jan Kilarski aptly described the mentality of post-war Gdańsk society in his famous *Letters from Gdańsk (Listy Gdańskie)*:

“Everywhere here they are demolishing and building, but not so much the city itself as a new life for it. One detects a certain leadership function, but it is rather the biological law on the creation of societies that rules here. Perhaps nowhere else in Poland is there such a strong drive to create a new society out of bold old and new elements that are completely unconnected with the land and its various conditions. Those who have been settled here since the times of their forefathers and those who participated in the life of Polish Gdańsk before the war can be counted on the fingers of two hands. Those who are entitled to feel at home here are now lost in a crowd. Those who on the surface are Germanised but who deep down still have Polish blood and harbour Polish memories and longing, now share the fate of those who are obliged to depart. Great human suffering is possible here. Such a strong wave of humanity that flows from Polish lands to the Polish coast must bring mud with it. Yet this does not contaminate life or impede its development<sup>511</sup>”

Two factors worth stressing can be derived from this quotation. First, the attitudes of post-war Polish society towards the Germans, and secondly the differences between settlers determined by the purpose of their settlement in the new territories.

A very important feature in the shaping of a collective identity after World War II was the attitude of Polish society towards the Germans. We might think that it is the Germans who appeared as the alien society, capable of uniting the culturally varied groups of Poles in a common feeling of hostility. Indeed, on the one hand, hatred of the Germans was whipped up by communist propaganda, but on the other hand occasionally the German population was pitied by the Poles because of its desperate situation<sup>512</sup>. In addition and as previously mentioned, in Gdańsk there remained a small group of Germans, hired as specialists in Polish workplaces<sup>513</sup>. In everyday life, instead of being regarded as enemies, these people became regarded as work colleagues<sup>514</sup>. This sort of schizophrenia

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511 J. Friedrich, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

512 Report by Regina Nikoniuk of meetings in August 2006. In the author's collection.

513 In April 1949 there were 16 Germans in Gdańsk voivodship, hired by MAP. AAN, MAP, 199/749, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne miesięczne i kwartalne wojewody gdańskiego*, vol. VIII, IV 1949.

514 G. Brzozowski, *Walcząc z traumą (Im Kampf mit dem Trauma)* [in:] *Wypędzenia i co dalej? Materiały z seminarium polsko-niemieckiego dla studentów. Beiträge eines*

became particularly evident in the attitude of Poles towards everyday commodities left behind by the deported Germans. These comprised furniture, appliances, utensils, cutlery and other items, often of better quality than the items which the settlers had abandoned or lost during the war<sup>515</sup>. This contact with 'German indoor civilisation', pedantic and orderly, aroused feelings of admiration and, at the same time, disgust because they were German. However, the disgust was not strong enough to dissuade people from taking possession of the abandoned furniture. As late as 1948, the editor in chief of *Dziennik Bałtycki* wrote: "None of the numerous post-German apartments that I visited showed signs that they had been inhabited by new Polish householders for three years<sup>516</sup>." No doubt the image of Germans in the minds of Polish post-war society as people living *normal* lives instinctively made Poles feel sympathetic towards the things they had left behind. The most extreme manifestation of hatred towards the German population was their removal from Poland.

The desperate situation of the remaining German population who had dominated Gdańsk voivodship until November 1945 was the result of several factors. The first of these was Soviet troops, who carried out rapes and shootings. The chaos that accompanied the initial period of resettlement, caused by the absence of precise regulations on the organisation of transports, made the Germans feel insecure and unsafe, and sometimes gave them hope that they could remain in their home city. The situation was made even more dramatic because the tide of Poles arriving in the city was totally unaware of the new reality there, due to their ignorance of the ethnic relations prevalent in Pomerania during and after the war. They encountered a people possessing German citizenship, speaking German and only occasionally Polish<sup>517</sup>. Very often, the newcomers classified indigenous Poles as Germans as well. In any case, these Poles shared the situation of the German population. They were not spared from robbery, rape, murder

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*deutsch-polnischen Seminars für Studierende*, ed. A. S. Pappai, M. O. Pec, K. M. Zalewski, Warsaw 2006, p. 54.

515 Stefan Chwin describes the contact between Polish settlers and the ossified climate of the apartments left by the Germans very convincingly in his novel *Hanemann*. See: S. Chwin, *Hanemann*, Gdańsk 1995, pp. 67–71.

516 E. Osten-Ostachiewicz, *Oczyścimy nasze mieszkania*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 1948, No. 230, p. 1.

517 In December 1947, some indigenous Poles spoke German in public. See: AAN, MAP, 199/759, the German population in individual voivodships. Statistical data, reports, and lists, *Sprawozdanie z podróży służbowej na teren województwa gdańskiego odbytej, 9–13 XII 1947 (poświęconej zebraniu materiałów do zagadnienia niemieckiego)*.

and eviction from their homes. This was closely linked to the phenomenon of looting, indulged in not only by ordinary looters, but also by administrative officials and even by the peacekeeping forces. An employee of the county authorities in Elbląg reported an epidemic of looting in that area<sup>518</sup>.

Reporting on the work of the Voivodship Vetting Board in 1947, a Gdańsk Polonia activist and expert on local conditions, Zygmunt Moczyński, explained: “The indigenous population does not agree to the status of a secondary element in the country. On the contrary, they view themselves as the ‘old guard’ which served its purpose and was decimated, and is now being revived with fresh forces<sup>519</sup>.”

This existential conflict deepened mutual animosities and also served to disorganise and break up social life. The local population viewed the influx of Poles as too expansionist. In any case, this influx was backed by an ideology of pioneering professed by the governing forces, claiming that it was the settlers from deep inside Poland who were to breathe new Polish life into the Regained Territories, ignoring the indigenous Polish population who were labelled autochthonic, which they themselves hated<sup>520</sup>. Moreover, the initial disliking which native Pomeranians, including Gdańsk residents, felt towards the newcomers was caused by the fact that they suspected them of opportunism and a lack of Polish consciousness and honour. Another factor was the discrimination of indigenous residents by local officials, who immediately after the war were recruited solely from the ranks of settlers<sup>521</sup>. Furthermore, the settlers often failed to understand the essence of ethnic vetting and rehabilitation, and did not distinguish one from the other.

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518 AAN, MAP, 199/51, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne wojewody gdańskiego*, 1945.

519 *Autochtoni. Na marginesie akcji weryfikacyjnej*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 1947, No. 78, p. 2.

520 See: M. Latoszek, *Pomorze...*, pp. 184–185.

521 B. Maroszek, *Kształtowanie się jednolitego...*, p. 109.





### III The First Stage of Ethnic Rehabilitation and Vetting in Gdańsk Voivodship

The paths of ethnic policy in post-war Poland were largely determined by the shifts in the borders as well as by Poland's geo-political situation<sup>522</sup>. The objectives of ethnic and national transformations in Gdańsk voivodship derived from the general concepts adopted by the central authorities, whose implementation was meant to turn the Regained Territories, including some of the counties (*powiats*) of Gdańsk voivodship, into an integral part of the homogenous Polish state. The fundamental aim of the ethnic policy in Gdańsk voivodship, apart from removing the German population, was to conduct ethnic rehabilitation and vetting. Both of these procedures complied with the need to quickly and effectively re-Polonise the Polish indigenous population and make the voivodship geographically and ethnically homogeneous. However, the procedures were impaired by a poor knowledge of ethnic characteristics, of the wartime experience endured by the areas in question, and of the situation of the local population. The local population often shared the fate of the ethnic Germans who were earmarked for settlement and who were removed from their houses and farms and deprived of the basic components of existence<sup>523</sup>.

#### 3.1 The Situation of the Indigenous Polish Population

The first situation report on the dispersal of the population in Gdańsk voivodship estimated the number of Poles at 532,502 and Germans at 373,745. This document gives no dates, but the fact that it includes figures on the Western counties (Lębork, Bytów, Miastko, Sławno and Słupsk) and eastern counties (Elbląg, Malbork, Sztum and Kwidzyn) suggests that it was produced after 7 July 1945, after these areas had been added to the voivodship. As we are dealing with report No. 1, we can assume with high probability that it was produced in the summer of that year, when the first complete reports on ethnic issues, including settlement, were released.

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522 E. Mironowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

523 M. Hejger, *op. cit.*, Słupsk 1998, p. 121; *Ibid.*, *Kwestia narodowościowa na tle przekształceń ludnościowych w Gdańsku po zakończeniu działań wojennych* [in:] *Gdańsk 1945...*, p. 100.

The dispersal of the Polish indigenous population in Gdańsk Voivodship was estimated as follows:

- a) The area of the former Free City of Danzig: 30,000;
- b) Old counties: 350,000;
- c) Western annexed counties: 12,000; and
- d) Eastern annexed counties: 15,000, of whom 10,000 were in Sztum county<sup>524</sup>.

The head of the Social Care Section of the Voivodship Office in Gdańsk, W. Sochaczewski, described the ethnic composition of Gdańsk voivodship in August 1945 as a fundamental criterion of assessment, and on this basis an administrative division of the voivodship was adopted. A distinction was made between old territories, i.e. those belonging to Poland before 1939, inhabited mainly by Poles but including a sizable percentage of so-called *Eingedeutsche*, and the new territories that had been part of the Third Reich before the war. The latter included the Mazury District, where Poles gradually became the dominant element, and the Western Pomerania District, where most of the population were Germans. Regarding the distribution of German citizens in urban centres and rural areas, a sizeable majority were to be found in the latter. For example, at the end of 1947, 5,120 Germans inhabited the rural areas of Gdańsk county, and only 236 inhabited urban centres<sup>525</sup>.

A major portion of the indigenous population was Kashubians, who strove to speak Polish but identified themselves more with the Catholic faith than with Polishness<sup>526</sup>. The people enrolled on the German National List were mainly women with children, waiting for the return of their husbands from the former German army or from labour camps. Due to lack of work, they often sought social aid. The level of unemployment, especially among women, was particularly high in Gdynia<sup>527</sup>. The difficulties of daily life at the time applied mainly to supplies, safety, the launching of enterprises and workshops, professional

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524 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/358, the affairs of the indigenous population and their vetting, *Raport sytuacyjny No. 1* (undated), pp. 226–227.

525 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/360, Regional problems, re-Polonisation, *Pismo SP w Gdańsku do WSP UWG*, 29 XII 1946, p. 39.

526 AAN, MAP, 199/51, Situation report of the voivode of Gdańsk, *Raport z przebiegu akcji osiedleńczej na terenie powiatu lęborskiego*, 15 VIII and 30 IX 1945, p. 186.

527 AAN, MAP, 199/153, reports by Gdańsk Voivodshop local authorities, *Wyjaśnienie w przedmiocie rozwiązania zagadnień opieki społecznej na terenie województwa gdańskiego dla Ministerstwa Pracy i Opieki Społecznej*, 20 VIII 1945, pp. 115–117.

workforces and medical assistance. Subjected to rehabilitation and vetting, the population remained without civic or property rights.

The state authorities adopted a stance on this issue on more than one occasion. Prime Minister Edward Osóbka-Morawski publicly spoke of the need to end the discrimination against Poles, especially those who had been enrolled in the *Volksliste*. Nevertheless, threats of severe punishment for discrimination against the indigenous population often made no impression even on state officials<sup>528</sup>.

Let us take a closer look at the social reality that was enmeshed in inter-group relations. A major factor regarding the situation of the indigenous population was the often-negative attitude of settlers. These people had no knowledge of the wartime reality of this area, including the reasons for inclusion on the *Volksliste*. The indigenous population of Gdańsk voivodship was accused of opportunism, careerism, a lack of honour and an absence of patriotic fervour<sup>529</sup>. They were also suspected of having had better living conditions during the war. Jealousy of the indigenous population by the new arrivals and the fact that the former had a greater sense of duty and orderliness, and were more skilled at running farms, were named as the main factors of intergroup animosity<sup>530</sup>. Economic considerations also played a major role<sup>531</sup>. The prospects of easy and swift enrichment at the expense of the indigenous population motivated a major portion of settlers. This was encouraged by the chaos in the local administration and the ignorance or naked animosity towards the local population, especially by the security authorities. Moreover, most of the administrative and political posts in Gdańsk voivodship were held by people not connected with Pomerania. Therefore, the new voivodship authorities were not acquainted with the population issues of Kashubia, Kociewie, Gdańsk and Powiśle<sup>532</sup>. It was difficult to normalise relations in this area as long as the security authorities described Gdańsk

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528 AP Bd, UWP, 851/1108, *Wydział Społeczno-Polityczny*, p. 13. Cf: M. Romaniuk, *op. cit.*, p. 84. On the subject of the security and material situation of the indigenous population, see also: M. Hejger, *op. cit.*, pp. 151–158.

529 B. Maroszek, *Kształtowanie się nowego...*, p. 99.

530 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/360, Regional issues, re-Polonisation, rehabilitation, *Pismo SP w Gdańsku do WSP UWG*, 29 XI 1946, p. 39.

531 Cf.: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/87, Situation reports from Sztum, *Raport z przebiegu akcji osiedleńczej*, X 1945, k 1; AP Gd, UWG, 1164/358, the affairs of the indigenous population and their vetting, *Raport sytuacyjny No. 1* (undated), p. 227.

532 B. Maroszek, *Stabilizacja i integracja społeczna ludności województwa gdańskiego w latach 1945–1947* [in] „Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny, Socjologiczny”, 1964, vol. 1, pp. 267–268; L. Zieliński, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

voivodship as purely post-German, and one of their first reports stated that there was no question of cooperation with the local population<sup>533</sup>.

The situation of people included on the German National List was further complicated by the attitude of people who had avoided enrolment. As we know, the Germans strove to drive the population apart during the war. Insofar as the war united Poles in the struggle against the Germans, after the war the indigenous population was divided by the *Volksliste*. Those who emerged from the war bearing an *Ausweis* and subsequently rehabilitated regarded themselves as victims of Nazi ethnic policy, whilst those who had evaded inclusion on the *Volksliste* regarded those who had been included as traitors who had betrayed their country for personal gain, such as greater food rations or better jobs. The disenchantment increased when after the war, e.g. in the district of Sianowo in Kartuzy county, *Eingedeutsche* received better food rations than some Poles who had never renounced their Polish nationality during the entire war<sup>534</sup>. However, we should remember that during the war, a part of the Kashubian population, especially in Kościerz county, had been resettled to the General Government, thus avoiding enforced Germanisation.

At the same time, the new settlers often had a generalised and biased view of the indigenous population, regarding them with suspicion. This only consolidated the unity of the indigenous population and helped settle conflicts within it<sup>535</sup>.

Indigenous Poles holding German citizenship or enrolled on the *Volksliste* remained in a special situation, exposed to various kinds of discrimination which affected their social and public position. As a result, they were often unable to get jobs and were barred from food and medical aid, as well as from the acquisition of property. Therefore, a positive decision on their application for rehabilitation was a vital matter, allowing them to join political, professional and social life. Waiting to receive full civic rights after the war was a struggle for personal honour in the new society whose core consisted of settlers from central and south-eastern Poland.

In a letter to Mieczysław Okęcki, first voivode of Gdańsk, the chairman of the Vetting-Rehabilitation Board for Gdańsk Poles, Kazimierz Banaś-Purwin,

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533 AIPN Gd, 0046/250, *Sprawozdanie Wydziału Personalnego Wojewódzkiego Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego w Gdańsku*, 28 XI 1945, p. 16.

534 AIPN Gd, 05/54, vol. 35, *Sprawozdanie miesięczne i okresowe Komendy Powiatowej MO w Kartuzach*, 21 VII-8 VIII 1945, p. 8.

535 B. Maroszek, *Kształtowanie się jednolitego...*, p. 106. Cf.: M. Romaniuk, *op. cit.*, pp. 114–115 et al.

described the situation of the indigenous Poles thus: "Most Poles in Gdańsk, who once had their own houses, today do not even have their own apartments or jobs, and earn modest sums from the vetting of Poles, concentrating all their effort and great dedication and responsibility on the Polish nation<sup>536</sup>."

Formally, the holding of a rehabilitation or vetting certificate guaranteed civic or property rights. However, source materials report frequent cases where holders of these documents were not considered fully-fledged citizens. Indigenous Poles occasionally received worse treatment from employers and public institutions than settlers did<sup>537</sup>. Several examples can be given. In Sławno, the post office refused to pay a postman called Rekowski, who had been positively vetted, the same salary as that for Poles<sup>538</sup>. A rehabilitated employee of the Central Coal Industry Products Distribution Agency in Gdańsk, Alfons Stolz, was dismissed because he had been included in Group III of the *Volksliste* during the war. Attempts were also made to shoulder the *Volksdeutsche* and *Eingedeutsche* with collective responsibility for national treason, e.g. during a meeting of the Polish Workers' Party circle at the Municipal Office in Gdynia, a certain Jan Wróbel recommended that work bonuses should be withheld for two years for employees of the Port Office who had enrolled themselves on the *Volksliste* during the war. However, this motion was rejected<sup>539</sup>. Nevertheless, collective responsibility was applied by the Trade Union of Haulage Workers in Gdynia, which ordered all haulage firms in Gdynia and Gdańsk not to give managerial posts to Poles who had been included on the German National List or to pre-war citizens of Gdańsk. This applied before and after their vetting<sup>540</sup>.

After six months of the rehabilitation campaign, the Socio-Political Department of the Voivodship Office of Gdańsk began to receive letters asking

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536 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Poufne pismo przewodniczącego Komisji Weryfikacyjno-Rehabilitacyjnej dla Polaków-Gdańszczan do wojewody gdańskiego*, 28 XI 1945, p. 1. Cf. AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo Marty Szymańskiej do Wojewódzkiej Komisji Weryfikacyjnej*, 4 VI 1946 p. 199.

537 J. Misztal, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa...*, pp. 131–132; M. Romaniuk, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

538 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Sprawozdanie z inspekcji w powiatach Słupsk, Sławno, Miastko i Bytów z polecenia wojewody gdańskiego w sprawie stwierdzenia stanu akcji weryfikacji i położenia ludności zweryfikowanej*, 16–19 IV 1946, p. 95.

539 AP Gd, KW PPR in Gdańsk, 2598/150, *Protokoły Komitetu Zakładowego (Fabrycznego) i Kół PPR przy Gdańskim (Głównym) Urzędzie Morskim w Gdyni*, 2 VIII 1946, p. 31.

540 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, rehabilitation issues, *Pismo Zarządu Stronnictwa Demokratycznego w Gdańsku do wojewody gdańskiego*, 5 VIII 1945, p. 51. See also C. Obracht-Prondzyński, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

whether the holders of provisional rehabilitation certificates really had full rights<sup>541</sup>. For example, the Regional Directorate of the State Railways in Gdańsk had such doubts due to numerous applications for pensions and benefits. In January 1946, it dismissed 11 employees who had been rehabilitated<sup>542</sup>. In Elbląg county, vetted persons were not employed if they spoke poor Polish<sup>543</sup>. As late as November 1947, Elbląg county chief executive W. Szyszko said that only a few vetted people were employed in factories; the rest performed menial work<sup>544</sup>. People rehabilitated in Silesia-Dąbrowa or Poznań voivodships were treated likewise<sup>545</sup>.

The authorities of Gdańsk responded to this state of affairs many times, as in the following reprimand issued to the management of the above-mentioned Central Coal Industry Products Distribution Agency: "Any discrimination between the newly-settled Polish population and the indigenous population, who lived during the occupation under the most difficult conditions, is impermissible, and situations where institutions and private individuals unlawfully differentiate between good and bad Poles cannot be tolerated<sup>546</sup>."

Therefore, efforts were made to counteract this situation. Local authorities in Gdańsk district were instructed to engage the indigenous population in social life. In 1945 they produced a plan of talks, lectures and other events to accelerate the process of re-Polonisation<sup>547</sup>. The Internal Service Division of the Civil Militia in Gdańsk issued regulations on the confiscation of former German property, the honouring of provisional certificates held by citizens of Polish descent, and the improper conduct of militia officials towards, as it said, "citizens in Groups III and IV of the *Volksliste*<sup>548</sup>."

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541 See, e.g. AP Gd, UW, 1164/363, WKW, *Pismo do Wydziału Morskiego Związku Zawodowego Transportowców Rzeczypospolitej*, 17 VIII 1946, p. 362.

542 AAN, MZO, 196/1068, situation reports by the voivode of Gdańsk, *Wyciąg z gazety „Zrzesz Kaszëbsko”*, p. 87; *Niewłaściwe postępowanie* [in:] „Zrzesz Kaszëbsko”, 1946, No. 16, p. 3.

543 AP Gd, KW PPR in Elbląg, 2599/10, *Sprawozdania Komitetu Powiatowego i Miejskiego PPR w Elblągu*, 31 July 1947, p. 58.

544 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/360, *Regional problems, re-Polonisation*, p. 51.

545 Z. Boda-Krężel, *Sprawa Volkslisty...*, p. 72.

546 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/364, WKW, *Pismo UWG do Centrali Zbytu Produktów Przemysłu Węglowego w Gdańsku*, 8 III 1946, p. 220. Cf.: E. Osóbka-Morawski, *Trudna droga. Od Piłsudskiego... do Stalina. Fragmenty wspomnień*, Warsaw 1992, p. 166.

547 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/80, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Gdańsku*, XI 1945, p. 60.

548 IPN Gd, 05/54, vol. 4, *Sprawozdanie z pracy Wydziału Służby Zewnętrznej Wojewódzkiej Komendy MO w Gdańsku*, 7 IV-31 XII 1945, pp. 1-16.

These recommendations were occasionally merely formal. Social conflicts in places inhabited by the indigenous population where Polish settlers arrived after 1945 became increasingly tense. Compliance with the voivode's instructions regarding the protection of the rights of the indigenous population encountered a series of obstacles for, as Piotr Madajczyk wrote, in order to integrate into their new surroundings, the newcomers had to feel at home and have a right to the land where they had arrived<sup>549</sup>. However, this often took place at the expense of the indigenous population. Typical is the example of M. Klonowicz, a Gdańsk local authority official, who warned that any discrimination against former residents of Gdańsk of Polish origin, especially rehabilitated persons, would be severely punished. He also said that the harm meted out to these people during the initial period of 'misconceived zeal' should be repaired, and recommended that this group of Poles get back the properties that were unlawfully taken from them – supplied with domestic equipment and other articles of daily use – and that they be engaged in work for the local community, and taught local history and culture (including the connections between Gdańsk and Poland). Both the local and newly-arrived intelligentsia were to be engaged in this, social and cultural events were to be held, and the German population removed by force<sup>550</sup>. But at the same time, in May 1946, he withdrew the rehabilitation certificates of residents of Mierzeszyn<sup>551</sup>. The farms confiscated from the indigenous population were to be used for resettlement purposes.

Very often, rehabilitation and rehabilitation certificates were not recognised by the Civil Militia, Public Security Bureau or state officials<sup>552</sup>. Occasionally they were destroyed or dismissed as "scraps of paper of no importance"<sup>553</sup>. A certificate did not always protect its bearer from theft of property, violence, expulsion from his or her house and property, deportation to the other side of the Oder, or even death. The Socio-Political Section of the Gdańsk Voivodship Office often issued additional certificates confirming civic rights. These were applied for by people seeking help against constant intimidation from various bodies. Other forms of discrimination of the local population included the withdrawal

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549 P. Madajczyk, *Niemcy polscy...*, p. 47.

550 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/358, the affairs of the indigenous population and their vetting, *Tajne pismo SP w Gdańsku do burmistrzów i wójtów*, 1 XII 1945, p. 233.

551 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo Urzędu Wojewódzkiego w Gdańsku do SP w Gdańsku*, 10 V 1946, p. 50.

552 Cf. J. Schodzińska, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa ludności rodzimej powiatu lęborskiego w latach 1945–1947 (aspekty społeczne)* [in:] „Rocznik Gdański”, 1999, vol. 2, p. 41.

553 J. Misztal, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa...*, p. 133.

of their resettlement benefits or confiscation of documents, including by the very authorities that had issued them in the first place<sup>554</sup>. The voivodship authorities noted hundreds of such cases. One of the most disgraceful practices was when Civil Militia officers forced indigenous Poles to wear armbands to make them stand out as part of the German population<sup>555</sup>. Maria Radziejewska, a resident of Gniew, condemned this as the “utmost infamy”<sup>556</sup>. Meanwhile, the Political Section of the Ministry of Public Administration stated that the wearing of armbands and the creation of ghettos was contrary to the spirit of a democratic state<sup>557</sup>.

Examining the quoted sources, we cannot avoid the impression that in Gdańsk voivodship after the war, there were certain milieus or groups who, in concert with the authorities (usually the militia or security service), persecuted the local population and exploited their often desperate situations. The local authorities resorted to beatings, torture, blackmail and theft of movable property and real estate. Consequently, many Poles were deported to the other side of the Oder, together with Germans<sup>558</sup>.

For example, Aleksander Guss (“Olek”), chief of the militia in Wielkie Mątwy, Gdańsk county, and other militiamen (with the pseudonyms “Wicek”, “Stach”, and “Cygan”), committed a series of rapes, including of the daughters of distinguished Poles who had been imprisoned in the Stutthof camp during the war, and threatened that their entire families would be shot. A similar crime during the resettlement of the German population was committed in the autumn of 1945 by a group comprising local authority executives Nowiński and Szulowski and the abovementioned militiamen. Kazimierz Banaś-Purwin and Tadeusz

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554 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Pismo Elżbiety Böhlau do Głównej Komisji Weryfikacyjnej w Gdańsku*, 26 II 1946, p. 34 and *Pismo naczelnika WSP UWG do ZM w Gdyni*, 23 II 1946, p. 193.

555 Cf.: L. Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa...*, p. 150.

556 AIPN Gd, *akta rehabilitacyjne*, 17/8, p. 1. Cf. AP Gd, UWG, 1164/87, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne PO w Sztumie*, XI 1945, p. 22. This was not an isolated case. For example, in January 1946 the Voivodship People’s Council of Poznań adopted a resolution ordering the German population to wear armbands prohibiting them from trading with Poles and from using public means of transport. E. Mironowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

557 E. Mironowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

558 Cf.: AAN, MAP, 199/768, *Polski Związek Zachodni—działalność, finanse. Plany pracy, sprawozdanie finansowe, korespondencja, Pismo wojewody gdańskiego do Ministra Administracji Publicznej*, 5 II 1946, p. 4.



Tylewski from the Verification-Rehabilitation Board for Gdańsk Poles appealed to the District Court of Gdańsk in the above cases<sup>559</sup>.

The apartments of the local population were frequently taken over as a prelude to total confiscation, achieved by denouncing the holders of rehabilitation or vetting certificates, resulting in the revocation of these documents. In extreme cases, apartments were seized and the occupants thrown out. That is what Polish soldiers did to Agnieszka Pampecka from Gdynia<sup>560</sup>. Polish Army officers commandeered the apartment of Marta Wesołowska in Wrzeszcz. They took her most valuable possessions and paid no bills, threatening in addition that they would shoot her and constantly subjecting her to other forms of disgrace. Also typical is the case of the caretaker of a housing block at ul. Biała 2 in Wrzeszcz, Kozłowska, who refused to take rent from vetted Polish women in order to create a pretext to evict them from their own apartments, which were subsequently taken over by settlers<sup>561</sup>. In a different case reported to the Voivodship Rehabilitation Board on 21 May 1946, a militia officer called Szczepański is said to have been “hired by a certain Grabowski to have the vetted woman Adela Jeszke evicted<sup>562</sup>.” That same day, five other people appealed for help and intervention in similar cases. As late as June 1946, the residents of Stargard Gdański complained that the process of rehabilitation was encumbered with false denunciations to the local authorities, resulting in a series of people being deprived of property rights and personal protection<sup>563</sup>.

Frequently, having been deprived of their certificates and evicted from their homes, vetted Poles were referred to the “Narwik” displaced persons camp. Here are typical examples of this form of discrimination. In 1945, the brothers A. and S. Matysiak, serving in an operational group of the Gdańsk Civil Militia, moved into the home of F. and M. Gehrman and started to intimidate and rob the

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559 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/359, Weryfikacja Kaszubów, *Pismo Komisji Weryfikacyjno-Rehabilitacyjnej dla Polaków-gdańszczan do prokuratury Sadu Okręgowego w Gdańsku*, 24 X 1945, pp. 1–2. BPAN, Ms 5525, *Komisja Weryfikacyjno-Rehabilitacyjna dla Polaków gdańszczan, Pismo do prokuratury Sadu Okręgowego w Gdańsku*, 24 X 1945, p. 38.

560 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Wniosek o przywrócenie prawa własności i rzeczy ruchomych*, p. 102, *Pismo do Zarządu Miejskiego w Gdańsku*, 10 V 1946, p. 58.

561 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do ZM w Gdańsku*, 10 V 1946, pp. 58 and 65.

562 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do Wojewódzkiej Prokuratury Rejonowej*, 21 V 1946, p. 107.

563 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, rehabilitation issues, *Pismo SP w Stargardzie Gdańskim*, 22 VI 1946, p. 317.

family. Even though the family had been positively vetted in January 1946, the militiamen threw them out of their homes and had them resettled beyond the Oder. On the way to Germany, the Polish citizen Gehrman died of exhaustion. A similar fate met the vetted Wroński family, deported from Gdańsk through the unlawful action of the militiaman W. Czepa. In proceedings against the above militiamen, the Municipal Court in Gdańsk repealed the verdict in 1947, but ruled that it was impossible to establish the reasons for the deportation of vetted Poles to Germany due to the absence of witnesses or documents<sup>564</sup>.

In some cases, the Rehabilitation Board intervened just in time to stop the deportation of people already in the camp. Anna Tatulińska, who lived on ul. Chrobrego, was beaten up and then, having protected herself from rape, moved to the Narwik camp with her mother and children, where they spent two weeks. The Rehabilitation Board came to the camp and confirmed the family's Polishness. In her appeal for help from the Union of Fighters for the Polishness of Pomerania, Tatulińska described how her family was in a critical material situation and without legal protection, even though her family's Polishness had been confirmed by the authorities<sup>565</sup>. Occasionally, people who had not yet completed the process of ethnic vetting but who had been resettled beyond the Oder and returned to Poland were vetted in another locality, and tried to recover their lost property. That was the case with J. Wyczliński, who came from a family of pre-war Polish activists inside the Free City of Danzig<sup>566</sup>.

More drastic was the experience of the Samson family, who, with their children, ended up in the Narwik camp in June 1946. The Voivodship Rehabilitation Board appealed to the Special Criminal Court in Gdańsk for their release, saying: "Slandorous denunciations to the Polish authorities should be the subject of criminal proceedings before the courts; denunciations by the Security Service, justifying the invalidity of certificates, are not convincing because they can in no way prove the veracity of the Security Services' statement." Therefore, the officials themselves validated the family's vetting decision because while robbing the apartment, they came across photographs of men in German

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564 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/352, opinions on the establishment of Polish nationality, *Postanowienie Wojskowej Prokuratury Rejonowej w Gdańsku o umorzeniu postępowania*, 30 VIII 1947, pp. 79–80.

565 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Pismo Anny Tatulińskiej do Związku Bojowników o Polskość Pomorza*, 18 III 1946, p. 13. See also: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do WUBP*, 6 V 1946, p. 169.

566 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Pismo WSP UWG do SP w Gdańsku*, 13 III 1946, p. 238.

uniforms – *Wehrmacht* as well as *Luftwaffe*. They concluded that they were SS uniforms<sup>567</sup>. The Voivodship Rehabilitation Board found that the parents and children had been brutally evicted from their house and taken to the Narwik camp. In this way, the Public Security Office safeguarded itself against the return of the owners of their desired, perhaps ‘reserved’, property.

In a particularly difficult situation were indigenous Poles from distant counties of the Regained Territories, inhabited – apart from officials from central Poland – by Germanised Poles. There, it was much more difficult for people to protect themselves against discrimination. For example, during the evacuation of Germans from the village of Gniewno in Łęborg county, vetted Polish families were also evacuated. The initiator of this action was the village head Adamski, who commandeered the farm run by the Pauke family, who had been deported beyond the Oder. The authorities of Gdańsk reacted to this situation very severely, demanding that the local authorities punish the officials responsible for resettling the Poles, and describing the deed itself as a “scandalous crime”. They also demanded that Adamski give back the farm he had taken<sup>568</sup>.

Opposite situations also occurred, when the local officials themselves were discriminated against. For example, the leader of the village of Cewice in Łęborg county, Albert Neuman, was arrested and removed from his farm and his family were resettled in Germany. The Voivodship Rehabilitation Board commenced an investigation into why the County Office in Łęborg had given the Neuman farm to a family of non-farmers. Inspections of distant counties lasting several days were organised. These will be discussed later in this work, but at this point we can mention a field inspection of Łęborg county by Mirosława Dybowski in spring 1946, which disclosed a series of confiscations of movable property and real estate, as well as numerous shortcomings in the vetting of persons who had clearly demonstrated their Polish origins.

The materials from these field inspections are an important source of knowledge about the situation of indigenous families and the attitudes of the post-war authorities towards them, including specific events in daily life after 1945. Let us quote just a few examples by way of illustration. On 12 and 13 June 1946, during a ‘hunt for Germans’ organised by the Civil Militia in Malbork, many persons who had already been vetted were taken away for compulsory labour. They

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567 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do prokuratury Specjalnego Sądu Karnego* (hereinafter SSK), 25 VI 1946, p. 354.

568 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do Wojewódzkiego Wydziału Osiedleńczego*, 17 VI 1946, p. 270; J. Schodzińska, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

included a 65-year-old woman. To frighten the people and lure them into the streets, the militia fired a few rounds beneath their windows<sup>569</sup>. Occasionally, the state officials trying to evict indigenous Poles from Gdańsk voivodship included teachers. In Lębork county, one teacher tried to expel children from school on account of “traces of Germanness”<sup>570</sup>. Similarly, a teacher in Kwidzyn county demanded deportation beyond the Oder of a vetted farmer in order to take over his farm<sup>571</sup>. There were similar ideas in Polish Workers’ Party circles, where there were calls to resettle the indigenous Poles to central voivodships in order to “consolidate the Polish spirit inside them”<sup>572</sup>.

At a meeting on 5 April 1946, the Voivodship Rehabilitation Board examined motions to invalidate national vetting decisions or cases of the unlawful invalidation of rehabilitation certificates. Five out of the six cases involved the confiscation of housing<sup>573</sup>. They also involved the theft of property, which reached such a scale that on 22 February 1946, the Ministry for the Regained Territories prohibited the removal of movable property from the areas under its authority<sup>574</sup>.

A situation report by the Voivodship Office in Gdańsk to the Ministry of Public Administration in March 1946 stated that a priority task of the voivodship authorities was to protect the rehabilitated and vetted population, for it continues to be the “target of mistreatment by lower-level security authorities, and often by settlers, who cannot stand their incorrect Polish pronunciation or lack of Polish”<sup>575</sup>.

Thus, following the shock of confiscation of their property, the local population had to face security authorities and militias who knew nothing about the reality of the ethnic situation in wartime Pomerania<sup>576</sup>. According to these bodies, the majority of the population were Germanised Poles or simply traitors.

569 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do wojewódzkiego komendanta MO w Gdańsku*, 19 VI 1946, p. 304.

570 Cf.: L. Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa...*, p. 150.

571 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Sprawozdanie z inspekcji w powiatach Kwidzyn, Sztum i Malbork odnośnie stanu zagadnień weryfikacyjnych i położenia ludności zweryfikowanej*, 2–4 IV 1946, p. 49.

572 AP Gd, KW PPR w Gdańsku, 2598/279, *Protokoły zebrań kół PPR przy WUBP w Gdańsku*, 23 IV 1946, p. 54. Cf.: *Polityka władz polskich wobec ludności rodzimej...*, p. 65.

573 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Protokół z zebrania*, 5 IV 1945, pp. 22–23.

574 L. Belzyt, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

575 AAN, MAP, 199/54, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne miesięczne wojewody gdańskiego*, III 1946, p. 2.

576 P. Madajczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

Concerning Starogard Gdański, where according to some militia reports as many as 95 % of the inhabitants had enrolled in Group III of the *Volksliste*, it was stated that “only a few had remained Poles<sup>577</sup>.” Thus, instead of guarding security, officials themselves stirred up and caused conflicts between groups. In any case, the problem applied to a broader spectrum of issues than only the indigenous population.

Of course, just as people had been eager to enrol on the German National List during the war in order to gain material benefits, so too after 1945 the vetting of some people did not necessarily involve any patriotic feelings of Polish nationality<sup>578</sup>. It is worth quoting an opinion by an official of the Population Records Bureau in Sopot, accused, incidentally, of mistreating vetted persons. This man, correctly condemning the attitudes of settlers towards the indigenous population, nevertheless believed that the desired social state of affairs would never be attained if the settlers encountered vetted persons who spoke not a word of Polish and described themselves as *eingepolt* (Polonised). He considered it wrong that people without even a basic knowledge of Polish were being awarded civic rights. In the opinion of this Sopot official, these very practices spawned harmful opinions about that part of the indigenous population that was genuinely of Polish descent<sup>579</sup>.

Other such cases, described as German propaganda, were noted in the maritime county. The rehabilitated Kashubian population in that area was reported to be speaking German in public.

The authorities of the time interpreted such a state of affairs in biased, ideological terms, as an anti-state attitude and a sign of hostility towards the government. Therefore, the Kashubian population's dislike of the post-war authorities was branded as pro-German propaganda<sup>580</sup>. This was often the subject of party discussions. The secretary of a Polish Workers' Party cell in Kartuszy, Jan Hirsch, pointed out the ever-present fear of Kashubians of participating in organised life. The situation was explained in two ways.

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577 IPN Gd, 05/54, vol. 56, *Sprawozdanie z pracy polityczno-wychowawczej Komitet Powiatowego MO w Starogardzie Gdańskim*, 22 XI 1946, p. 252.

578 Cf.: AIPN Gd, 05/54, vol. 29, *Sprawozdanie okresowe i miesięczne Komendy Powatowej MO w Pruszcz Gdańskim*, 12 V 1945–31 XI 1946, p. 177.

579 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Pismo Wydziału Ewidencji Ludności ZM w Sopocie do prezydenta Sopotu*, 12 IV 1946, pp. 58–60.

580 AAN, MAP, 199/57, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne wojewody gdańskiego*, for the first quarter of 1948, pp. 100 and 170; AIPN Gd 05/54, vol. XI, *Sprawozdanie miesięczne Komendy Wojewódzkiej MO w Gdańsku*, 1 VII-31 XII 1947, p. 130.

According to some activists, e.g. in Kartuzy, the feeling of fear had been increased by the appointment of “harmful elements” to the public administration, i.e. people on the *Volksliste*, as well as former German soldiers, which was said to paralyse the participation of immaculate *Eingedeutsche* in party structures<sup>581</sup>. In other counties, including Kościerz, it was believed that the feeling of distrust was increased by not allowing such people to work in these authorities<sup>582</sup>. For, as we have seen, if the security authorities reckoned that the degree of Germanisation in some places in Pomerania was as high as 95 %, then it was certainly impossible to create county and district local authorities out of “pure Poles”<sup>583</sup>.

A report by the Polish Workers’ Party County Committee in Kościerzyn described the residents thus: “The population of our county consists of Kashubians, mainly in Group III of the German National List. Kashubians seal themselves off, they only want to live for themselves, they have no social lives, and it is very difficult to convince them otherwise. Until they get to know others, they will never try to meet them, but when one has managed to meet them, they will still never change. 60 % of our population is loyal, the rest is completely hostile to our government<sup>584</sup>.” In party circles, Kashubians were described as backward, very poor, distrustful and religious<sup>585</sup>. This view was used to explain the low number of party organisations in that area. Militia reports said that the indigenous population of Gdańsk “bars itself from political life”<sup>586</sup>.

In fact, the situations described above boosted distrust among the local population towards the new reality. On the one hand, they caused protests and

581 AP Gd, KP PPR in Kartuzy, 2600/2, *Protokoły posiedzeń plenarnych*, 8 VIII 1945, pp. 8–9; AIPN Gd, 05/54/10, *Sprawozdania miesięczne i raporty sytuacyjne Komitetu Wojewódzkiego MO w Gdańsku*, 8 III 1947, p.105.

582 AP Gd, KP PPR in Kościerzyn, 2601/2, *Protokoły posiedzeń plenarnych*, 13 III 1946, p. 26.

583 See, e.g. AIPN Gd, 0046, 273, vol. 1, *Raporty, meldunki z pracy Powiatowego UBP w Starogardzie Gdańskim*, 18 III 1945, p. 2.

584 AP Gd, KP PPR in Kościerzyn, 2601/8, *Sprawozdania*, 1946, pp. 18–19.

585 AP Gd, KW PPR in Gdańsk, 2598/295, Circulars, instructions, reports, *Sprawozdanie do Wojewódzkiej Komisji Kontroli Partii–KW PPR w Gdańsku z kwietnia 1946 r.*, p. 27. In the exhaustive monograph already cited called *Kaszubi...* C. Obracht-Prondzyński describes the stereotypes of Kashubians in the eyes of the post-war authorities. The author identifies their attitudes to such issues as politics, nationality, group ethics and the system of values, as well as their socio-economic status. See: C. Obracht-Prondzyński, *op. cit.*, pp. 628–650.

586 IPN Gd, 05/54, vol. XII, *Sprawozdania z pracy polityczno-wychowawczej i sytuacji politycznej na terenie milicyjnym i ogólnym*, 4 XI 1946, p. 344.

encouraged certain efforts by the pre-war Polish community in Gdańsk and ordinary citizens permanently settled there to rectify this situation, if only by taking part in the work of the Rehabilitation Boards. But on the other hand, they caused passiveness and a desire by some people to move to the other side of the Oder, of which more will be said below<sup>587</sup>.

The situation of the Polish indigenous population on the western and northern territories, including Gdańsk voivodship, is illustrated by the large number of circulars, directives, regulations, etc. issued by the state and voivodship authorities during 1945–1950. As we shall see, a particularly prolific period in this regard was spring 1946, preceding the referendum, when the Gdańsk authorities released two documents: a circular dated 16 March 1946 and an announcement of 15 April 1946<sup>588</sup>. In these, voivode Stanisław Zrałek again reminded people that any arbitrary issue of documents confirming full Polish civic rights was illegal and punishable under the Criminal Code, and cautioned the courts, prosecutors, public security bodies, land offices and the State Repatriation Bureau. In February 1947, the Voivodship Office in Gdańsk received yet another circular, “on the treatment of the vetted indigenous population on the Regained Territories.” This document stated that: “all available means must be employed to establish harmonious co-existence between settlers and the indigenous population, and to convince the former that a vetted indigenous Pole is a full citizen whose Polishness cannot be cast into doubt, and that his personal liberty, life and property enjoy the full protection of the Polish legal order<sup>589</sup>.”

This was not the last document on the treatment of the indigenous population, their situation, and ethnic vetting that was issued by 1949, when the Ministry of the Regained Territories was abolished. The contents of these documents almost always referred to the difficult, even desperate, situation of the indigenous population, which put the state authorities in a bad light regarding the implementation

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587 This passiveness was also a characteristic of indigenous Poles living in other parts of the Regained Territories. See, e.g. S. Banasiak, *Działalność osadnicza Państwowego Urzędu Repatriacyjnego na Ziemiach Odzyskanych w latach 1945–1947*, Poznań 1963, p. 198.

588 *Zweryfikowani i zrehabilitowani zyskują pełnię praw obywatelskich. Obwieszczenie wojewody gdańskiego*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 1946, No. 141, p. 3.

589 AAN, MAP, 199/765, the indigenous population—economic and legal situation, vetting, attitudes to the state authorities and settlers. Reports, motions, circulars, correspondence, *Pismo okólne Departamentu Administracji Publicznej MZO do wojewodów na obszarze Ziemi Odzyskanych*, 20 II 1947, p. 17.

of this legislation because, despite the frequency of opinions from the authorities, the situation in question throughout the country did not change.

The example of Gdańsk voivodship shows that the task of integrating the Regained Territories with the rest of the country was considered completed far too soon. The School Inspectorate in Elbląg in 1948 reported that indigenous people were still being treated as second-class citizens and as a cheap labour force. Most of them were employed by the City Cleaning Department as street sweepers or domestic helps<sup>590</sup>. In August 1950, the County People's Council in Gdańsk called for increased care and help for the indigenous population. The people's councils were called upon to examine at their plenary meetings the situation of the Polish indigenous population<sup>591</sup>.

The social condition of the indigenous population in Gdańsk voivodship was largely dictated by the way in which the reality of the time was viewed and by the situation of people. It was strongly flavoured by the advent of communist power in Poland. The relationships of individual segments of Gdańsk society towards the post-war authorities were affected by the political and social experiences to which these social segments had been subjected. In particular, the procedures of ethnic rehabilitation and vetting shaped relations between the indigenous population and the new political structures.

For many people with strong bonds of Polish nationality, the rehabilitation and vetting procedures were humiliating, especially after the difficult experiences of the German occupation. Instead of celebrating the defeat of the Germans, they had to explain to the new authorities the mechanisms of Third Reich policy in Pomerania, including the question of Germanisation. We need only consider the takeover of Pomerania by the Soviets and the behaviour of settlers there to understand the hostility of the indigenous population towards the emerging reality.

A particularly controversial issue was property, described in source documents as the property of former *Volksdeutsche* (which, under the terms of the new legislation, should have been returned to rehabilitated persons)<sup>592</sup>, but described in

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590 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/360, Regional issues, re-Polonisation, *Protokół z wizytacji kursu repolonizacyjnego Państwowej Szkoły Powszechnej dla Dorosłych w Elblągu*, 19 III 1948, p.53.

591 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/16, *Protokoły z posiedzeń Powiatowej Rady Narodowej (herienafter PRN) w Gdańsku*, 4 VIII 1950, p. 125.

592 AAN, MAP, 199/759, the German population in various voivodships, *Pismo Departamentu Politycznego do Departamentu Administracyjno-Prawnego MAP*, 20 I 1948, p. 108.



literature as so-called contentious farms<sup>593</sup>. The outcome of successful vetting and rehabilitation was, apart from the granting (or recovery) of Polish citizenship, the reinstatement of rights to land and property taken over by the new settlers. On the one hand, the latter were eager to maintain the uncertain legal status of the indigenous population. On the other hand, complaints received by the State Repatriation Bureau spoke of settlers being thrown out “onto the street” by the original owners of the properties they had occupied because the original owners had recovered their property rights<sup>594</sup>. The decree of 30 October 1945 discussed above, which was an amendment to the rehabilitation law, was a triumph of the pioneering concept, allowing settlers and repatriated persons to keep the properties they had taken over<sup>595</sup>. However, occasionally this regulation was not enforced, as in March 1946, when repatriated persons from Gdańsk and the coastal counties appealed to be allowed to remain on the farms they had occupied because “in the meantime, the original owner had been converted from a German to a Pole<sup>596</sup>”.

One of the legal instruments regulating the status of post-German property was the decree of 31 January 1946. According to this, newcomers who had taken over the property of vetted persons would not be entitled to a reimbursement of their outlay. But if they insisted on compensation, they were spoken of as people of “bad faith<sup>597</sup>.” It is worth adding that the Voivodship Rehabilitation Board in Gdańsk extended the range of vetted properties to include those in the counties on the right bank of the Oder which had been confiscated from Polish activists after the 1920 plebiscite<sup>598</sup>.

The question of so-called contentious farms was the subject of a conference organised by the Ministry of Justice on 30 October 1946. It was said at that conference that “there is a need to regulate in law the current landholdings of repatriated and resettled people, while guaranteeing adequate compensation for

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593 H. Słabek, *Wieś i rolnictwo* [in:] *Polska Ludowa...*, p. 213.

594 AAN, MAP, 199/54, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne miesięczne wojewody gdańskiego*, for III 1946, p. 3.

595 S. Bykowska, *Rehabilitacja Kaszubów i Pomorzan po II wojnie światowej* [w:] *Kaszubi w PRL*, ed. M. Adamkiewicz, I. Joć, Gdańsk 2007, p. 35.

596 AAN, MAP, 199/54, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne miesięczne wojewody gdańskiego*, III 1946, p. 2.

597 L. Belzyt, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

598 AAN, MZO, 196/497, *Pismo WKW do MZO*, 8 VI 1946, p. 95; AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, 8 VI 1946, p. 201.

rehabilitated persons who have been wronged<sup>599</sup>.” In the meantime, the return of properties managed by settlers to rehabilitated persons often caused disgust among the settlers, not only in Gdańsk Voivodship, but also in, e.g. Poznań Voivodship where, in April 1947, the Voivodship People’s Council turned to the Presidium of the National People’s Council to regulate the question of “contentious properties” in such a way that they could not be returned to rehabilitated persons, i.e. their original owners. Worth noting is the distinction in official correspondence between “Poles” meaning settlers, and *Volksdeutsche*, meaning rehabilitated indigenous Poles. This illustrated the social divisions deeply rooted in collective consciousness, including as a result of the Nazi policy of nationalisation.

In May 1946, the Ministry of the Regained Territories called for the unconditional return of property, especially farms, to vetted persons. It explained its decision by the fact that the process of verification had not been conducted properly or by the set deadline<sup>600</sup>. In December 1947, there were 493 people in Gdańsk voivodship who had still not been given back their properties<sup>601</sup>.

At a meeting of the Voivodship People’s Council on 24 April 1946, the voivode of Gdańsk laid down the following guidelines in this matter. If a repatriated person or settler had received the property of a vetted person (no matter if he spoke little Polish, as long as he admitted to being a Pole), the property should be returned to its rightful owner. But if the settler had occupied the empty property of someone who had delayed in vetting, the property would remain in the settler’s hands, whereas the previous owner received another property of a similar value<sup>602</sup>.

In the field, such decisions were reached by so-called Special Committees – also called Committees for the Verification and Recovery of Farms to Vetted

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599 AAN MAP, 199/768, Polish Western Union, *Pismo Kancelarii Cywilnej Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej do Prezydium Wojewódzkiej Rady Narodowej w sprawie przywrócenia majątku osobom zrehabilitowanym, które były wpisane na niemiecką listę narodową*, 12 IV 1947, p. 130.

600 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Protokół z posiedzenia*, 31 V 1946, p. 119.

601 AAN, MAP, 199/759, the German population in various voivodships, *Sprawozdanie z podróży służbowej na teren województwa gdańskiego*, 9–13 XII 1947, p. 13.

602 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/45, UWG Organisational statutes. Reports on Voivodship People’s Council meetings. Directives by the voivode, *Protokół z posiedzenia WRN*, 24 IV 1946, pp. 42–43.

Persons – appointed to oversee the return of property to vetted persons<sup>603</sup>. Nevertheless, local authorities, especially the socio-political departments of counties and towns, did not always implement their instructions<sup>604</sup>. For example, in June 1945 the Land Office in Gdańsk granted a post-German farm to Franciszek Petka, but the following January it was taken away from him by the land commissioner. The Voivodship Care Committee for Vetted Persons and the Union of Veterans in the Struggle for the Polishness of Gdańsk and the Coast intervened in this case<sup>605</sup>.

In Gdańsk county, containing some 10,000 farms, there were three Special Committees that had received 700 applications by 6 November 1946, most of which involved “complex and contentious issues”. In August 1946, in the district of Pszczółki alone, six families from beyond the Bug River had to vacate their farms in favour of their vetted previous owners. The militia reported: “This discourages the settlers from work, makes them uncertain of tomorrow and hostile towards the Government of National Unity (...)”<sup>606</sup>.

As at 20 January 1948, there were 10,000 “contentious farms” in areas of Gdańsk voivodship administered by the Ministry of Public Administration, i.e. areas that had belonged to Poland before the war. However, this figure does not include the properties of persons rehabilitated during court proceedings (Group II), therefore in fact the number of such farms was considerably higher<sup>607</sup>. It is worth adding that the authorities of Gdańsk granted ‘posthumous vetting’, sought mainly by relatives anxious to recover a family property<sup>608</sup>. Furthermore, the indigenous Polish population of the voivodship complained to the authorities that individual housing committees had unlawfully confiscated their apartments

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603 See: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Protokół z w sprawie rewindykacji gospodarstwa rolnego Bronisławy Regentbrecht, na której gospodarstwie osiedlony został przez PUBP w Kwidzynie Władysław Słysz w dniu 7 sierpnia 1945 r.*, 25 V 1946, p. 376.

604 See: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo Wojewódzkiego Komitetu Opieki nad Zweryfikowanymi do WKW w Gdańsku*, 9 VIII 1946, p. 474.

605 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/367, General files of the Care for Vetted Persons Committee (hereinafter KOnZ), *Pismo do Wojewódzkiego Urzędu Ziemiańskiego*, 5 VII 1946, p. 19.

606 AIPN Gd, 05/54, vol. 29, *Sprawozdanie okresowe i miesięczne Komendy Powatowej MO w Pruszcz Gdańskim*, 12 V 1945-31 XI 1946, p. 177.

607 AAN, MAP, 199/759, German population in individual voivodships, *Pismo Departamentu Politycznego do Departamentu Administracyjno-Prawnego MAP*, 20 I 1948, p. 108.

608 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/363, WKW, *Pismo do ZM w Sopocie*, 24 VIII 1946, p. 442; AP Gd, MRN-ZM, 1165/11, Situation reports illustrating the problems of Gdańsk city, XI 1946, p. 88.

on the grounds that they were post-German. In the second half of 1947, there were about 20 successful interventions in this matter<sup>609</sup>.

The issue of contentious farms illustrates the unstable existence of both the indigenous and the resettled population. The situation of the former was additionally encumbered by the loss of their homes and the transfer of ownership, often together with farms, to settlers. This drama frequently took place before the eyes of the expelled families on their home ground, where they had to restart their lives virtually from scratch. As it transpired, many gave up life in Poland and, having renounced their vetting, decided to move to Germany.

The first stage of rehabilitation and vetting did not succeed in improving the poor material situation of the indigenous population of Gdańsk voivodship. This operation took place at a time of chaos connected with the end of hostilities, social restructuring and in a political vacuum. At the same time, soldiers of the Soviet Army were on the rampage, committing crimes. The Polish indigenous population was hit the hardest. Despite numerous appeals in official letters and in the press that the Polish indigenous population be treated the same as the remainder of Polish society, their situation left much to be desired<sup>610</sup>.

The end of the war marked the beginning of rebuilding and economic stability, which official propaganda was eager to stress in the Regained Territories. However, for a major part of the indigenous Polish population, the period of stabilisation did not actually begin until several years later. For them, the first months and years after the cessation of hostilities merely meant increasing degradation and economic weakness<sup>611</sup>.

Let this part of the work end with the words of Lieutenant-Colonel Czerniak, commander of the Civil Militia in Gdańsk county, which confirm the discrimination of the indigenous population: "Vetted persons (...) during the initial period of general chaos after the liberation of these territories, were taken to be Germans, and almost all of them suffered materially<sup>612</sup>."

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609 AAN, MAP, 199/57, Situation reports of the voivode of Gdańsk, XI 1946, p. 62.

610 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/364, WKW, *Pismo Zarządu Związku Weteranów Walk o Polskość Gdańska i Wybrzeża i Komisji Weryfikacyjnej do spraw Rehabilitacji*, 19 I 1946, pp. 58 and 295–296.

611 M. Orzechowski, *Studia z dziejów polskiej ludności autochtonicznej na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1949*, Wrocław 1962. Doctor's thesis—typescript. Cited via: J. Misztal, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa...*, p. 121.

612 AIPN Gd, 05/54, vol. 29, *Sprawozdanie okresowe i miesięczne Komendy Powatowej MO w Pruszcz Gdańskim*, 12 V 1945–31 XI 1946, p. 177.

### 3.2 The Bodies Conducting Ethnic Rehabilitation and Vetting

Ethnic policy in Gdańsk voivodship was established by the voivode. Informally, he was answerable to the first secretary of the Voivodship Committee of the Polish Workers' Party. As with everywhere else in post-war Poland, a major role in ethnic issues was played by the Voivodship Public Security Bureau. Supervision over work in this regard was exercised on behalf of the voivode by the Socio-Political Department of the Voivodship Office of Gdańsk, comprising the following sections: Politics, Security, Assemblies, Associations and Spectacles, and Ethnicity-Religion. This last section contained a Department for Ethnic Issues, the chief expression and executor of the ethnic policy of the voivodship authorities<sup>613</sup>.

The mayors of towns and chief executives of counties were responsible for both of these procedures, but they were coordinated and controlled by the above-mentioned Voivodship Socio-Political Department. There were special Rehabilitation Boards in the towns and in the counties. Their duties included maintaining registers of rehabilitated persons; cooperating with the population registration authorities, security bodies, prosecutor's offices and courts; preparing instructions on the manner of conducting rehabilitation; publishing an agenda of those signing the *Declaration of Loyalty*; and reporting on rehabilitation. In the towns these offices administered the operation directly, whereas in the counties they coordinated the work of the district Rehabilitation Boards, which consisted of five to ten people.

Rehabilitation Boards in Gdańsk voivodship were appointed in the town and county councils on the basis of a recommendation by the voivode dated 22 July 1945, "on affirmed Poles residing in that area and cognisant of local conditions who, with their signatures, will be personally liable for the Polishness of the applicant<sup>614</sup>."

The Rehabilitation Boards were meant to consist of five to ten people representing the following institutions: the local administration, the municipal or county people's council, the Polish Western Union, trade unions and the local indigenous population (three to five representatives appointed by the general first instance authorities)<sup>615</sup>. From 16 July to 15 October 1945, the Gdańsk

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613 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/377, *Opis struktury organizacyjnej WSP UWG w 1945 r.*, pp. 1–3.

614 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, rehabilitation issues, *Pismo wojewody do starostów i prezydentów*, 22 VI 1945, p. 13.

615 M. Hejger, *op. cit.*, pp. 130–131.

Socio-Political Department created the organisational basis of vetting<sup>616</sup>. By 1 November 1945, when the operation was fully operational, the Department had branches in Wrzeszcz and Oliwa, after which the original organisational structure was restored, i.e. two boards attached to Gdańsk City Council<sup>617</sup>.

The leading authority in this regard in Gdańsk was the Vetting-Rehabilitation Board, with Kazimierz Banas-Purwin as chairman, Tadeusz Tylewski as deputy chairman, and Alojzy Pilarczyk as secretary. The Board had four branches: in Gdańsk, Franciszek Błęński, Antonina Czyżewska, Maria Flisykowska, Pelagia Korbasiewicz, Wincenty Pacholski, Stefania Słupińska, and Smulikowski (Christian name unknown); in Wrzeszcz, Michał Bellwon, Józef Miotk, and Paweł Śliwiński; in Oliwa, Jan Władysław Ebert, Bogusław Gańcz, and Helena Hassowa; and in Sopot, Bronisław Bukowski, Klemens Badziąg, Teofil Kulikowski, Michał Mielniński, Klemens Nitka, Józef Uller, Medard Wieloch, and Julian Zamkowski. In a letter to Gdańsk mayor F. Chudoba in January 1946 about the composition of the Board, K. Banaś-Purwin wrote that: "it is composed of Poles who, during the German occupation, rendered a great service to the Polish cause on Gdańsk soil (...)"<sup>618</sup>.

In addition, in May 1946 an Extraordinary Commission for Vetting Issues, also called the Chief Rehabilitation Board, was set up in Gdańsk. Its tasks included coordinating vetting in Gdańsk and helping the Socio-Political Department with its work<sup>619</sup>. To centralise and unify the vetting operation in the whole of Gdańsk voivodship, the above-mentioned Voivodship Rehabilitation Board, chaired by Gdańsk voivode Stanisław Zrałek, was appointed on 18 March 1946.

Occasionally, the vetting boards had more members than the number decreed by the voivode. For example, on 11 July 1945 the Sopot board had 12 people, of whom three worked on any single day<sup>620</sup>. In addition, from 1945 there was a six-man opinion-giving body at the Gdańsk division of the Polish Western

616 R. Wapiński, *Pierwsze lata...*, p. 72; M. Hejger, *Kwestia narodowościowa...*, p. 100; Cf: L. Belzyt, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

617 M. Stryczyński, *op. cit.*, pp. 145–146.

618 BPAN, Ms 5525, *Pismo do prezydenta Gdańska F. Chudoby*, 18 I 1946, p. 4.

619 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do WRN w Gdańsku*, 13 V 1946, p. 68; BPAN, Ms 5524, *Lista członków Komisji Weryfikacyjno-Rehabilitacyjnej dla Polaków gdańszczan w Gdańsku*, p. 13. Cf.: *Członkowie Komisji Weryfikacyjnej do Spraw Rehabilitacji*, p. 11.

620 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/360, *Sprawozdanie w sprawie akcji repolonizacyjnej na terenie Sopotu*, 22 X 1947, p. 44.

Union<sup>621</sup>. We should also note the work of the ‘Field Commission’ headed by Brunon Miąskowski and Jan Tejkowski<sup>622</sup>.

As indigenous Poles were being deported to Germany together with Germans, on 15 March 1946 the authorities of Gdańsk created Vetting-Rehabilitation Boards at marshalling points from where the Germans departed<sup>623</sup>. Their chairmen were meant to bear ultimate responsibility for the proper segregation of Poles. However, the above-mentioned director of the Gdańsk Ethnic Department, Zygmunt Moczyński, demanded honest work by the Rehabilitation Boards at the administrative level because: “when abandoning their property, the settlers rarely regained their possessions in their original condition.” It was stressed here that “persons recognised as belonging to the Polish nation have the same property rights as Polish citizens, therefore they cannot be deprived of the property which they own<sup>624</sup>.” For example, in February 1946 there were 49 Polish nationals in the Narwik transit camp, either undergoing vetting or already vetted<sup>625</sup>. On 17 October 1947 in the county of Tczew, the Rehabilitation Board excluded 38 people from the resettlement of the German population<sup>626</sup>.

### 3.3 Rehabilitation Procedures under the First Directives of the Voivode of Gdańsk

The intimidation and arbitrary treatment of people enrolled on the German National List was encouraged by the divergence among the legal instruments discussed in the previous chapter: between the decree of 28 February 1945 which, as we know, never took effect, and the rehabilitation law promulgated on 6 May 1945<sup>627</sup>. Successful rehabilitation led to the issue of a certificate of rehabilitation following the signing of the *Declaration of Loyalty*. The Ministry of Public Administration stressed that the rehabilitation law applied to pre-war Polish citizens. Therefore, apart from demonstrating a pro-Polish attitude during

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621 M. Ujdał, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

622 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, WKW, *Skład osobowy Komisji Weryfikacyjno-Rehabilitacyjnej w Gdańsku*, p. 2.

623 Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz polskich wobec ludności rodzimej...*, p. 54.

624 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/364, WKW, *Pismo WSP UWG do prezydentów miast i starostów*, 5 IV 1946, pp. 284–285.

625 BPAN, Ms 5525, *Pismo do inspektora osiedleńczego, Erwina Fąfary*, 5 II 1946, p. 6.

626 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/360, *Pismo SP w Tczewie do UWG*, 1 X 1947, p. 15.

627 W. Jastrzębski, *op. cit.*, p. 39; L. Olejnik, *Zdrójcy...*, p. 96.

the occupation, it was necessary to provide evidence of Polish citizenship before September 1939<sup>628</sup>.

As early as in April 1945, before the legal status of the Germanised population was settled, the first post-war voivode of Gdańsk, Mieczysław Okęcki, ordered local government chiefs and mayors to accept the *Declaration of Loyalty* from people entered in Groups III and IV of the German National List. Persons wishing to recover full civic and property rights were to submit the declarations by 31 August 1945. The authorities of the neighbouring voivodship of Pomerania hoped that after this date: “the division of Pomeranian society into groups would disappear and that it would not disappear just formally<sup>629</sup>.” In a confidential report of September 1945, the voivode of Gdańsk estimated the number of persons to be rehabilitated at 120,000<sup>630</sup>.

An instruction sent to the voivodship regional authorities indicated the problem of treating the holders of an *Ausweis* as Germans. Mieczysław Okęcki drew attention to people deported by the Soviet authorities into the depths of the USSR and the need to effectively separate “undesirable elements” from Poles who had preserved a Polish national attitude<sup>631</sup>. On 16 June 1945, Leonard Wierzbicki, head of the Socio-Political Department, ordered the immediate rehabilitation of persons in Groups III and IV of the *Volksliste* throughout the voivodship<sup>632</sup>.

The authorities of Gdańsk soon began to receive complaints about the difficulty in implementing the rules on rehabilitation in outlying areas. For example, the chief executive of the coastal county did not know whether the German occupiers had carried out obligatory enrolment on the territory of his county<sup>633</sup>. The biggest problem was the absence of documents issued by the German occupiers<sup>634</sup>. This was solved by producing a certificate from the population records office or a declaration of identity signed by two witnesses. On the basis of the above-quoted directive by the Ministry of Public Security of 26 May 1945,

628 AAN, MAP, 199/769, Rehabilitation of persons included on German national lists, *Pismo Departamentu Politycznego MAP do Wydziału Narodowościowego*, 27 V 1946, pp. 40–41.

629 AP Bd, UWP, 851/556, *WSP, Pismo do kierownika Oddziału Prasowego*, 6 VIII 1945, p. 21.

630 AAN, MAP, 199/51, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne wojewody gdańskiego*, IX 1945, p. 5.

631 L. Olejnik, *Zdrajcy ...*, p. 95; M. Hejger, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

632 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/281, general regulations and directives 1945–1951, *Pismo naczelnika WSP do prezydentów miast i starostów*, 16 VI 1945, pp. 4–12.

633 AP Gd, UWG, rehabilitation issues, *Pismo SP w Wejherowie do UWG*, 19 VI 1945, p. 1.

634 L. Zieliński, *op. cit.*, p. 35.



*On the issue of replacement identity documents*, it was also possible to apply to the militia for the issuance of a replacement identity document<sup>635</sup>.

However, as mentioned above, the militia was not concerned about the efficiency of the rehabilitation. For example, in Stargard Gdański they simply refused to issue replacement identity documents at first, in addition to which, in July 1945, the Militia Command in Gdańsk withheld 300 applications for these documents. According to the regulations, these persons faced the prospect of being rehabilitated via the courts, i.e. the same way as people on Group II of the German National List. The Socio-Political Department intervened, indicating the need to prepare instructions on the issue of replacement identity documents to people returning to Poland, including from concentration camps. Consequently, to expedite the application process, the office outsourced its staff to individual militia precincts<sup>636</sup>.

Meanwhile, news from field authorities suggested increasing chaos with rehabilitation. The chief executive of Kartuszy county explained that also in his county, only a small number of people had been able to obtain replacement identity documents. This was for the following reasons: there were no posters in some places on the subject of the issue of these documents, militia units had stopped accepting applications, the deadline for applications was too short, and many people lived too far from the County Militia Command<sup>637</sup>. The problem was similar in the coastal county, where 20 % of the people subject to rehabilitation did not have identity cards.

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635 Persons deported during the occupation could apply within one month of their return to Poland, but no later than one year after the end of the war. AAN, MAP, 199/766, rehabilitation of people on German national lists, *Rozporządzenie MAP z 25 V 1945 r.*, pp. 49–52 and *Rozporządzenie MBP w sprawie wykonania ustawy z 6 V 1945 r. O wyłączeniu ze społeczeństwa polskiego wrogich elementów w przedmiocie zastępczych dowodów tożsamości*, pp. 47–48. See also: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, *rehabilitation issues*, *Pismo WSP SP w Stargardzie Gdańskim*, 4 VIII 1945 r., p. 49. Cf: J. Rados, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

636 AAN, MAP, 199/52, situation reports of the voivode of Gdańsk, *Dane co do obszaru i zaludnienia*, 1 XI 1945, p. 9. For the sake of comparison, officials responsible for German issues were appointed at the security offices in Poznań voivodship. K. Strykowski, *op. cit.*, p. 429.

637 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, rehabilitation issues, *Pismo SP w Stargardzie Gdańskim do WSP*, 28 VII 1945, p. 54; 4 IX 1945, p. 112; *Pismo WSP do SP w Wejherowie*, 22 VIII 1945, p. 74; *Pismo SP w Kartuzach do WSP*, 4 IV 1945, p. 116; *Pismo WSP do SP w Tczewie*, 29VIII 1945, p. 104; *Pismo WSP do SP w Stargardzie Gdańskim*, 10 IX 1945, p. 141; *Pismo WSP do Komendy Wojewódzkiej MO w Gdańsku*, 10 IX 1945, p. 143.

Different parts of the voivodship had different rehabilitation procedures, depending on the degree of Germanisation of individual counties during the war. Where Germanisation had been intense, as in the coastal county, additional procedures were introduced to clarify individual cases, e.g. to establish exactly to which group a person to be rehabilitated had belonged. Special boards were appointed for this purpose, composed of a representative of the urban or municipal people's council, an official from the population records office, a militia officer and the head of the local government authority. Witnesses provided evidence<sup>638</sup>. The situation was different in Gdynia, where applications for replacement identity documents began to be accepted as early as the beginning of June 1945. An announcement to this effect was carried by the newspaper the *Dziennik Bałtycki*, referring to the decree of 28 February 1945<sup>639</sup>. As a result, at the end of October 1945, 12,936 people in Gdańsk voivodship who held neither *Ausweis* nor identity cards, did not receive certificates of rehabilitation<sup>640</sup>.

Another issue with implementing the May law was a public announcement to report accusations against rehabilitated persons. This was meant to encourage society at large to engage itself for the sake of the rehabilitation campaign. Pursuant to article 3 of the act, the announcement was to read as follows: "Anyone who knows a rehabilitated person who was voluntarily enrolled in group III or IV of the German National List, or knows that the conduct of such a person during the occupation was incompatible with Polish nationhood, should notify the public security authorities or a prosecutor of the Special Criminal Court."

This announcement was to be posted on the walls of the offices of the peoples' councils, chief executives and municipal courts. In an article with the significant title: "*I'm going to turn myself into a Pole*". *Eingedeutsche facing public opinion*, the *Dziennik Bałtycki* said it was the duty of citizens to complain about the hasty restoration of Polish rights: "As of today, the citizens of the Coast are fully responsible for whether or not the *Eingedeutsche* here will be considered Poles again, which of them should be forgiven and which of them cleansed like the plague<sup>641</sup>." At the same time, the newspaper condemned: "all those who had renounced

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638 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/89, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Wejherowie za 1945 r.*, p. 2.

639 *Zastępcze dowody tożsamości*, „*Dziennik Bałtycki*”, 1945, No. 10, p. 4.

640 There was a similar problem in Pomernia voivodship, e.g. in Bydgoszcz. M. Romaniuk, *op. cit.*, pp. 100–102.

641 Z. Żelska-Mrozowicka, „*Idę zrobić się na Polaka*”. *Eingedeutsche przed sądem opinii publicznej*, „*Dziennik Bałtycki*”, 9 VIII 1945, No. 75, p. 3.

their Polish citizenship to become German in order to obtain better food rations and retain their apartment<sup>642</sup>.”

This very emotional article exploited the rhetoric of anti-German warnings, typical of the post-war period, of the permanent threat beyond the western border<sup>643</sup>. For example, it said that: “the Germans are trying to creep into Polish society through the fence of Germanisation<sup>644</sup>.” The article’s author demanded that the names of those seeking rehabilitation be posted not only in public administration buildings, but also in places frequented by the local population: “We do not spare paper for announcements of balls and dances, so let us not spare it for these announcements. After all, we must not lose sight of traitors and enemies!<sup>645</sup>”

Such a trivial issue as obtaining sufficient quantities of paper was a further obstacle to implementing the May law. For example, in Stargard county there was not only a shortage of paper, but also a problem with posting announcements on the walls of public buildings, because details of rehabilitated persons should be displayed for a maximum of six months, after which time the applicant received a provisional certificate. Another typical problem during the post-war period was a shortage of personnel<sup>646</sup>. In the strongly Germanised coastal county, there were only three full-time employees dealing with rehabilitation<sup>647</sup>.

In some northern and western voivodships, there was opposition to the legal solutions dealing with rehabilitation. Aleksander Zawadzki, voivode of Silesia from March 1945, called for simpler administrative procedures for obtaining full civic rights, including permanent certificates of rehabilitation instead of the provisional six-month ones<sup>648</sup>. Let us recall that these were introduced in areas where there was obligatory enrolment on the German National List on the basis of the decree of 24 August 1945<sup>649</sup>. In Gdańsk voivodship, the issue of these permanent

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642 Ibid.

643 See: J. Kochanowski, *Verräter oder Mitbürger? Staat und Gesellschaft in Polen zum Problem der Volksdeutschen vor und nach 1945*, [in:] *Die “Volksdeutschen” in Polen, Frankreich, Ungarn und der Tschechoslowakei. Mythos und Realität*, ed. J. Kochanowski and M. Sach, Osnabrück 2006, pp. 333–352.

644 Z. Żelska-Mrozowicka, „Idę....

645 Ibid.

646 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, rehabilitation issues, *Pismo SP w Stargardzie Gdańskim do WSP*, 5 IX 1945, p. 118.

647 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/50, *Sprawozdanie z inspekcji organizacyjno-instrukcyjnej SP w Wejherowie*, 8–16 I 1946, p. 18.

648 L. Olejnik, *Zdrajcy ...*, p. 107; M. Romaniuk, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

649 Official Journal No. 34, 1945, item 203.

certificates commenced on 22 October 1945<sup>650</sup>. The opposite view prevailed in Poznań, where there was greater caution towards Germanised people. Here, it was believed that permanent certificates should not be issued to rehabilitated persons too hastily<sup>651</sup>. First, they had to demonstrate their pro-Polish attitudes and usefulness to the Polish nation over a period of six months.

The original deadline for submitting applications for rehabilitation, 31 August 1945, transpired to be much too short. As early in September 1945, the chief executive of Stargard county called for an extension to this deadline because many people had still not applied<sup>652</sup>. The deadline was first extended to 31 October 1945, and then, in a decree by the Ministry of Administration, to the end of July 1946<sup>653</sup>. But even this extension was too short to encourage all obligated persons to submit their applications. In November, the chief executive of the coastal county asked for an extension of the deadline to 15 December 1945 because, as he explained: “some people have not fulfilled their duty and, as investigations show, this is not due to ill will, but simply the fact that they are generally older people not aware of the importance of the procedure and its consequences<sup>654</sup>.” There were similar requests from Tczew, Pelplin and Gdynia. Some people visited the offices of the authorities in person to explain why they had not yet applied for rehabilitation. One female resident of Gniew explained that the militia had twice taken her away for compulsory labour, first at a farm in the village of Rojewo and then at another farm in Radostowo<sup>655</sup>.

The first reports on the results of the rehabilitation campaign reached the Voivodship Office of Gdańsk in July 1945. An examination of source materials discloses three basic stages of the rehabilitation procedure during the initial period:

1. Submission of the *Declaration of loyalty to the Polish nation and state*, plus evidence of Polish citizenship before 1939;

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650 J. Rados, *op. cit.*, pp. 71–81; R. Wapiński, *Pierwsze lata...*, pp. 69–70; L. Olejnik, *Zdrajcy...*, p. 113.

651 AAN, MAP, 199/769, rehabilitation of people on German national lists, *Pismo UWG w Poznaniu do Departamentu Politycznego MAP*, 18 III 1946, p. 39.

652 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, rehabilitation issues, *Pismo SP w Stargardzie Gdańskim do WSP*, 9 IX 1945, p. 115.

653 See: L. Olejnik, *Zdrajcy...*, p. 103.

654 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/358, the affairs of the indigenous population and its vetting, 1945, p. 208.

655 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/237, determination of citizenship, *Pismo Zarządu Gminy w Gniewie do UWG*, 4 XII 1945, pp. 59–60.

2. Successful rehabilitation, certified by a provisional certificate or by the public disclosure of personal data for a period of six months<sup>656</sup>;
3. Receipt of certificate of permanent rehabilitation.

Thus, 31,950 people were rehabilitated in Stargard county by the end of October 1945. But this was not the final result, because applications for rehabilitation continued to flow in. In November 1945, a further 856 *Declarations of loyalty* were received from people returning from camps or from places where they had been resettled during the war. In agreement with the security authorities, certificates of rehabilitation, marking the end of the administrative procedure, began to be issued. Occasionally, this occurred during an official ceremony in the presence of local officials<sup>657</sup>.

A total of 28,000 people had been rehabilitated in the city and county of Tczew by the end of 1945<sup>658</sup>. However, some localities were extremely reluctant to grant Polish civic rights, especially in Kartuzy county, where out of 21,757 applications for rehabilitation submitted in September 1945, 6,547 or 30 % were rejected. Only about 8,000 people received provisional certificates, and almost 14,000 were refused them because they did not have the required documents. Three hundred and seventy-one objections were submitted to the public security authorities. Party activists viewed the rehabilitation campaign in Kartuzy county as chaotic. They criticised the presence of former *Eingedeutsche* and *Volksdeutsche*<sup>659</sup> on the Rehabilitation Boards there.

Nevertheless, the chief executive of the neighbouring county of Kościerz reported that the local population was pleased with the rehabilitation campaign<sup>660</sup>. By the end of August 1945, some 15,000 people there had signed the *Declaration of loyalty*<sup>661</sup>. The work of the Rehabilitation Board was described as the most

656 The issue of a provisional certificate was synonymous with the reinstatement of Polish civic rights, and thus meant rehabilitation. That is why the term 'rehabilitation' is described as the receipt of a provisional certificate.

657 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/86, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjna SP w Stargardzie Gdańskim za lata 1945–1951*, X and XI 1945, pp. 1, 21 and 32.

658 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/88, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjna SP w Tczewie za lata 1945–1951*, za IX, X, XI 1945, pp. 1, 9, 19 and 32.

659 AP Gd, KP PPR in Kartuzy, 2600/6, *Protokoły i sprawozdania Międzypartyjnej Komisji Porozumiewawczej Stronnictw Politycznych w Kartuzach*, 27 VI 1945, p. 18.

660 AAN, MAP, 199/51, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne wojewody gdańskiego, t. 1*, WSP UWG and SP w Kościerzynie, IX 1945, pp. 15, 160–161.

661 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/59, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne miesięczne*, IX 1945, p. 154.

important activity in the county<sup>662</sup>. A total of 26,000 applications were noted in December that year, of which 14,000 were approved and the remainder were still awaiting consideration<sup>663</sup>.

In the coastal county, with its administrative offices in Wejherowo, over 34,000 people were believed eligible for rehabilitation in August 1945. The chief executive said that some 60 % of them had already submitted their *Declarations of loyalty*. By the end of 1945, 34,052 people had applied<sup>664</sup>, and almost all of them were approved<sup>665</sup>. The Socio-Political Department there issued between 600 to 700 rehabilitation certificates every day. Rehabilitation in Gdynia proceeded smoothly. By the end of October 1945, 11,627 residents of Gdynia had been reinstated as Poles<sup>666</sup>.

In Gdańsk, the proportion of rejected applications was particularly large because many Germans were anxious to avoid resettlement and remain in their home city. As at 30 September 1945, there were 12,424 applications for rehabilitation, only 984 of which were approved. By the end of the year, 1,417 citizens of Gdańsk had been granted Polish civic rights. Rehabilitation in Gdańsk reached a peak in August 1945, when about 800 rehabilitation certificates were issued, and again in October 1945 when about 400 were issued<sup>667</sup>.

In Sopot, 1,032 provisional rehabilitation certificates were issued by 31 December 1945 and the process of converting them to permanent certificates began. This was a positive result because there were 1,538 people from *Volksliste* Group III, and 41 from Group IV in the city. Some 22,500 residents were considered to be eligible for rehabilitation and vetting<sup>668</sup>. The Civil Militia command in Sopot reported in November 1945 that the city's total population was 23,537<sup>669</sup>.

662 AAN, MAP, 199/844, UWG. *Załączniki do sprawozdań*, t. III, *Sprawozdanie SP w Kościerzynie*, za VIII 1945, p. 15.

663 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/50, *Sprawozdanie z inspekcji SP w Kościerzynie dokonanej*, 19–24 XII 1945, p. 39.

664 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/89, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Wejherowie*, za VIII, IX, X, XI, XII 1945, pp. 2, 13, 26, 36 and 45.

665 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/50, *Sprawozdanie z inspekcji SP w Kościerzynie*, 19–24 XII 1945, p. 18.

666 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/75, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne Prezydenta Miasta Gdyni za lata 1945–1951*, IX, X 1945, pp. 19, 24.

667 AP Gd, MRN-ZM, 1165/1110, *Rejestr deklaracji wierności 1945–1946*.

668 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/76, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne ZM w Sopocie za lata 1945–1950*, X, XI, XII 1945, pp. 2, 7 and 16.

669 IPN Gd, 05/54, vol. 15, *Sprawozdania dekadowe i miesięczne Komendy Miejskiej MO w Sopocie*, V1945-XII 1946, p. 40.

By the end of October 1945, a total of 126,567 people in Groups III and IV of the *Volksliste* had applied for rehabilitation<sup>670</sup>. Of these, 58,355 had been granted rehabilitation certificates, 14,121 had been refused, and the remainder were still awaiting a decision. Nevertheless, the general trend was that applications for rehabilitation were approved. A letter from the abovementioned Polish activist Zygmunt Moczyński to the Polish Western Union in November 1945 said that some 125,000 people had already been granted rehabilitation by administrative procedure<sup>671</sup>. By the end of January 1946, this figure had reached 138,401 with 1,846 rejections<sup>672</sup>.

Occasionally, people who had been denied rehabilitation appealed to the Social-Political Department. For example, Leon Ponicki, a resident of Wrzeszcz, had his application rejected because during the war he had changed his name to Pohnert. His claim that he had been threatened with persecution and a labour camp did not convince the decision-making body, which concluded that by adopting a German name, he had failed to demonstrate a desire to retain his Polish connections.

At first, the national authorities received information about the situation of the Polish population from the representatives of the Polish Army who occupied Pomerania together with the Red Army, and later from the voivodship authorities, as well as from the State Bureau for Repatriation and the security authorities. It is worth stressing that not until the onset of the rehabilitation process did the authorities of Gdańsk, having received materials dating from the occupation, learn about German ethnic policy, and hence about the situation of people striving for rehabilitation<sup>673</sup>. No doubt it is the absence of this information earlier that caused such chaos throughout the rehabilitation operation.

Thus, we learn from a letter from the Voivodship Socio-Political Department to the Civil Militia County Command in Tczew, dated 26 November 1945, that not until that date did the voivode of Gdańsk receive a copy of the secret *Erlass* issued by the Third Reich Ministry of the Interior on 13 March 1941, dividing the inhabitants of the annexed territories into four groups<sup>674</sup>. Neither did the Gdańsk authorities possess copies of the regulations governing the *Volksliste* in

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670 AAN, MAP, 199/52, situation reports of the voivode of Gdańsk, *Dane co do obszaru i zaludnienia*, 1 XI 1945, p. 9.

671 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/358, issues of the indigenous population and their vetting, *Pismo WSP do Polskiego Związku Zachodniego Obwód Toruński*, 14 XI 1945, p. 199.

672 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/60, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne miesięczne*, I 1946, p. 12.

673 M. Ujdał, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

674 *Doc. Occup.*, vol. V, pp. 122–139. See chapter II of this work.

Pomerania issued up until 22 February 1942, when Adalbert Forster released his infamous *Aufruf*. It was explained to the Civil Militia in Tczew that the different names of categories introduced by the Nazis (*Volksdeutsche, Eingedeutsche*) were actually intended to eradicate Germanised Poles. They then realised the arbitrary manner in which the Germans had included Poles in the different categories of the *Volksliste*. It was suggested that the Polish authorities should exercise a certain leniency towards persons seeking rehabilitation<sup>675</sup>.

It became apparent that the success of the ethnic processes discussed in this work depended largely on the level of awareness in society as a whole. Therefore, conferences and meetings were held to bring this complex subject matter home to people. One of them was held on 27 February 1946 in Gdańsk, to which representatives of the local and surrounding population, municipal authorities, courts and militia were invited<sup>676</sup>.

According to the results of the first post-war census conducted on 14 February 1946, on Poland's original territory there were 222,971 people undergoing rehabilitation. Of these, 44,835 were in Gdańsk voivodship<sup>677</sup>.

Voivode Stanisław Zrałek described the rehabilitation as the settlement of the debt of gratitude to those generations who had resisted centuries of Germanic onslaught and had succeeded in preserving a tiny stretch of Polish coastline in the re-emergent Republic<sup>678</sup>. However, this looked completely different from the angle of the indigenous population, who described the manner of repaying the above debt as a humiliating process akin to the Spanish Inquisition, a new *Volksliste* or, in the case of the right-bank counties of Gdańsk voivodship, a new plebiscite<sup>679</sup>. Feliks Dziurkiewicz, who was a railwayman before the war and organised sports activities for young Poles in the Free City of Danzig, and who himself had problems with recovering his Polish civic rights, described the problems of people on the *Volksliste* thus: "The doubts and suspicions heaped upon them by the cataclysms of war are but the result of unfortunate incidents, whereas in fact they have preserved the values of Poles. This is the direction in

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675 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/358, questions of the indigenous population and their vetting, *Pismo WSP do Komendy Powiatowej MO w Tczewie*, 26 XI 1945, p. 218.

676 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/74, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne ZM w Gdańsku za lata 1945–1951*, III quarter 1945, p. 15; XI 1945, p. 65; XII 1945, pp. 86 and 92.

677 L. Olejnik, *Zdrajcy ...*, pp. 103–104, 113. Cf. I. Sobczak, *Procesy...*, p. 38; Idem, *Obraz...*, p. 43.

678 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/364, WKW, p. 295.

679 Cf.: Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz polskich wobec ludności rodzimej...*, p. 40; L. Belzyt, *op. cit.*, p. 83.



which the Rehabilitation Board should proceed and offer help, instead of holding humiliating inquisition-like proceedings<sup>680</sup>.”

### 3.4 Judicial Rehabilitation

A separate issue was judicial rehabilitation, about which it is worth noting a few issues. It involved far fewer people, but the procedure was much more complicated, and was applied to *Volksdeutsche*, persons included in Group II of the German National List. The current state of research does not allow an accurate and reliable figure for the number of people obliged to undergo judicial rehabilitation on the basis of the law of 6 May 1945, but the authorities of Gdańsk estimated that in November 1945, some 5,000 were still waiting for this rehabilitation in November 1945<sup>681</sup>.

Persons obliged to undergo judicial rehabilitation had to register or do compulsory work on reduced pay, and their property was confiscated. Their situation was further complicated by the actions of the local authorities, formally directed against the German population<sup>682</sup>. For example, one of the first resolutions adopted by the Municipal People's Council ordered the eviction of all people in Group II from their apartments so that the apartments could be made available to settlers<sup>683</sup>. Similarly, in August 1945 the Housing Commission in Kościerzyn resolved that people in Group II be accommodated in barracks and their homes made available to office workers and military families<sup>684</sup>. In Tczew, too, all properties belonging to *Volksdeutsche* were treated as post-German property and assigned to settlers<sup>685</sup>.

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680 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, *Zażalenie na decyzję Komisji Rehabilitacyjnej przy ZM w Gdańsku*, 11 IX 1945, p. 145.

681 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/358, *Pismo WSP do Polskiego Związku Zachodniego Obwód Toruński*, 14 XI 1945, p. 199. In Śląsk-Dąbrowa voivodship, there were about 130,000 people in group II of the Volksliste. See e.g. L. Olejnik, *Zdraycy ...*, p. 108.

682 Z. Boda-Krężel, *Sprawa Volkslisty...*, pp. 86–87.

683 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/363, WKW, *Zażalenie w sprawie konfiskaty mieszkania*, 1 VII 1946, p. 268.

684 AP Gd, KP PPR in Kościerzyn, 2601/34, *Protokoły, sprawozdania oraz korespondencja Referatu Administracyjno-Samorządowego KP PPR w Kościerzynie*, 27 VIII 1945 p. 7.

685 Where judicial rehabilitation was combined with a restoration of property rights, popery was restored. See: AAN, MAP, 199/759, *Sprawozdanie dot. narodowościowych zagadnień niemieckich w powiecie tczewskim*, 11 XII 1947, p. 32. See also: L. Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa...*, p. 165.

This problem was the subject of an analysis by the Sociographic Board of the Silesian Institute, which noted the existence of a kind of solidarity between *Volksliste* people in Upper Silesia. Mistakes and shortcomings during rehabilitation and constant criminal suspicion of this group were blamed for this state of affairs<sup>686</sup>.

As of 1 January 1945, people in Group II applied for rehabilitation where they lived. Unlike in the case of *Eingedeutsche*, public announcements of their rehabilitation were posted one month before the start of the process, which was communicated to the local Security Office and Special Criminal Court, who took over the case if the Municipal Court rejected it.

The rehabilitation procedure was based on statements by the applicant, who appeared in the role of defendant, and on testimony from at least two witnesses. In practice, the number of witnesses ranged from four to over a dozen, and many of them were themselves in Group III. The testimonies of witnesses, varying in length from a single page to several pages, often describe the applicant's fortunes during the war in great detail, and confirm the pressure applied on and blackmail used against the Polish population of Pomerania after the infamous *Aufruf*. Of course, we must bear in mind that people distorted the truth to avoid punishment, which may have encouraged group solidarity based upon collective fortunes. It is possible that these people confirmed untruths in order to paint a "pure" picture of *Volksdeutsche/Eingedeutsche*. To avoid a court case, they often said they belonged to a group different to the one to which they had actually belonged, usually Group III rather than II<sup>687</sup>.

Only a positive court verdict granting rehabilitation had to contain the grounds for the decision. Negative verdicts usually contained no grounds, which created great opportunities for fraud<sup>688</sup>.

As mentioned above, applications for rehabilitation began to be submitted to the municipal courts in Gdańsk voivodship in April 1945. In September that year, the Socio-Political Department estimated that this procedure would include 30 % of all persons included in Group II of the *Volksliste*<sup>689</sup>. For example, by the end of

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686 AAN, MAP, 199/766, *Obserwacje wstępne Komisji Socjograficznej Instytutu Śląskiego*, p. 75. Cf.: A. Dziurok, *Śląskie rozrachunki. Władze komunistyczne a byli członkowie organizacji nazistowskich na Górnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1956*, Katowice 2000, p. 218.

687 AIPN Gd, 05/54, vol. XI, *Sprawozdania miesięczne Komendy Wojewódzkiej MO w Gdańsku*, 1 VII-31 XII 1947, p. 33.

688 AAN, MAP, 199/843, *Opinia Biura Konsultantów przy MAP*, 8 III 1946, pp. 4–6.

689 AAN, MAP, 199/51, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne wojewody gdańskiego*, IX 1945, p. 13.

1945 the Municipal Court of Kartuzy county had received 1,306 applications for rehabilitation, of which 489 were considered, 382 approved and 26 rejected<sup>690</sup>. In the county of Kościerz, 658 people were rehabilitated by the courts and 177 applications were rejected<sup>691</sup>. By September 1945, the Municipal Court in Gdynia received 1,998 applications for the reinstatement of full civic and property rights. Out of this number, it approved 17 applications and referred the remainder to court proceedings before a Special Criminal Court. By 15 October 1946, the court rehabilitated 1,106 people<sup>692</sup>. Persons included in Groups I and II of the *Volksliste* were issued with passes for a voluntary journey to Germany. Forty people took advantage of them in September 1945<sup>693</sup>. In Sopot, 51 people applied for judicial rehabilitation by the end of October 1945. But by the end of 1946, the Municipal Court in Sopot received 453 applications for rehabilitation, of which 113 were approved and 337 remained pending<sup>694</sup>. In the coastal county, in August 1945 7,243 persons were seeking judicial rehabilitation<sup>695</sup>. Only 1,317 had received it by 1 November 1946<sup>696</sup>.

Regarding the counties in the Kociewie region, it is estimated that there were 300 *Volksdeutsche* in Starogard county and 700 in Tczew county.<sup>697</sup> However, the number of files stored in the Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Gdańsk and relating to rehabilitation procedures in Tczew county, 1,400, suggests that the phenomenon was on a much greater scale, especially because entire families – parents and children – were recorded under a single surname. Therefore, the above figure of 1,400 people in Tczew country included in Group II may actually be twice or three times as high.

The prosecutor of the Special Court did not always attend the hearing, and he expressed an opinion only when the Municipal Court had reached a verdict. He

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690 AAN, MAP, 199/744, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne wojewody gdańskiego*, vol. 1, November 1945, p. 58.

691 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/82, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP Kościerzynie za lata 1945–1950*, I quarter 1947, p. 63.

692 AAN, MZO, 196/1069a, *Wykaz akcji rehabilitacyjnej i weryfikacyjnej województwa gdańskiego*, 15 X 1946, p. 11.

693 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/75, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne Prezydenta Miasta Gdyni za lata 1945–1951*, IX 1945, pp.19–20.

694 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/76, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne ZM w Sopocie za lata 1945–1950*, X 1945 and X 1946, pp. 2 and 55.

695 AAN, MAP, 199/51, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne wojewody gdańskiego*, vol. 1, IX 1945, p. 303.

696 AAN, MAP, 199/54, *Stan akcji rehabilitacyjnej*, 1 XI 1946, p. 61.

697 J. Milewski, *op. cit.*

was entitled to do so one month after the verdict had been handed down. Marta Jackowska, a resident of Gniew, found herself in such a situation. She testified that in 1943, her employer had forcibly enrolled her in Group II. In October 1945, the Municipal Court granted her civic rights, but in November the Criminal Court in Gdańsk overturned this decision on the grounds that: “deportation to Germany for compulsory labour would not have been a danger for the defendant justifying the signing of the list, and she could have found work anywhere. (...) She should be punished and condemned.” The prosecutor at the Criminal Court in Gdańsk moved for the “rejection of rehabilitation, indefinite internment in a camp, compulsory labour, loss of civic and personal rights, and confiscation of property<sup>698</sup>.” Her appeal was not heard until April 1946 and resulted in the original verdict being upheld. Nonetheless, one year lapsed from the submission of the appeal to the final restoration of civic rights. Edyta Mania from the village of Szprudowo in Tczew county found herself in an even worse situation, as she had to wait three long years to obtain rehabilitation. It seems, although the documents do not state this directly, that the reason why rehabilitation was withheld in this case was that the state had taken over a 93-hectare plot in which several families from beyond the Bug River had in the meantime been accommodated. Not until two years later did the Special Court in Gdańsk prepare an indictment, and the criminal hearing against Mania was held in September 1947. Finally, the case came before the District Court in Gdańsk, which quashed the indictment on the basis of the law of 28 June 1946.

In November 1946, the Ethnic Section of the Voivodship Office held two conferences on the powers of the criminal courts, attended by Special Court prosecutor Stanisław Stachurski<sup>699</sup>. These courts also prepared indictments against persons who had already been positively vetted. For example, a false appeal against the vetting of Małgorzata Szulc by Władysław Blus, secretary at the Special Court in Gdansk, resulted in an eight-month prison sentence for her, no doubt due to the abuse of authority prevalent at that time, for Blus had moved into Szulc’s empty apartment<sup>700</sup>.

The Special Criminal Courts also organised field hearings to commence criminal proceedings against persons accused of treason against the Polish nation.

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698 AIPN Gd, *Akta rehabilitacyjne*, 7/1, p. 31.

699 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Sprawozdanie z działalności Oddziału Narodowościowego*, XI 1946, p. 164. For fragments of memoirs about the activity of Stachurski, see: M. Walicka, *op. cit.*, pp. 61–65.

700 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/363, WKW, *Pismo do Sądu Okręgowego w Gdańsku*, 13 VII 1946, p. 91.

In these cases, the proceedings were held on the basis of the PKWN decree *On justice against Fascist-Nazi criminals* of August 1944. For example, in Kartuzy in September 1945, five cases against traitors to the Polish nation were heard. Two death sentences were handed down, and two other people received prison terms of three to ten years<sup>701</sup>.

People who had already been rehabilitated or vetted sat in prisons all over Poland, e.g. in the prison in Sztum, where 18 vetted and 23 unvetted indigenous Poles accused of collaboration with the Germans were held. An inspection of this prison in June 1946 by Mirosław Dybowski, mentioned earlier, revealed that most of the charges against these persons were trumped up by officials eager to take over their property. The inspection also revealed that these people had been mistreated by the prison and security services<sup>702</sup>.

Dybowski intervened many times in matters concerning the situation of the indigenous population. This time as well, in view of the Gdańsk Criminal Court session scheduled for 12 July 1946, the Voivodship Rehabilitation Board requested that Dybowski, as an expert on ethnic issues, should take part in the work of the criminal courts to judge cases of people of Polish origin who had either already been vetted or were due to be vetted, and also asked that the bench of judges be composed of persons acquainted with the specifics of the local population. But the Criminal Court rejected this request, saying that the presence of such an expert was unnecessary because punishment for crimes judged on the basis of the August decree were handed down regardless of the defendant's nationality<sup>703</sup>.

By November 1945, the prosecutor's office of the Criminal Court in Gdańsk received almost 600 cases judged on the basis of the August decree<sup>704</sup>. During two years of activity, these special courts judged a total of 4,593 cases all over Poland, imposing 631 death sentences, 306 prison terms of more than ten years, and 1,534 prison terms of less than ten years<sup>705</sup>.

Kashubian society expressed its public opinion about the composition of the bench of judges in rehabilitation cases. In *Zrzesz Kaszëbsko* in February 1946, the

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701 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/81, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Kartuzach za lata 1945–1951*, IX 1945, p. 14.

702 M. Hejger, *op. cit.*, pp. 144–145.

703 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, *Pismo do prezesa SSK w Gdańsku*, 2 VII 1946, p. 425; *Pismo przewodniczącego SSK w Gdańsku do WKW*, 9 VII 1946, p. 445.

704 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/62, *Sprawozdanie dot. stanu bezpieczeństwa na terenie województwa gdańskiego*, I 1946, p. 17

705 E. Dymitrów, *Niemcy...*, p. 234.

author of an article entitled 'Improper Conduct', Brunon Richert, wrote that the inhabitants of Puck complained that the bench of judges in the Municipal Court did not include a single representative of the local community. "Yet judges should be cognisant of the circumstances that prevailed in this area during the occupation. Among the local Kashubians, are there no forthright Poles and people qualified to serve as judges?" Richert asked. There were other problems with the benches of judges, e.g. some of them were the subject of criminal investigations and had an alcohol dependency<sup>706</sup>.

There were also other complaints about the court trials. In Kartuzy county, members of political parties claimed that the Municipal Court there helped people undergoing rehabilitation by telling them what to say during their court hearings<sup>707</sup>. In Stargard county in June 1946 as well, the local authorities called for a review of rehabilitation cases because as many as 90 % had ended positively. This result was deemed dangerous and cast the effectiveness of the judicial process into doubt. Verdicts were believed not to be based on the witness testimony, therefore greater activity by the security apparatus was called for<sup>708</sup>. This intervention clearly influenced the work of the Municipal Court. By August 1946, 1,135 applications for rehabilitation had been submitted, but only 30 had been approved<sup>709</sup>.

The situation was similar in Pomerania voivodship. In the county of Toruń, due to the low intelligence of judges, 75 % of positive rehabilitation cases involved *Volksdeutsche*. This caused negative social reactions. Therefore, it was demanded that they be punished merely for having been enrolled in Group II of the *Volksliste*<sup>710</sup>.

Suspicion of *Volksdeutsche*, but also of *Eingedeutsche*, and their participation in public life were frequently expressed in the columns of the *Dziennik Bałtycki*. Here there was a lively debate involving not only journalists, but also Gdańsk

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706 Cf.: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/363, WKW, *Pismo do Sądu Okręgowego w Słupsku*, 22 VII 1946, p. 120.

707 AP Gd, KP PPR w Kartuzach, 2600/6, *Protokoły i sprawozdania Międzypartyjnej Komisji Porozumiewawczej Stronnictw Politycznych w Kartuzach*, 27 VI 1945, p. 18.

708 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/86, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjna SP w Stargardzie Gdański za lata 1945–1951*, XI 1945, p. 51.

709 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/86, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjna SP w Stargardzie Gdański za lata 1945–1951*, za VIII 1945, p. 71.

710 *Protokół z zebrania naczelników urzędów powiatu toruńskiego poświęconego doborowi ławników uczestniczących w procesach rehabilitacyjnych z 6 listopada 1947 r. [in:] Niemcy w Polsce 1945–1950...*, p. 181.

officials, lawyers and readers. In an article called *Wniemczenie (Eindeutschung)*, Zofia Zelska-Mrozowicka wrote: "People are keenly knocking on the doors of and offering their services to all parties and 'respectable' organisations primarily to obtain pioneering jobs in the new territories, anything to get away from one's hitherto environment. Fortunately, the Rehabilitation Board will soon commence work. It will identify any Volksdeutsche, whether hiding in a mousehole or occupying a senior position<sup>711</sup>." As we know, it is the municipal courts that dealt with the rehabilitation of persons in Group II of the *Volksliste*, and not, as the author said, the Rehabilitation Boards. Moreover, she went too far in her superficial and authoritative tone, simplifying the question of deviation from nationality during the war. This article, together with others that played on the anti-German sentiments of most Poles in order to maintain a climate of hostility, has gone down as a primitive anti-German current of post-war historical writings.

The fee charged by a court for accepting an application was 600 zlotys, 500 as a registration fee and 100 for publishing the announcement. The final fee was set by the court at its discretion, but ranged from 100 to several thousand zlotys. In the event of partial rehabilitation under the terms of the act, the court not only suspended civic or personal rights, or confiscated the whole or part of a property, but it also imposed fines. All of these forms of repression could be applied simultaneously. For example, restricted rehabilitation was granted to Paweł Lewandowski of Tczew, who in October 1945 was deprived of his civic and personal rights and fined 10,000 zlotys. The court handed down this sentence even though it recognised that the defendant had been enrolled in Group II of the German National List against his will. Moreover, in its justification the court mentioned acts by which Lewandowski, suffering from serious lung disease, had demonstrated his Polishness during the war. Nevertheless, a stronger argument for the judge was the fact that he had enjoyed material benefits from inclusion on the *Volksliste*, which was censured in the law<sup>712</sup>. In his appeal to President Bolesław Bierut, the last hope for those who had been denied rehabilitation, Lewandowski, as a husband and father of three children, complained: "due to the suspension of my civic and personal rights, I cannot find employment (...) I also feel a social outcast among my friends and colleagues<sup>713</sup>."

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711 *Wniemczenie (Eindeutschung)*, *Dziennik Bałtycki*, 1945, No. 18, p. 3.

712 AIPN Gd, *Akta rehabilitacyjne*, 20/5, p. 14.

713 AIPN Gd, *Akta rehabilitacyjne*, 20/4, p.52.

Indeed, under the terms of the rehabilitation law, a municipal court considered: "(...) the benefits which [the applicant] had enjoyed due to his inclusion in the DVL<sup>714</sup>." Presenting the problem in this manner opened up various possible interpretations. Avoiding Nazi persecution (including death) by enrolling on the *Volksliste* could be considered cowardice that gave rise to certain advantages. Enrolment on the *Volksliste* did not guarantee immunity from German persecution. The rehabilitation files include the documents of people who ended up at the concentration camp in Stutthof<sup>715</sup>.

Returning to the question of the fees for rehabilitation, this should be regarded as the third condition for rehabilitation, after signing the *Declaration of loyalty* and demonstrating a proper attitude in the face of the German occupiers. For if the initial registration fee was not paid, the application for rehabilitation was rejected or put on hold. The amount of the fees often prevented people from applying<sup>716</sup>. These sums were invariably beyond the financial means of the people wishing to be rehabilitated. No discounts seem to have been granted. It is certain that in some cases the officials were corrupt, especially because, as mentioned above, the bench of judges occasionally included people against whom criminal proceedings were in progress. A report by the Office of Information and Propaganda in Puck in July 1945 said: "Obnoxious but rich elements are becoming Poles, but the poor cannot afford this<sup>717</sup>."

A similar problem occurred during administrative rehabilitation. For example, the Municipal People's Council set the following charges for permanent rehabilitation certificates: 250 zlotys for working people, 500 zlotys for those with uncertain sources of income, and 1,000 zlotys for freelance employees and property owners<sup>718</sup>. High charges, often preventing the filing of rehabilitation applications, were also charged by Gdańsk City Council<sup>719</sup>. The Voivodship Rehabilitation Board considered these charges too high and asked the Voivodship People's Council to amend the resolution which set forth the charges for permanent

714 Journal of Laws 7 May 1945, art. 16.

715 AIPN Gd, *Akta rehabilitacyjne*, 17/1, p. 31.

716 AAN, MZO, 196/1068, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne wojewody gdańskiego, Sprawozdanie z dochodzenia w sprawach narodowościowych województwa gdańskiego oraz artykułu z 5 V 1946 r. w „Zrzesz Kaszëbsko”*, 5 II 1946, k; 86; *Niewłaściwe postępowanie* [in:] „Zrzesz Kaszëbsko”, 1946, No. 16, p. 3.

717 C. Obrach-Prondzyński, *op.cit.*, p. 166.

718 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Pismo do Miejskiej Rady Narodowej (MRN) Gdyni*, 9 IV 1946, p. 52.

719 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/363, WKW, *Pismo do ZM w Gdańsku*, 10 IX 1946 r., p. 317.



rehabilitation certificates<sup>720</sup>. Let us remember that the average monthly salary for a worker was about 500 zlotys.

To accelerate the processes of rehabilitation and vetting, the state and voivodship authorities relaxed the rules governing the fees for rehabilitation. For example, the City Council of Gdynia exempted from these charges persons who could prove that they could not afford them<sup>721</sup>. However, the charges were not as high as this everywhere, so they did not encumber the proceedings. From 24 August 1945, the Rehabilitation Board in Starogard district charged 10 zlotys for the *Declaration of loyalty* and the rehabilitation certificate. No handling charges were levied on persons who attained rehabilitation by 23 August. By the end of August that year, the district treasury had received 25,760 zlotys in revenues from rehabilitation<sup>722</sup>.

In chapter I we discussed how Nazi officials had entered people on the German National List without their knowledge and consent, thus placing them in a *fait accompli*. We should note that if the above situation could be proved to the Gdańsk authorities after 1945, the rehabilitation procedure was waived. For example, Alfons Majewski, who was put into Group II in just such a way, was exempt from judicial rehabilitation as a citizen of the Free City of Danzig, but was obliged to go through ethnic vetting<sup>723</sup>.

The inability of Poland's post-war authorities to pursue an effective policy regarding the Polish indigenous population can be illustrated by the fact that rehabilitated and vetted people were detained in camps intended for the German population<sup>724</sup>. Those interned in labour camps all over Poland included many indigenous Poles from Gdańsk voivodship who had failed to obtain Polish citizenship in time or whose rehabilitation had been conducted improperly. The Ethnic Department in Gdańsk frequently intervened to secure the release of these people in various places of detention, including Narwik, Malbork, Potulice, Grudziądz, Miłecin near Włocławek, Mogilna, Torun Puławy, Szczecin, and Złotów<sup>725</sup>.

720 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Protokół z posiedzenia*, 19 IV 1946, p. 90; AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do ZM w Gdyni*, 6, 17 VI 1946, pp. 191 and 268.

721 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Pismo do SP w Łęborku*, 10 V 1946, p. 52.

722 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, *Pismo SP Starogardzkiego do WSP*, 12 IX 1945, pp. 154–155.

723 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/363, WKW, *Pismo do SP w Tczewie*, 30 VII 1946, p. 195.

724 G. Strauchold, *Autochtoni polscy...*, p. 125.

725 See: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do prokuratury SSK w Toruniu*, VI 1946, pp. 334, 340, 344, and 370; 1164/363, WKW, *Pismo do prokuratury SSK w Gdańsku*, 9 VII 1946, p. 47; *Pismo do prokuratury SSK w Toruniu*, 9, 11 and 30 VII 1946, pp. 55, 76, and 201; *Pismo do G. Zawadzkiego*, 23 VII 1946, p. 135. The State Archives in Bydgoszcz

One of the tasks of the Gdańsk Rehabilitation Board was to arrange the release of Poles from labour camps who had been unlawfully interned there as Germans. For example, in January 1946 Jan Wolf applied for the release of his son from the camp in Potulice where he had been taken by the Soviet army when it captured Gdańsk. Even though the son swore that he was Polish, he was arrested because he had a pre-war Danzig passport. He was then sent to compulsory work, and then to the labour camp in Grudziądz, where he was told that there were never any Poles in Gdańsk and that there are still none. Upon arrival in Potulice, he no longer dared declare that he was Polish. The Wolf family had belonged to the Polish community in Danzig and acted for the benefit of Poles in various associations, which were certified by, among others, Zygmunt Moczyński, Leon Budziński and members of the Rehabilitation Board in Sopot, Klemens Badziąg and Wieloch<sup>726</sup>. However, Wolf junior was known to be still in the labour camp in Potulice in 1946<sup>727</sup>.

In the opinion of the Department of Prisons and Camps of the Ministry of Public Security, it is the local authorities that halted the rehabilitation of persons whom their officials had sent to the camps<sup>728</sup>. Therefore, the ministry ordered the voivode to accept, until 31 October 1945, *Declarations of loyalty* from people in camps and prisons who were eligible for rehabilitation and vetting<sup>729</sup>. Prison governors and camp commandants were told to draw up lists of people eligible to apply for the return of their civic rights. On this basis, in May 1946 the Voivodship Rehabilitation Board in Gdańsk asked the prosecutor at the Special Criminal Court in Torun to arrange the release of persons eligible for rehabilitation, clear them of charges, and enable them to sign the *Declaration of loyalty*<sup>730</sup>.

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also preserve records of applications for the release of Poles who had been enrolled in the *Volkliste*. See: AP Bd, UWP, 851/725, *Podania o zwolnienia internowanych Polaków posiadających III grupę przez Armię Czerwoną zamieszkałych w Fordonie*; AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Sprawozdanie Oddziału Narodowościowego przy WSP UWG, II 1946, p. 6*; 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo wojewody gdańskiego do prokuratora SSK w Toruniu, 27 V 1946 r.*, p. 152.

726 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Prośba o zwolnienie Jana Wolfa z obozu pracy w Potulicach*, 21 I 1946, p. 59.

727 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo prokuratury SSK w Toruniu*, 17 VI 1946, p. 276.

728 AAN, MAP, 199/766, *Pismo MBP do MAP w sprawie autochtonów*, 8, 17 IX 1945, pp. 62–63.

729 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/358, *kólnik Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego* (hereinafter MBP), 17 September 1945, p. 129.

730 APG, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo wojewody gdańskiego do prokuratora SSK w Toruniu*, 27 V 1946, p. 152.

In September 1946, the Board's delegate, Brunon Miąskowski, in consultation with Torun Criminal Court prosecutor Malinowski, vetted the indigenous Poles from Gdańsk held in the camp in Potulice.

Indigenous Poles from Gdańsk voivodship were also held in other parts of Poland, where the local authorities intervened on their behalf. In spring 1947, the Voivodship Socio-Political Department sent a delegation to Silesia-Dąbrowa voivodship to discuss the rehabilitation and vetting of Kashubians and people from the Warmia and Mazury regions. As we know, rehabilitation in Silesia was also a particularly important issue. On 28 April 1947, the abovementioned Brunon Miąskowski spoke to the prosecutor of the District Court of Katowice about people from Gdańsk voivodship interned in the camp at Jaworzno. They agreed that the cases of these people would be referred to the Voivodship Rehabilitation Board and the prosecutor of the Gdańsk Criminal Court for consideration. Miąskowski also met with the director of the Qualification-Control Commission in Katowice, called Jabłoński. Its tasks included interrogating prisoners and, if appropriate, applying to the Ministry of Public Security for their release. An exchange of prisoners eligible for rehabilitation was agreed upon, for Silesians accused of forsaking Polish nationality were also held in Gdańsk voivodship.

Miąskowski also went to Krakow, where he had a meeting at the Voivodship Office of Public Security. Here we encounter a different attitude towards the problem of the *Volksliste* and rehabilitation, no doubt because of the different ethnic policy pursued by the Nazis in the General Government. In Krakow, people did not understand the specific nature of the lands that had been annexed to the Third Reich and earmarked for complete Germanisation. After 1945, the public security authorities all over Poland had their own way of treating the indigenous population, especially vetted persons, in a manner different from the official stance of the state authorities. They played a major role in rehabilitation and vetting procedures, but often exerted a destructive impact resulting in confusion, e.g. persons already vetted were still held in camps and the granting of civic rights was made conditional upon signing a cooperation agreement with the security apparatus<sup>731</sup>. During their talk with a delegate from Gdańsk, the Krakow officials claimed that the vetting covered too many people and the Polish authorities should disqualify from Polish citizenship any indigenous Pole who had served in the German army<sup>732</sup>.

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731 Report by Erwin Kartzewski, December 2006, in the author's possession.

732 Cf.: Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz polskich wobec ludności rodzimej...*, pp. 42–43.

Important are the actions taken regarding the fortunes of the children of people held in camps. At a conference on 31 August 1945, the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of Labour and Social Care agreed that the children of Poles interned by the Soviet army immediately after the war and the children of those entitled to rehabilitation should not be resettled<sup>733</sup>.

The rehabilitation (vetting) of Poles also took place abroad, mainly in Germany and Norway<sup>734</sup>. In those countries, there were categories of foreigners that included many Poles: German and Austrian *Wehrmacht* soldiers, prisoners of war, and forced and voluntary workers of the Todt Organisation<sup>735</sup>. Determining nationality was the task of the allied expeditionary corps (ALFN). For example, a delegation of the Polish Mission for Repatriation (PMR), based in Stockholm, visited Oslo in October 1945. The PMR's work covered Denmark and Norway. In the presence of an allied officer and an interpreter, the vetting in Norway was carried out by Lieut.-Col. J. Halwic and Sub-Lieut. Jodłowski. The questions put to the Poles in camps were mainly about their desire to return to Poland. Later, during private interviews, they were asked about their inclusion on the *Volksliste* and membership of German organisations, why they wanted to return to Poland, whether they had belonged to any underground organisations or the Norwegian resistance, and whether they had stayed in concentration or prisoner-of-war camps.

Pursuant to an instruction from the Chief Plenipotentiary for Repatriation, Władysław Wolski, those in Groups I and II of the *Volksliste*, and those who had been included on the list outside the territories annexed to the Reich, members

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733 AAN, MAP, 199/23, repatriation of Germans and POWs to Germany. The work of German clergymen in Upper Silesia. The rehabilitation of persons included in the *Volksliste*. Protocols, press cuttings and correspondence, *Pismo w sprawie wysłania do Niemiec dzieci niemieckich*, 24 IX 1945, p. 5.

734 Due to the particular conditions in which this procedure was conducted abroad (not all the regulations applicable in Poland were applied outside the country), it is difficult to describe it as vetting or rehabilitation. Interned in the camps were both people subject to rehabilitation and included on the DVL, as well as German citizens of Polish origin who were obliged to undergo vetting. Considering the conditions in camp and the 'vetting haste' dictated by the schedules of departing transports, it seems justified in this case to use both of these terms interchangeably.

735 The Todt Organisation (Organisation Todt) was the largest Nazi construction organisation of a paramilitary nature. During the war, it acted at the side of the *Wehrmacht* in building work (e.g. the construction and repair of roads and bridges) in all the territories occupied by the Germans. E. Denkiewicz-Szczepaniak, *Polska siła robocza w Organizacji Todta w Norwegii i Finlandii w latach 1941–1945*, Toruń 1999, p. 3.

of German political organisations, and persons ill-disposed towards the new Polish reality were denied entitlement to return to Poland<sup>736</sup>. Out of 16,178 persons eligible for vetting and up to 27 November 1945, 11,770 were granted permission to come to Poland. Some 2,008 of the Poles in Germany chose to remain there. Most of those in Groups III and IV chose to return to Poland, probably out of fear that they would be put away in camps for German prisoners<sup>737</sup>.

At the beginning of 1946, over 10,000 soldiers from General Anders' Second Corps arrived in Poland. Some 70 % of them had been included in Group III (rarely Group IV) of the *Volksliste* and had consequently been conscripted into the *Wehrmacht*, from which they transferred to the Polish army. Michał Rola-Żymierski, minister of national defence, begged the ministers of the regained territories, public administration and public security to treat the returning soldiers leniently. Among other things, he asked that they receive help with their rehabilitation procedures, with the proviso that dubious cases be placed under the supervision of the security authorities<sup>738</sup>. Soldiers from other Polish army units in the West, including in England, also returned to Poland. However, those of them who had been enrolled in the *Volksliste* were discriminated against by the state authorities. For example, in Poznań voivodship the military authorities confiscated their documents, the population record offices treated them as foreigners, and the Civil Militia forced them to perform physical labour. It was stressed that the improper treatment of Polish soldiers returning to Poland was the result of an absence of instructions on this subject<sup>739</sup>.

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736 *Stanowisko wobec repatriacji volksdeutscheów ulegało stopniowej liberalizacji, zgodnie ze zmianami ustawodawstwa, będącego prawną wykładnią polityki państwa w tej dziedzinie*. P. Kersten, *Kształtowanie...*, pp. 90–91.

737 E. Denkiewicz-Szczepaniak, *Polska siła...*, pp. 247–276.

738 AAN, MAP, 199/766, *Pismo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej do W. Kiernika, ministra Administracji Publicznej*, 9 I 1945, pp. 69–70. Cf.: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/82, *Sprawozdania SP w Kościerzynie za lata 1945–1950*, XII 1945, p. 23.

739 AAN, MAP, 199/769, *rehabilitation of people included on the Volksliste, Pismo UWG w Poznaniu do Departamentu Politycznego MAP*, 11 IV 1946, pp. 53–54. It happened that even after the war, Polish soldiers were assigned to this group, this time by the Polish authorities. That was the distinction accorded to the pre-war Polish activist Antoni Belling. A citizen of the Free City of Danzig before 1939, in December 1945 he was registered by the Gdańsk authorities as a Pole who had accepted inclusion in Group III of the DVL, AP Gd, UWG, 1164/364, WKW, *Pismo WSP do Rejonowej Komendy Uzupelnień*, 1 II 1946, p. 114.

### 3.5 Legal Regulations – Theory and Practice

As early as August 1945, the justification for the rehabilitation procedures set forth in the May law was questioned. The Western Institute in Poznan criticised the fact that when granting full civic rights, the authorities took into account the Nazi policy of dividing people into categories according to their degree of Germanisation. Karol M. Pospieszalski indicated the ethnic immaturity among the population of Silesia and Pomerania which, apart from coercion, influenced the success of this Germanisation<sup>740</sup>. Moreover, there was a discrepancy between the principles of direct Germanisation applied during the war and the practice of the occupying authorities, who occasionally placed a person in a higher category of the *Volksliste* without their knowledge, on account of their profession or gender.

The Ministry of Public Administration explained: “People compulsorily entered on the list were not only those who declared themselves Germans, but also those of German blood who had become Polish long ago and admitted to being Polish, as well as those who had never had anything in common with Germany, and they were not always assigned to the appropriate group (...)”<sup>741</sup>. As mentioned above, one report described this as a “comedy of categorisation”.

The law *On the exclusion of hostile elements from Polish society* also failed to regulate what to do with people whose applications for inclusion on the *Volksliste* had been rejected or who had been deleted from it. The issues which the legislators had failed to address included registration in the *Volksliste* by order of the Polish underground and a clarification of the areas where compulsory registration on the list prevailed but was not always executed. There were also doubts about people east of the ‘Curzon line’ who had declared German nationality. They were subject to Germanisation pursuant to a decree of 4 November 1944 by the Polish Committee for National Liberation. However, Poles included on the *Volksliste* in foreign countries occupied by the Third Reich were supposed to be subject to the law of 6 May 1945. In the way, this May law glossed over citizens of the former Free City of Danzig who were Polish nationals and were included on the *Volksliste*, and related only to Polish citizens who had enrolled themselves in Danzig or in other territories annexed to the Third Reich. Apart from their

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740 AAN, Ministry of Justice, 199/5556, *Opracowanie Instytutu Zachodniego w Poznaniu*, 11 VIII 1945, p. 26. See: IZ, dop. V-58; L. Olejnik, *Zdrójcy ...*, p. 120.

741 AAN, MAP, 199/769, rehabilitation of persons on the national list, *Pismo Departamentu Politycznego do Wydziału Narodowościowego MAP*, 27 V 1946, p. 40.

Polish national distinction during the war, these persons also had to prove their citizenship of Danzig<sup>742</sup>.

Holders of *Ausweis* who had been deported to the east by the Soviets and who were eligible for administrative rehabilitation occasionally had trouble recovering their full Polish rights on returning to Poland, because the deadline for submitting the *Declaration of loyalty* had expired. The political reality at the time did not allow judgment for Soviet atrocities against the Polish nation, whilst the May 1945 directive of the Ministry of Public Administration allowed the subsequent rehabilitation of people who had been deported by the Germans. However, this provision was expanded to include people deported by the Soviet authorities<sup>743</sup>.

The abovementioned Silesian Institute presented a detailed analysis of the socio-political context of the rehabilitation laws in a report issued in February 1946 entitled *Preliminary Observations by the Socio-Graphic Committee of the Silesian Institute*<sup>744</sup>. It indicated three elements of the legal context of the post-war situation created by the *Volksliste*: the need to eliminate the formal effects of inclusion on that list, the need to identify and punish certain persons in connection with this list, and the need for a fresh ethnic selection.

The rehabilitation laws distinguished between the ‘registration’ of persons in the list and their ‘conduct’. The method of applying these criteria to people obliged for rehabilitation was criminal proceedings. Consequently, everyone on the *Volksliste*, especially in former territories annexed to the Third Reich (despite the legislators’ recognition of ‘general coercion’) became a criminal suspect by default. In this way, the intention of the lawmakers to eliminate hostile elements and consolidate Polish nationhood was neutralised. Consequently, the Socio-Graphic Committee of the Silesian Institute called for an amendment to the law on the exclusion of hostile elements, suggesting that the concept of “conduct during the occupation in a manner not commensurate with Polish nationhood”

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742 AAN, MAP, 199/769, *Pismo UWG w Poznaniu do Departamentu Politycznego MAP*, 18 I 1946, p. 30, *Pismo Departamentu Politycznego do Wydziału Narodowościowego MAP*, 27 V 1946, p. 42, *Pismo Departamentu Politycznego MAP do UWG w Poznaniu*, 4 VI 1946, p. 28, *Okólnik Ministerstwa Sprawiedliwości w sprawie stosowania dekretu PKWN z 4 XI 1944 r. i ustawy z 6 V 1945 r. do obywateli polskich, którzy zagranicą wpisani zostali na niemiecką listę narodową*, pp. 46–47.

743 AAN, MAP, 199/768, Polish Western Union, *Pismo MAP do wojewody łódzkiego*, 21 III 1946, p. 74; L. Olejnik, *Zdraycy ...*, p. 126.

744 AAN, MAP, 199/766, *Rehabilitation of persons on the German national list*, (undated), p. 75–81.

be changed to “state of higher necessity”, intended to serve as a standard of interpretation. The point, therefore, was to prevent unfounded accusations, but without allowing genuine crimes to be glossed over. Another suggestion was that judicial rehabilitation be abandoned in favour of administrative rehabilitation for persons in Group II of the *Volksliste*, with particular regard to their personal details, place of work, and residence during the occupation, as well as their work in political organisations. Significantly, one of the most important (and most difficult) tasks in the sphere of legislation and administrative policy was the inclusion of the indigenous population in the mainstream Polish socio-national life not through radical measures, but through long-term, coordinated and premeditated activity<sup>745</sup>. The state authorities tried to take the above postulates into account in their work on amendments to the laws on rehabilitation.

### 3.6 The Beginnings of Ethnic Vetting

Parallel with the rehabilitation in Gdańsk voivodship was ethnic vetting. This involved an official investigation into attitudes towards Poland nationhood during the occupation and before 1939, in order to separate the Polish population from the German population earmarked for resettlement. The legal regulations governing vetting were discussed in the previous chapter, so here we shall merely note that not until 6 April 1946, nearly one year after the war’s end, did the Ministry of the Regained Territories, created in November 1945, issue a decree entitled *On the manner of determining the Polishness of persons residing on the Regained Territories*<sup>746</sup>. Until then, the only benchmark for the local authorities concerning vetting had been an instruction of 20 June 1945 from the Ministry of Public Administration, setting forth the rules for issuing provisional certificates of Polish nationality valid for three months. These were intended for those who had lived on Poland’s regained territories on 31 August 1939, were Polish nationals, were not members of the NSDAP, and had not been discriminated against on the basis of the decree of 31 August 1944 *On punishment for fascist-Hitlerite criminals*, and who had submitted the written *Declaration of loyalty to the Polish nation*.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Public Administration empowered the voivode of Gdańsk – until such time as the matter was regulated in law – to issue certificates of nationality also to those who had been persecuted by the Nazis for their

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745 Cf.: L. Bądkowski, *Pomorska myśl polityczna*, Gdynia 1990., pp. 59–60.

746 Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland, 1946, No. 4, Item 26.



nationality or for being married to someone possessing the nationality of a persecuted country<sup>747</sup>.

On the basis of these guidelines, on 22 June 1945 the voivode of Gdańsk issued a directive marking the commencement of vetting in the voivodship. Voivode Mieczysław Okęcki ordered that the directive be “promptly displayed in visible places, especially in all public offices under the authority of mayors and chief executives, on the buildings of the County People’s Councils, and in the Municipal Courts.” He instructed the heads of local government authorities to appoint Rehabilitation Boards, to be composed of: “affirmed Poles residing in that area and cognisant of local conditions who, with their signatures, will be personally liable for the Polishness of the applicant.”

As with rehabilitation, one of the reasons for the rapid commencement of vetting was the need to prevent persons of Polish origin being deported from the voivodship together with Germans<sup>748</sup>.

The first to begin vetting on Polish territory was Silesian voivode Aleksander Zawadzki, who on 22 March 1945 issued an order to local government chiefs to commence the procedure<sup>749</sup>. In Warmia and Mazury, the preliminary stage of vetting was called registration, introduced on 24 April 1945. Here, the criteria that determined Polishness were a knowledge of Polish, a Polish-sounding name and the person’s biography. Ethnic vetting was regarded as an urgent issue, essential to state interests<sup>750</sup>.

Ethnic vetting was an exceedingly important but difficult task, which the voivodship authorities realised. At one meeting, voivode Stanisław Zrałek said: “Vetting is of huge importance and should be handled capably. This is an issue which is difficult to resolve<sup>751</sup>.”

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747 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, Rehabilitation issues, *Instrukcja MAP*, 20 VI 1945, p. 12.

748 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, rehabilitation issues, *Pismo dyrektora Departamentu Politycznego MAP, A. Grabowskiego do wojewody gdańskiego*, 10 VII 1945, pp. 11 and 13.

749 J. Misztal, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa na Śląsku...*; *Ibid.*, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa...*, p. 192; G. Strauchold, *Autochtoni polscy...*, p. 50; Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz polskich wobec ludności rodzimej...*, p. 33.

750 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, Rehabilitation issues, *Pismo PO na Okręg Mazurski Jakuba Prawina do starostów i prezydentów miast w Okręgu Mazurskim*, 24 IV 1945, k; p. 38; L. Belzyt, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

751 AIPN Gd, 0054/8, *Sprawozdanie ze zjazdu starostów powiatowych, komendantów powiatowych MO i kierowników UBP*, 19 V 1946, p. 11.

A part of the indigenous population felt that they fully belonged to the Polish nation, but others shunned it as a result of long exposure to Germanisation. Others still, despite their Polish origins, felt no links with Poland at all, but hoped that the pre-war Polish-German order would be reinstated one day. In addition, there was another characteristic typical of regional ethnic minorities and applicable especially to Kashubians, namely a reluctance to declare oneself either Polish or German “which strengthened a feeling of ‘belonging to a particular place’ as the only fixed and unalterable element of reality<sup>752</sup>.” A frequent reason for undergoing vetting was to maintain contact with the local community. A knowledge of two languages, Polish and German, facilitated people who were unresolved.

We touch upon an issue of national consciousness among the post-war indigenous population which, regarding the Kashubian population and Poles in Gdansk, can be described in the form of a certain continuum according to a model formulated by Andrzej Sakson towards the Masurian population: Pole–Polish Kashubian (Polish Gdańsk resident)–Kashubian (Gdańsk resident)–German Kashubian (German Gdańsk resident)–German<sup>753</sup>. Following on from this, the indigenous population of the new counties of Gdańsk voivodship, and of the Regained Territories in general, can be divided into three categories: conscious Poles, persons indifferent to nationality, and persons choosing to be German<sup>754</sup>. We should note that it was exceedingly difficult to identify the members of these groups. For many people, vetting belonged to the social-psychological dimension, rather than the political-national dimension.

Realising this, Okęcki also recommended the lenient treatment of applicants: “One should apply a liberal and understanding attitude where one is dealing with cases of certain Polish origin and the likelihood that with the passage of time, the applicant will become an honest citizen of the Polish State.” The basic criterion for determining a person’s Polish loyalty was a lack of membership of the NSDAP and attitudes towards the Polish nation during the occupation<sup>755</sup>.

752 J. Schodzińska, *op. cit.*, p. 36. CVf: M. Latoszek, *Pomorze...*, p. 31.

753 Cf.: A. Sakson, *Mazury – społeczność pogranicza*, Poznań 1990, p. 283; Tenże, *Ludność rodzima Warmii i Mazur po 1945 roku – liczebność i kondycja* [in] *Wysiedlać czy repolonizować? Dylematy polskiej polityki wobec Warmiaków i Mazurów po 1945 roku*, ed. T. Filipkowski, W. Gieszczyński, Olsztyn 2001, p. 37.

754 Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz polskich wobec ludności rodzimej...*, p. 32. Cf. H. Rybicki, *Powrót pogranicza...*, pp. 140–141; P. Małajczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

755 AP Gd, UWG, Rehabilitation issues, *Pismo do Zarządu Miejskiego w Elblągu*, 3 VIII 1945, p. 36.

Occasionally, the declaration form was completed in Polish and in German. It was used to check a person's knowledge of Polish, including that of immediate relatives, and identify membership of Polish and German organisations<sup>756</sup>.

On 15 October 1945, the voivode posted a reminder that vetted persons were entitled to seek the recovery of their properties, apartments and retail units through the courts and regain their public and state positions. However, the vetting did not proceed smoothly because some local officials disapproved of this liberal trend and the whole procedure was conducted too hastily. The Gdańsk security authorities refused to honour provisional rehabilitation certificates and continued to discriminate against those who had already been vetted<sup>757</sup>. As we have seen, this state of affairs lasted many months after the end of the war. In April 1946, the authorities of Gdańsk reissued a notice whereby provisional certificates issued for three months were henceforth valid indefinitely until such time as the central authorities issued fresh regulations<sup>758</sup>.

The intention of the Gdańsk authorities was to restore the local population's trust in the local authorities<sup>759</sup>. They realised that pre-war Polish activists were able to play a major role in this. It is not without reason that militia reports described the indigenous population of Gdańsk as the most constructive and industrious residents of the city who were eager to demonstrate their Polishness through their work<sup>760</sup>.

These activists were useful not only for ethnic vetting, but also for easing the tensions between groups, although only towards the creation of the model of society that was binding in Poland: a uniform monolith where new arrivals from the depths of Poland played a subordinate role. We can say that until indigenous Gdańsk activists exceeded their authority, they were seen as representatives of

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756 *Zarządzenie Pełnomocnika Rządu RP na Obwód Łębork w sprawie rejestracji obywateli Rzeszy Niemieckiej pochodzenia kaszubskiego zamieszkujących powiat łęborski z 5 lipca 1945 r.* [in:] *Niemcy w Polsce 1945–1950...*, p. 60.

757 See: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do Komisji Specjalnej do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem gospodarczym*, V 1946, p. 105, *Pismo do Wojewódzkiej Prokuratury Rejonowej w Gdańsku*, 21 V 1946., p. 110–112; *Pismo do prokuratury SSK w Gdańsku*, 31 V 1946 , p. 160.

758 AP Gd, MRN-ZM, 1165/1095, Directives on the subject of vetting, *Pismo UWG do starostów powiatowych i prezydentów miast*, 16 IV 1946, p. 76.

759 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/358, the affairs of the indigenous population and its vetting, *Tajna instrukcja wojewody A. Gadomskiego*, XI 1945, p. 237.

760 AIPN Gd, 05/54, vol. XII, *Sprawozdanie z pracy polityczno-wychowawczej MO i sytuacji politycznej*, 5 XII 1946, p. 413.

the post-war authorities towards the indigenous Polish population, albeit only to a certain extent in line with their integration with the local population and their distinction from settlers who, as we know, dominated the society of Gdańsk that was taking shape. Thus, as soon as the community of pre-war Gdańsk citizens resolved to expand their activity to include caring for people who had been deprived of their properties, the voivodship authorities initially said no. This tension was revealed when the Vetting-Rehabilitation Board for Gdańsk Poles, headed by Kazimierz Banaś-Purwin, was appointed to Gdansk city council.

The rules for the work of the Board described in detail the powers and duties of its members, who had been appointed on the basis of the vetting regulations in force. Their duties included: 1. Ensuring that signatories of the *Declaration of loyalty* were certainly Poles and that: “during the occupation, they had lived as a separate ethnic group regardless of their German nationality category”; 2. Determining ethnic attitudes before 1939; and 3. When reaching decisions, “to guide themselves solely by their conscience, knowledge and common sense without any external influences such as suggestions, acquaintanceships, relationships or bonds<sup>761</sup>”.

Meanwhile, correspondence with the Gdańsk Voivodship Office revealed a conflict between the Rehabilitation Board and voivode Mieczysław Okęcki, to the extent that the local authorities refused to recognise the Board for a while<sup>762</sup>. When Kazimierz Banaś-Purwin objected to the eviction of Gdańsk residents from their homes so that they could be occupied by settlers, the authorities condemned the Board as ‘self-appointed’.

However, the protests and postulates of the pre-war Polish community were recognised. From autumn 1945, the Gdańsk city fathers allowed pre-war Polish activists to deal with other issues of the indigenous population apart from nationality. A meeting of the voivodship authorities on 26 November 1945 granted the Rehabilitation Board the right to intervene in cases of discrimination against the indigenous population. Militia precincts were obliged to collaborate with the Boards in each action involving the indigenous population.

First, voivode Okęcki was petitioned to review the vetting operation in the district of Mierzeszyn because of numerous irregularities there<sup>763</sup>. Generally, the

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761 BPAN, Ms 5524, the internal affairs of the Vetting Board in Gdańsk, *Pismo P. Banasia-Purwina*, 30 IX 1945, p. 1. Cf.: AP Gd, MRN-ZMG, 1165/1101, *Regulamin pracy Komisji Weryfikacyjnej dla Spraw Rehabilitacji*, p. 22.

762 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/358, the affairs of the indigenous population and its vetting, *Pismo Kazimierza Banasia-Purwina do wojewody gdańskiego*, 28 XI 1945, p. 1.

763 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/358, the affairs of the indigenous population and its vetting, *Protokół z zebrania odbytego u wojewody M. Okęckiego*, 26 XI 1945, pp. 219–220.

county of Gdańsk was the scene of the most spectacular events in the voivodship involving vetting. In December 1945 in the village of Łęgowo, deputy village chief Władysław Woźniak burst into the offices of the Rehabilitation Board with a gun and wanted to shoot all of its members. Fortunately, he was stopped<sup>764</sup>. At another time, militiamen blocked the entrance to the building and demanded bribes<sup>765</sup>.

It is interesting that none other than Gdańsk county chief executive M. Klenowicz criticised the work of the Rehabilitation Board. He complained that it was exceeding its authority, and that pre-war Polish activists were stirring up animosity between the county's indigenous population and newcomers, thus artificially preserving the distinction of Gdańsk residents. However, he hailed the solution to the problem of re-Polonisation by relocating Germanised people in the centre of Poland for the sake of rapid assimilation. Klenowicz stressed the need to complete as quickly as possible the process of vetting which was merely complicating social relations<sup>766</sup>.

Kazimierz Banaś-Purwin also found that the county leaders were intent on seizing the property of indigenous Poles. The scale of this must have been great if Banaś-Purwin asked for the intervention of not only the voivode of Gdańsk, but also of Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, government plenipotentiary for the reconstruction of the coastal areas in 1945–1948. He called for the suspension of Klenowicz and for investigation against him, as well as the arrest of land commissar Bolesław Jelen<sup>767</sup>.

However, irregularities in vetting occurred not only in rural areas, mainly involving disputes regarding 'contentious farms'. In towns as well, vetted people encountered problems, e.g. at work, where they received lower pay or their rehabilitation certificates were not recognised, and fees were unlawfully charged to extend the validity of these certificates. For example, in Gdańsk a fee of 50 zlotys

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764 BPAN, Ms 5525, Vetting-Rehabilitation Board for Gdańsk Poles, *Pismo do wojewody gdańskiego M. Okęckiego oraz Delegata Rządu do Spraw Wybrzeża E. Kwiatkowskiego*, 6 XII 1945, p. 12. Cf.: E. Kwiatkowski, *Diariusz 1945–1947*, Gdańsk 1988, p. 144.

765 BPAN, Ms 5526, Letters to the Vetting Board, *Pismo P. Banasia-Purwina z 30 IX 1945 r.*, p. 1.

766 AP GD, 1164/358, the affairs of the indigenous population and its vetting, *Pismo SP w Gdańsku, M. Klenowicza, do wojewody gdańskiego*, 4 XII 1945, pp. 231–232.

767 BPAN, Ms 5525, Vetting-Rehabilitation Board for Gdańsk Poles, *Pismo do wojewody gdańskiego M. Okęckiego oraz Delegata Rządu do Spraw Wybrzeża E. Kwiatkowskiego*, 6 XII 1945, p. 1.

was charged, and Kazimierz Banaś-Purwin himself complained to the voivode of Gdańsk about this.

The statistics regarding the first stage of vetting are difficult to verify because the sources contradict each other. We must assume that the figures described below are estimates. In addition, after the war there were no figures on the number of people not yet vetted. Generally, the numerical status of the indigenous Polish population was blurred by deportations into the depths of the USSR and subsequent deportations beyond the Oder river together with the German population.

The monthly reports from Gdańsk voivodship have shown that the outcome of ethnic vetting in Gdańsk towards the end of 1945 corresponded to the number of Poles inhabiting the voivodship after the end of the war. In May 1945, there were 8,000 Poles and 150,000 Germans living in the city<sup>768</sup>. By August 1945, 10,300 people had applied for Polish civic rights, of whom 8,023 were granted these rights by the end of the year<sup>769</sup>. By October 1945, the Rehabilitation Board in Sopot had accepted 2,265 *Declarations of loyalty*, mainly from persons of Polish descent who had resided in the Free City of Danzig<sup>770</sup>.

In the county of Gdańsk, 2,756 people had applied for vetting by the end of January 1946. Of these, some 300 applications were rejected. A surge in applications was noted in May that year, when the number of successful vettings reached 3,550, excluding children aged under 14<sup>771</sup>. In the county of Sztum, out of 9,758 Poles residing there at the end of September 1945, 4,340 had been positively vetted. It was also reported that while waiting for political changes, a number of people of German descent had applied for Polish citizenship, usually in the hope of recovering their farms. Delays with vetting were explained by illness, and if an application was rejected it was referred to the Voivodship Office for reconsideration<sup>772</sup>. In spring 1946, a reverse situation was noted when the

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768 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/58, monthly situation reports, *Sprawozdanie Wydziału Opieki Społecznej*, 26 V 1945, p. 2; *Problem niemiecki*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 1945, No. 2, p. 3.

769 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/74, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne ZM w Gdańsku za lata 1945–1951*, VIII, XI 1945, pp. 2 and 65.

770 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/76, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne ZM w Sopocie za lata 1945–1950*, X 1945, p. 2.

771 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/80, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Gdańsku za lata 1945–1947*, I and V 1946, pp. 82 and 84.

772 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/87, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne PO w Sztumie za lata 1945–1951*, IX 1945, pp. 8, 19 and 26.

German population talked vetted persons into surrendering their rehabilitation certificates and moving beyond the Oder<sup>773</sup>.

In the county of Elbląg, only 72 applications for full civic rights had been considered by 14 November 1945<sup>774</sup>. That is also the number of certificates which the municipal council of Elbląg issued by 16 July 1945. As the mayor of this city, W. Wysocki, never received instructions from the voivodship about vetting, he acted on the basis of a memorandum applicable to the Mazury district. Wysocki assumed that no residents of Elbląg were automatically eligible for full Polish citizenship because he had never registered the pre-war Union of Poles resident in that city, as a result of which Poles in that category were denied rehabilitation<sup>775</sup>.

The results of vetting in the remaining counties on the banks of the Vistula river were much better. The county of Malbork issued 2,545 provisional rehabilitation certificates by the end of November 1945<sup>776</sup>. In the county of Kwidzyn, 872 people were positively vetted by the end of that year<sup>777</sup>.

Despite numerous difficulties, the results of vetting in the western annexed counties were generally positive<sup>778</sup>. Some 1,205 people in Łębork county were vetted by the end of 1945. The chief executive of that county, Jan Nowakowski, appointed a County Board of the Association of Kashubians as an opinion-giving body for applications for vetting submitted in the various districts. The opinions were then referred to the Municipal Court<sup>779</sup>. Once again, an ignorance of the rules came to the fore, because these courts were not empowered to handle vetting. Correspondence between the authorities of Łębork and the

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773 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Sprawozdanie z inspekcji w powiatach Kwidzyn, Sztum i Malbork odnośnie stanu zagadnień weryfikacyjnych i położenia ludności zweryfikowanej*, 2–4 IV 1946, p. 49.

774 AP Gd, UWG, situation reports for Elbląg 1945–1946, *Poufne sprawozdanie*, 14 XI 1945, p. 2.

775 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, rehabilitation issues, *Pismo Prezydenta Miasta Elbląga do UWG*, 16 VII 1945, p. 37.

776 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/85, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Malborku za lata 1945–1950*, XI 1945, p. 54.

777 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/83, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Kwidzynie za lata 1945–1950*, XII 1945, p. 42.

778 Vetting in the Kashubian borderlands has been dealt with by H. Rybicki, *Powrót pogranicza...*, pp. 154–160.

779 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/71, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne PO w Łęborku za lata 1945–1950*, I 1946, pp. 6 and 52.

Voivodship Office in Gdańsk confirmed that Nowakowski was wholly ignorant of the procedures of vetting and rehabilitation<sup>780</sup>.

In the county of Bytów, substantially more than 2,000 people were vetted and issued with provisional rehabilitation certificates. *Declarations of loyalty* were submitted to a board composed of representatives of the local authorities, but in close consultation with the security authorities<sup>781</sup>. The county authorities made an effort to find people who had not applied for rehabilitation. To make procedures more efficient, the Rehabilitation Board also started accepting applications in outlying areas, where it encountered refusals for rehabilitation and even hostility towards Poland, including from people with Polish-sounding names<sup>782</sup>.

In Miastko county, only 11 *Declarations of loyalty* from people of Polish origin were received in October 1945. But by the following summer, the vetting operation had covered 137 people<sup>783</sup>. In Słupsk county, the local Rehabilitation Board vetted 571 people<sup>784</sup>.

In the old counties, vetting problems affected to the greatest degree the district of Wierzychucino, in the coastal county, which had belonged to Germany before the war. By the end of August 1945, 520 of the people who had submitted a *Declaration of loyalty* had received their rehabilitation certificates. Others were still waiting for their applications to be considered<sup>785</sup>. The Rehabilitation Boards were also active at the gathering points for repatriation.

As at 1 June 1946, the number of people positively vetted in Gdańsk voivodship was 24,650, with 2,443 rejections<sup>786</sup>. Some 650 applications for vetting had been rejected in the counties of Sławno and Słupsk alone<sup>787</sup>. The county and city authorities charged a handling fee for issuing a vetting certificate. For example,

780 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/359, The vetting of Kashubians, *Pismo do PO w Lęborku*, 6 X 1945, p. 82.

781 AAN, MAP, 199/53, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne wojewody gdańskiego*, XI 1946, p. 7.

782 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/77, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne PO w Bytowie za lata 1945–1946*, for XI 1945, pp. 12, 16–17.

783 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/72, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Miastku*, for X 1945, p. 3, *Sprawozdanie SP w Sławnie*, 30 VI 1946, p. 28.

784 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/73, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Słupsku*, 1 VIII 1946, pp. 28 and 33.

785 AAN, MAP, 199/153, annexes to the reports of the Gdansk Voivodship Office, vol. III, *Sprawozdanie SP w Wejherowie*, 5 IX 1945, p. 111.

786 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/60, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne miesięczne*, for II 1946, p. 12.

787 AAN, MAP, 199/53, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne wojewody gdańskiego*, vol. II and III, for XI 1956, p. 7.



in Malbork a provisional certificate cost 30 zlotys, but people without the ability to pay were exempt from this charge<sup>788</sup>.

### 3.7 The Creation of the Voivodship Vetting Board. Field Inspections

In March 1946, work began in Gdańsk voivodship on making the vetting process more efficient and introducing uniform criteria for reaching decisions. For this purpose, a conference was convened on 4 March at the City Council in Gdańsk, attended by representatives of the administrative authorities. The following took part: Prof. Bronisław Bukowski, Kazimierz Banaś-Purwin, lawyer Stanisław Romanowski and judge Kazimierz Leszczyński. The following representatives of the political parties also attended: Władysław Zdunek (Polish Workers Party PPR), Mirosław Dybowski (Polish Socialist Party PPS), Franciszek Błęński (Polish Peasant Party PSL), Józef Pilarczyk (Democratic Party SD) and Jan Pioch (People's Party SL). The conference discussed problems with the effective re-Polonisation of the indigenous population, especially ignorance of the rules governing vetting. As mentioned above, announcements and instructions on this subject had never reached some parts of the voivodship.

The conference reached a number of fundamental decisions. It appointed a Commission for Ethnic Issues, chaired by the abovementioned Kazimierz Leszczyński. It was meant to deal with the stabilisation of ethnic relationships in Gdańsk voivodship. The Commission adopted *Basic principles of vetting in Gdańsk voivodship*, written by an expert on ethnic matters in Pomerania, Mirosław Dybowski, already mentioned several times above<sup>789</sup>. The Commission endeavoured to make the appropriate authorities interpret the rules on rehabilitation and on vetting correctly and implement them properly.

On 6 March 1946, an article appeared in the *Dziennik Bałtycki* entitled *Not a drop of Polish blood beyond the Oder. Comments about the incorrectly conducted vetting operation*<sup>790</sup>. It served as a kind of manifesto to improve vetting

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788 AAN, MAP, 199/51, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne wojewody gdańskiego*, vol. 1, *Sprawozdanie PO w Malborku*, for IX 1945, p. 208.

789 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Pismo Komisji do Zagadnień Narodowościowych do wojewody gdańskiego*, 5 III 1946 p. 9, *Protokół z zebrania w sprawie usprawnienia akcji weryfikacyjnej na terenie województwa gdańskiego i stworzenia jednolitych kryteriów weryfikacyjnych*, 4 III 1946, p. 10.

790 *Ani jednej kropli krwi polskiej za Odrę. Uwagi na marginesie wadliwie prowadzonej akcji weryfikacyjnej*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 1946, No. 64, pp. 1–2.

procedures in the voivodship. As an introduction, the author recalled that: "Two processes of the granting of citizenship are currently being conducted in parallel with each other: rehabilitation, i.e. the restoration of Polish civic rights (...) and vetting, i.e. the granting of Polish citizenship (...)." We read further that confusion between these two concepts and a "failure to understand the conditions under which Poles have been arriving in these areas for centuries and the degree of pressure of Germanisation (...) and a desire to usurp the property and rights of the indigenous population, is creating an unhealthy antagonism harmful to the State and Nation, between Polish settlers and indigenous Poles and persons of Polish origin." Persons already vetted, the article stated, "have for over ten months been the target of repeated robbery not just by demoralised looters, but also by state officials." The article described how vetted persons were being discriminated against, their vetting certificates not being recognised or being withdrawn, and indigenous Poles deported together with Germans. Due to the continuation of such a policy, "we are continuing the dirty work of the Nazis and instead of re-Polonising the indigenous population, we are turning them into Germans." The article presented the criteria by which vetting should be continued in Gdańsk voivodship. It explained that vetting was not a judgment, but merely a public law formality, which nevertheless did not cancel out responsibility for disloyal actions against the Polish nation. An applicant's descent was to be established according to the ethnic structure of the area in which the vetting took place.

Thus, in those counties where Polish influence dominated (Sztum, Kwidzyn and the eastern parts of Lębork and Bytów), a negative approach was to be applied, taking into account such factors as fear of German extermination and the elimination of persons with anti-Polish attitudes during the war. The result, it was assumed, would be that 90 % of those positively vetted would have no distinct feeling of national identity. In areas with a predominantly German element, however, an individual approach would be taken. The primary criterion here would be an awareness of the applicant's origin, declared and proven by him or her. The level of intelligence and education were also two of the factors to be considered.

Another article about vetting distinguished between two ways of handling the affairs of the indigenous population: by emotion, involving a large degree of liberalism, and by reasoning, involving an attitude of distrust. However, it was said that neither of these worked if they were not accompanied by a knowledge of the area and of the local population<sup>791</sup>.

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791 *Autochtoni. Na marginesie akcji weryfikacyjnej*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 1947, No. 78, p. 2.

We can assume that the above factors – the conference and the press articles – spurred the authorities of Gdańsk into energetic action. On 15 March 1946, voivode Stanisław Zralek (in office since the beginning of 1946) issued a memorandum to local government chiefs and mayors, announcing an inspection of all heads of County and Municipal Vetting Boards on 26 March. He also ordered the appointment of Socio-Political Departments where they had not yet been appointed. He said that the Boards should include a representative of the indigenous Polish population. On 16 March 1946, Zralek extended the deadline for vetting to 30 April<sup>792</sup>. More posters were put up in all districts, urging the indigenous population to submit applications for vetting<sup>793</sup>.

In the meantime, despite all the difficulties with vetting, the state authorities hailed the re-Polonisation of the indigenous population as a great success, usually in speeches and in propaganda publications on the subject of the integration of the Regained Territories with the rest of the country. For example, in response to a declaration by Władysław Gomułka that the vetting had been performed conscientiously<sup>794</sup>, the Voivodship People's Council in Poznań adopted a resolution stating that: "the basis for reconstructing the regained lands must be the local Polish population, therefore the Council warmly welcomes the words of Deputy Premier Gomułka praising our efforts." As the people's councils themselves were considered representatives of the population, the Presidium of the Poznań People's Council claimed that the Presidium would be able to help achieve a rapid vetting of the entire indigenous population of Polish origin in the Regained Territories<sup>795</sup>.

On 18 March 1946, the Voivodship Vetting Board, mentioned above, was appointed to unify the vetting operation throughout the voivodship of Gdańsk and audit the work of the vetting boards in the field. It took over a major portion of the duties of the Ethnic Division of the Socio-Political Department, mainly

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792 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Sprawozdanie z działalności Oddziału Narodowościowego przy WSP*, for March 1946, p. 270; this memorandum is occasionally also dated 13 March 1946, See: 1164/366, minutes of the meetings of the Voivodship Vetting Board 1946–1947, *Okólnik wojewody gdańskiego*, 13 III 1946, p. 1.

793 AAN, MAP, 199/68, *Pismo wojewody gdańskiego do MZO*, 25 VI 1946, p. 46. Cf. AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do WRN w Gdańsku*, 13 V 1946, p. 69.

794 *Miasta i wsie czekają na osadników. Wicepremier Gomułka o sytuacji na Ziemiach Odzyskanych*, „Dziennik Zachodni”, 11 III 1946, No. 69.

795 AAN, MZO, 196/497, the vetting of the indigenous population in the Regained Territories, *Pismo Prezydium WRN w Poznaniu do Prezydium KRN*, 25 IV 1946, p. 10.

concerning rehabilitation and vetting<sup>796</sup>. The Voivodship Vetting Board also considered appeals and issued judgments where a first-instance vetting board had failed to reach a unanimous decision. It was composed of the lawyers Bieszk, Romanowski and Wiktor Roszczynialski, as well as B. Bukowski and M. Dybowski. Its chairman was voivode Stanisław Zrałek<sup>797</sup>. The members of the Board received an allowance of 250 zlotys for each Board meeting. The Board was the only authority that could invalidate vetting certificates. It met only once a week, on Fridays from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m., and in reaching its decisions it was supposed to be guided by the principles adopted by the Commission for Ethnic Issues.

The Voivodship Vetting Board also issued decisions on rehabilitation. Additionally, to conduct and supervise vetting in outlying areas, it also appointed a circulating or ad-hoc Vetting Board composed of two people and headed by the secretary of the Socio-Political Department in Gdańsk, Brunon Miąskowski, whom we met earlier<sup>798</sup>. This Board's task was to conduct vetting in areas on the edge of the voivodship and control the work of the county vetting boards whenever there were difficulties<sup>799</sup>.

At its first meeting on 29 March 1946, the Board discussed basic issues with the vetting operation. Guests included Stefan Drozd, head of the voivodship Socio-Political Department; Dr. Rafał Kaniewicz, prosecutor at the Special Criminal Court of Gdańsk; the editor-in-chief of the daily *Dziennik Bałtycki*; and Bolesław Wit-Święcicki, one of the organisers of the post-war press in Gdańsk<sup>800</sup>. The ambiguity of the vetting criteria was raised at many discussions among state administrative officials. For example, at a meeting of the Voivodship People's Council in Gdańsk in April 1946, one of the councillors, Sochaczewski,

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796 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/364, WKW, *Sprawozdanie Oddziału Narodowościowego przy WSP*, for IV 1946, p. 312.

797 It is not true, M. Hejger writes, that the chairman of the Board was P. Banaś-Purwin. M. Hejger, *op. cit.*, pp. 133–134.

798 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Okólnik w sprawie utworzenia Wojewódzkiej Komisji Weryfikacyjnej*, III 1946, p. 247. On 20 November 1945, Gdańsk City Council adopted the organisational statute of the Socio-Political Department. It was composed of the following sections: Social, Political, Penal-Administrative, and a Secretariat. See: 1164/74, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne Zarządu Miejskiego w Gdańsku*, for XI 1945, p. 80.

799 M. Hejger, *Kwestia narodowościowa...*, pp. 101–102.

800 See szerzej: *Prasa gdańska na przestrzeni wieków*, ed. M. Andrzejewski, Gdańsk 1999, pp. 119–120.

demanded a clear definition of “Polish indigenous population”. The chief executive of Gdańsk county Klonowicz, known for his views, again called for the deportation of this population so that their farms could be given over to Poles resettled from the other side of the Bug River. Someone else, also wholly ignorant of the problems of the indigenous Polish population, insisted that the Vetting Boards be composed mainly of people from central Poland known to be “forthright Poles who had suffered and who had been interned in camps”<sup>801</sup>. Voivode Stanisław Zrałek responded to these demands in the spirit of the regulations governing the treatment of the indigenous Polish population. However, he compared the idea of deporting the indigenous population from Gdańsk voivodship to the practices of the Nazis during the war<sup>802</sup>. The discussion addressed the problem of the invalidation of vetting by county or district local authorities<sup>803</sup>. Let us recall that since March 1946, the only authority empowered to do so had been the Voivodship Vetting Board.

In spring 1946, another step towards the successful realisation of both procedures regulating ethnic issues in Gdańsk voivodship was the protection of indigenous residents against deportation to Germany, for by the end of March 1946: “Thousands of Polish families were resettled just because a particular employee had acted at his discretion, ignoring the instructions of the higher authorities and the arduous work of the Vetting Boards (...) Many cases involved the confiscation of furniture and apartments”<sup>804</sup>. In March 1946, during the first two weeks of its work, the Voivodship Vetting Board issued a series of regulations to eliminate this risk<sup>805</sup>. The Ministry of the Regained Territories issued the following statement:

“Deportation beyond Poland’s borders of but one Polish national just because he failed to obtain his certificate of Polish nationality by administrative means within the prescribed deadline would be a blatant violation of the well-conceived

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801 E. Mironowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

802 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/45, organisational statutes of the Voivodship Office of Gdańsk. Reports on meetings of the Voivodship Vetting Board. Directives by the voivode, *Protokół z posiedzenia WRN*, 24 IV 1946, pp. 42–43.

803 See: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, *Pismo do SP w Sztumie*, 25 VI 1946, p. 357.

804 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, *Pismo Głównej Komisji Werifikacyjno-Rehabilitacyjnej do wojewody gdańskiego*, 1 IV 1946, p. 17.

805 AAN, MAP, 199/54, monthly situation reports of the voivode of Gdańsk, vol. IV, for III 1946, p. 2.

Polish *raison d'état*<sup>806</sup>." Nevertheless, this did not provide the expected results because on 10 August 1947, a consignment of Germans being deported from Gdańsk again included people who had either already been vetted or who were still undergoing vetting. Therefore, the voivodship authorities again recommended that members of the Vetting Boards monitor deportations beyond the Oder river<sup>807</sup>. This issue will be discussed in greater detail below.

During the first weeks of its work, the Voivodship Vetting Board faced the task of considering a series of difficult cases involving the restitution of civic rights. For example, an official at the Culture and Arts Department in Gdańsk, Władysław Brzosko, accused the husband of a certain Agnieszka Wandtke of having belonged to the NSDAP, and then robbed her. The witnesses due to testify against her transpired to be former members of the Nazi party and, moreover, had been bribed by Brzosko. Wandtke's husband was cleared of the charge, but she herself had to submit to a repeat vetting, which confirmed her Polish descent<sup>808</sup>. This case caused great consternation, especially among indigenous residents, who swore that Wandtke had demonstrated a pro-Polish attitude during the war<sup>809</sup>. In turn, an official of the Settlement Department in Lębork county issued permits for the removal of post-German property, referring to the abovementioned regulation of 22 February 1946 by the Ministry of the Regained Territories on the removal of movable property from the Regained Territories<sup>810</sup>.

The most energetic activists on the Voivodship Vetting Board, such as Moczyński, Dybowski, Miąskowski and Bukowski, who were concerned about a genuine improvement in the fortunes of the voivodship's indigenous population, also met after working hours. At one such meeting at the home of voivode Stanisław Zralek, they sought the best solutions that would put an effective end to the rehabilitation and vetting processes. They decided to organise several-day

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806 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/364, WKW, *Pismo WSP do prezydentów miast i starostów*, 5 IV 1946, pp. 284–285. See also: *Roztoczyć opiekę nad zweryfikowanymi*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 1946, No. 72, p. 3.

807 AAN, MZO, 196/1069, Situation reports by the voivode of Gdańsk, *Pismo WSP do Departamentu Politycznego MAP*, 11 VIII 1947, p. 288.

808 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Pismo do Komisji Specjalnej do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym przy WRN*, 24 IV 1946, p. 98. See also: 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do prokuratora SSK*, 11 V 1946, p. 11; 1164/363, WKW, *Pismo przewodniczącego WKOnZ, W. Zdunka, do WKW*, 15 VIII 1946, p. 349.

809 *Na tropach Smętka*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 2 April 1946.

810 AAN, MZO, 196/1074, *Pismo PUBP w Lęborku do Departamentu Inspekcji MZO*, 17 II 1947, p. 136.

visits by the Vetting Board to individual counties in Gdańsk voivodship<sup>811</sup>. Only in this way, by means of direct talks with officials and inspections of documents, would it be possible to ascertain why so many distortions and irregularities regarding ethnic policy were occurring and how to prevent them.

We have already seen that the materials from field inspections are an interesting source of knowledge of the situation of indigenous society and the conditions in which ethnic vetting was carried out. Only an examination of individual cases in the smallest communities provides a detailed picture of the processes in question, involving not just official procedures, but also an entire range of social factors, including intergroup elements. During these field visits, Gdańsk officials discovered the reasons for the negligible results of the vetting process.

We commence a review of the above on-site inspections with the region of Powiśle, where the situation was so bad that the counties of Kwidzyn and Malbork were subjected to two inspections in March and April 1946. For example, the composition of the Vetting Board there did not include a single representative of the local Polish population. In fact, the administration was generally composed of settlers. Errors made during the vetting process caused bitterness, making indigenous Poles even more distrustful of the Polish authorities<sup>812</sup>. In the opinion of Mirosław Dybowski, who led one of the inspections, the local official for socio-political affairs had committed material blunders, failing to consider vetting legislation in his work. As a result, the residents of Kwidzyn procrastinated in coming to the office and signing the *Declaration of loyalty*. Only 970 vettings had been performed in Kwidzyn county by the beginning of April 1946. However, the absence of any guidelines whatsoever was used as an excuse<sup>813</sup>. This would suggest neglect on the part of the Voivodship Office in Gdańsk.

The immediate inclusion of pre-war activists of the Union of Poles in Germany on the Vetting Board of Kwidzyn was ordained. They included: Władysław Frank, Konrad Ścisłowski and Marcin Głodny. They arrived in Gdańsk in March 1946 as representatives of the Polish community. At the voivodship Resettlement Office, they sought permission to set up a Polish Ethnic Committee in Kwidzyn

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811 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Protokół z zebrania*, 12 IV 1946, pp. 55–56.

812 Similar issues with judicial vetting were notified by the Voivodship Office of Silesia, which complained that the indigenous Polish population was not represented on the vetting boards, vetting was being conducted for personal gain, and vetting documentation was not being kept properly. See: Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz polskich wobec ludności rodzimej...*, pp. 43–44.

813 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/360, regional issues, re-Polonisation, *Sprawozdanie w sprawie akcji repolonizacyjnej*, 22 X 1947, p. 44.

which, like the one in Olsztyn, would resolve the problems of the Poles there. It was recommended that an official in the neighbouring district of Sztum, Kazimierz Brochwicz-Donimirski, a meritorious activist of the Union of Poles in Germany, be consulted in difficult cases. Attention was drawn to the question of the 'contentious farms', which often made vetting impossible. The general well-known practice was used: the farms of people deprived of their vetting certificates were confiscated for resettlement purposes. For example, in Tyhnowy district, the farm of the well-known Polish family Runowski was taken from them and given to a demobilised Polish Army soldier. There were situations where the same household was occupied by two families, one of them indigenous, and the other settlers. This often caused a kind of economic standstill when neither family worked because they waited for the question of ownership to be resolved<sup>814</sup>. Conflicts between groups were also referred to in reports by the security authorities, who perceived a different problem, namely the return from Germany of indigenous people anxious to recover their farms that had in the meantime been transferred to settlers<sup>815</sup>.

The voivodship authorities insisted that people unjustly evicted from their farms be allowed to return there and that indigenous Poles be offered positions as local government chief executives. The voivode expected to see the first results of the improved vetting within two weeks. According to the head of the voivodship Personnel Section, the voluntary appearance of people at the county offices without fear would be a sign of improvement of the vetting process<sup>816</sup>.

Meanwhile, in Kwidzyn county, the People's Council and Interparty Committee took a different approach to contentious farms from the voivodship authorities. At a meeting on 4 May 1946, they resolved that families vetted or rehabilitated after 1 February 1946 would not receive their original farms, but only those not yet occupied or deriving from a division of land attached to farms. This was considered a kind of panacea for social conflicts caused by the question of vetting and contentious farms. An indigenous Pole voluntarily waiving their

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814 *Raport z inspekcji w Wejherowie przeprowadzonej przez inspektora Wojewódzkiego Oddziału PUR w Gdańsku z 15 kwietnia 1946 r.*, pp. 126–127 [in:] *Niemcy w Polsce 1945–1950...*, pp. 126–127.

815 AIPN Gd, 0046/184, vol. 1, *Sprawozdania tygodniowe i miesięczne Powiatowego UBP w Sztumie*, 1–15 III 1947, pp. 22–23.

816 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Pismo do PO w Kwidzynie*, 5 III 1946, p. 217, 9 III 1946, pp. 229–231.



farm was supposed to be an expression that they were willing to participate in the rebuilding of the destroyed Poland<sup>817</sup>.

As we have seen, the security authorities played a particularly negative role during the vetting process. They often brutally interfered in it in for personal gain. It is not difficult to find examples of this in Kwidzyn, where a security official called Henryk Markieta earned a particularly bad reputation. He terrorised both customers and local government employees. On 17 January 1946, Markieta burst into the Vetting Board with a gun, threatening to shoot the employees and 378 applicants for vetting<sup>818</sup>.

The next inspection of eastern counties annexed to Gdańsk voivodship took place from 2 to 4 April 1946 and revealed particularly dramatic circumstances, this time in Malbork county. Murders were committed there in order to prevent vetting. After the farm of the pre-war Polish activist Stefania Senke in the village of Duminowo had been devastated in February 1946, the militiaman Jan Sypuła, together with a railway worker and Soviet soldier, shot the woman and stole the goat that had fed her three children. This killing caused an outrage among the local population and caused four vetted families to move from Duminowo to Germany<sup>819</sup>.

Another killing in this county took place in the village of Piaski. A vetted member of the Union of Poles in Germany and a confidant of the Polish Plebiscite Committee in 1920, Józef Lipiński, was shot by railway guards. The Gdańsk authorities asked the Distinct Military Police in Gdańsk to clarify the matter<sup>820</sup>. Another pre-war activist, Wróblewski, had his tailor's shop robbed and, following fruitless attempts to recover his goods, moved to Germany.

The post-inspection report stated: "I encountered irregularities towards each vetted person. (...) A major characteristic of the vetted population is poverty, caused by ceaseless abuse by settlers, often in collaboration with corrupt militia and security officials. The offences are the same everywhere: non-recognition of vetting certificates, theft of the property of vetted persons and denouncements

817 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/363, WKW, *Protokół z posiedzenia PRN w Kwidzynie*, 4 V 1946, pp. 494–495.

818 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Sprawozdanie z inspekcji powiatu kwidzyńskiego odnośnie usprawniania akcji weryfikacyjnej i położenia ludności zweryfikowanej*, 24 V 1946, p. 114.

819 See also: Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz polskich wobec ludności rodzimej...*, p. 64.

820 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo wojewody gdańskiego do Rejonowej Prokuratury Wojskowej w Gdańsku*, 18 VI 1946, p. 281. See also: L. Belzyt, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

to the security authorities (...) always involving vetted persons who have either farms or valuable possessions. There are no denunciations of poor people<sup>821</sup>.”

Various cases of provocation took place with the participation of the militia and Office of Repatriation in order to remove indigenous Poles from their farms<sup>822</sup>. For example, two families in the village of Nebrowo were forced to move to Germany. An inspection revealed cases where vetted persons were beaten and robbed by the militia and security authorities. During an inspection in the district of Ryjewo, a 95-year-old woman suffered a shock at the sight of Polish officials, and only calmed down when they assured her that they had no evil intentions. But it transpired that she had been robbed by a security officer earlier. Not only were people evicted from their homes, which were subsequently occupied by state officials or settlers at the initiative or with the help of the militia, security service and Soviet army, but the homes of Poles were robbed as well. The Voivodship Vetting Board frequently appealed to the Regional Military Prosecutor's Office to restore order and punish those guilty<sup>823</sup>. The situation did not improve even after the issue of an order by voivodship militia commander-in-chief Col. Józef Borkowski in May 1946 in response to the flood of complaints from vetted persons. Borkowski's warning to “punish with all due severity any breach of these instructions and, in individual cases, refer cases to the prosecutor's office<sup>824</sup>” was never put into practice.

An April inspection of Malbork country revealed mass robberies and rapes committed virtually daily by Soviet soldiers, even in the centre of Malbork<sup>825</sup>. Only 313 people in Malbork had been vetted by April 1946. At a meeting of 4 April on the subject of the citizenship of the county's indigenous population, the chief executives excused the abuse and neglect on the grounds that there were no clear instructions and no knowledge of current social relationships. They were obligated to conduct an information campaign among the local population on this subject.

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821 AAN, MZO, 196/1076, *Sprawozdanie z inspekcji w powiatach Kwidzyn, Sztum i Malbork odnośnie stanu zagadnień weryfikacyjnych i położenia ludności zweryfikowanej*, 2–4 IV 1946, p. 51.

822 Cf.: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do WPUR w Gdańsku*, 24 VI 1946, p. 325.

823 See, e.g. AP Gd, UWG, 1164/363, WKW, *Pismo do Rejonowej Prokuratury Wojskowej w Sopocie*, 30 VII 1946, p. 206.

824 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo wojewódzkiego komendanta MO w Gdańsku do WKW*, 22 V 1946, p. 139.

825 L. Belzyt, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

In response to instructions, the Ministry of the Regained Territories itself monitored the course of vetting in difficult situations. That was the case in Malbork county<sup>826</sup> and in the district of Grunowo, where a delegate from the Voivodship Vetting Board himself vetted persons whose applications had not yet been considered, and instructed the local authority to submit reports on the number of vetting certificates issued. The district authorities were also asked to investigate the deportation of four vetted families from Malbork to Germany and deal with the return of confiscated farms<sup>827</sup>. On 29 September 1946, a conference of the indigenous population was held in order to inform them of their rights and duties<sup>828</sup>.

Mirosław Dybowski noted much better progress with vetting and a better situation of the local population after his inspection of Sztum county. Here, unlike in the neighbouring counties of Kwidzyn and Malbork, the local county authorities, peacekeeping bodies and political parties cooperated with each other well. Only a few cases of misappropriation and intimidation were noted, attributable to the proximity of Kwidzyn county which, Dybowski noted, was a “den of warfare and lawlessness.” What stopped indigenous Poles from applying for vetting were rumours from Sztum county that vetted persons were to be resettled in Poland’s former eastern districts. Residents of Sztum county who had witnessed the resettlement of Poles from beyond the Bug River to the Regained Territories in the west were likely to believe rumours such as this. Some people were convinced that it was not worth going through all of that humiliating procedure if they were going to be resettled in any case. We should note that in the northern and western territories, there were rumours that these territories would be restored to Germany.

According to Sztum chief executive Józef Grodnicki, the authors of these rumours were: “elements hostile to people’s democracy intended to set the indigenous population against the motherland, thus sowing confusion and dissatisfaction<sup>829</sup>.” In an *Appeal to the indigenous population of Sztum county* in April 1946, Grodnicki denied plans to resettle the indigenous population, announced severe penalties for spreading propaganda that harmed the interests of vetted

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826 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/363, WKW, *Pismo w sprawie wzmoczenia bezpieczeństwa w powiecie malborskim*, 19 VIII 1946, p. 388.

827 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do SP w Malborku*, 18 VI 1946, p. 297.

828 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/85, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Malborku za lata 1945–1950*, for IX 1946, p. 89.

829 Cf.: A. Sakson, *Stosunki narodowościowe...*, pp. 209–213.

residents of the county, and assured the latter that they enjoyed equal status with remaining Polish citizens<sup>830</sup>.

Summing up, the inspection of the counties along the banks of the Vistula resulted in urgent requirements applicable to the entire voivodship of Gdańsk: to restore property taken from vetted persons, to exercise control over the resettlement of the German population in such a way as to stop the Polish population from being resettled with the Germans, to order all state authorities to recognise vetting certificates, and to oblige the authorities to treat vetted persons as full Polish citizens in order to prevent court cases involving the restoration of confiscated property, and to appoint a commission to supervise the return of properties to their rightful owners<sup>831</sup>.

In April 1946, soon after the end of the above inspection of the areas on the right bank of the Vistula, the Voivodship Vetting Board ordered the inspection of the western counties of Gdańsk voivodship. This task was again undertaken by Mirosław Dybowski. As the decree by the Ministry of the Regained Territories of 6 April 1946, entitled *On the manner of determining the Polishness of persons residing on the Regained Territories* was already in force, Dybowski first arranged a meeting of chief executives, socio-political officers, militia and security officers, as well as other administrative personnel from the counties of Słupsk, Sławno, Miastko and Bytów to discuss the latest guidelines applicable to the conduct of vetting<sup>832</sup>.

Apparently, the Voivodship Vetting Board conveyed this decree, with a commentary, to all the appropriate authorities of Gdańsk voivodship, explaining the meaning of individual paragraphs.

The fact that the lawmakers allowed the vetting of former NSDAP members merits particular attention. However, this was only possible with the consent of the Voivodship Vetting Board<sup>833</sup>. As early as in May 1946, the Board permitted the vetting of Alojzy Kraft, a former member of the Nazi party. However, the investigation into his past was to be made by the Civil Militia, and its outcome reported to the Special Criminal Court in Gdańsk<sup>834</sup>. In the case of Józef Hewelt, who was

830 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/360, regional issues, re-Polonisation, *Pismo SP w Sztumie J. Grodnickiego do WSP*, 4 XII 1947, p. 29.

831 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Sprawozdanie z inspekcji w powiatach Kwidzyn, Sztum i Malbork odnośnie stanu zagadnień weryfikacyjnych i położenia ludności zweryfikowanej*, 2–4 IV 1946, pp. 45–49.

832 Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland No. 4, 1946, item 26; W. Czapliński, *op. cit.*, p. 124; J. Misztal, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa...*, p. 212.

833 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Protokół z posiedzenia*, 19 IV 1946, p. 90.

834 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do ZM w Gdańsku*. 18 V 1946, p. 88.

not found to have committed any anti-Polish activities during the occupation, his membership of the NSDAP was deemed irrelevant. Not even a portrait of Hitler found in Hewelt's home proved an obstacle to his successful vetting. This illustrated a major shift in the attitudes of both the central and the voivodship authorities regarding the conditions for granting Polish civic rights. As mentioned above, less than a year previously the authorities of Gdańsk had denied vetting to people who had been forced to adopt German-sounding names during the war. And yet from spring 1946 onwards, vetting was also granted to people who had belonged to NSDAP, provided that they had not joined voluntarily<sup>835</sup>.

The inspection of the western parts of Gdańsk voivodship showed that the local communities were not aware of the problems of the indigenous Kashubian population or other Slavic minorities. It was feared that the negligible Polish population here, including Kashubians, would not result in mass vettings. Nevertheless, the presence of settlers from Warmia and Mazuris, doubtless Poles and not yet vetted, was stressed. There were reckoned to be 400 unvetted Poles in Słupsk county, 600 in Sławno county and 250 in Miastko county. They were also to be found in Lębork county. For example, the chief executive of Szymrowice district hosted Bernard Went, a Mazurian who spoke excellent Polish<sup>836</sup>. Contact between the administrative authorities and these groups of people were very difficult because the farms where they had been accommodated together with the German population were under strict control by the Soviet authorities, who did not allow Polish officials to enter them. The problem of so-called Polish refugees from East Prussia employed compulsorily in Soviet collective farms also applied to the counties of Lębork and Bytowo, annexed to Szczecin voivodship in May 1946.

The inspection revealed that the Soviets hindered proper vetting by detaining a considerable part of the Polish population. For example, in Sławno county, several dozen Poles eligible for vetting were detained as alleged Germans<sup>837</sup>. They included Franciszka Kruszewska, Zofia Romańska, Józef Mickunas, Henryk

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835 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do prokuratury SSK w Gdańsku*, 18 V 1946, p. 90, *Pismo do SP w Gdańsku*, 11 VI 1946, pp. 208, 227 and 234 also *Pismo do ZM w Gdańsku*, 11 VI 1946, pp. 222 and 240.

836 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do SP w Lęborku*, 10 V 1946, p. 52 also *Pismo do ZM w Elblągu*, 10 V 1946, p. 48.

837 On 30 April 1948, there were 286 such persons detained on the grounds that they were fit to work in post-war Poland. The figures include their families. AAN, MAP, 199/768, Polish Western Union, *Stan cyfrowy Niemców w województwie gdańskim*, 30 IV 1948, p. 14.

Czajka, Franciszka Góra and Katarzyna Lugowska. The district of Barcino in Miastko county was also beyond the control of the Polish authorities because Poles were not allowed to enter it. Representatives of the Polish authorities petitioned for the appointment of liaison officers to liaise with the Soviet military authorities.

The irregularities noted by inspector Dybowski during his inspections of western counties were also the result of an ignorance of the regulations issued at voivodship level. For example, the abovementioned decree by the voivode of 15 October 1945, reminding the local authorities of the rights of people holding vetting rights, had seldom been heard of. Furthermore, the officials occupying socio-political posts proved incapable of solving ethnic issues, including the citizenship of the indigenous Polish population.

As Warsaw was sending urgent instructions and orders to end the vetting quickly, the Gdańsk authorities organised special tuition for administrative staff. For example, on 26–27 March 1946 there was a course for socio-political employees at Gdańsk city council, at which Zygmunt Moczyński delivered a report entitled *Rehabilitation and Vetting*<sup>838</sup>. In June that year, Mirosław Dybowski held a course for socio-political inspectors in the counties on the right bank of the Vistula<sup>839</sup>, and in July there was a second series of training sessions for 11 employees of socio-political departments in Gdańsk voivodship. A series of lectures on administrative procedures, vetting issues, repatriation, etc. was held. Officials were sensitised to particular matters, but their interest was assessed as weak. Ignorance of the legal regulations in force was attributed to a lack of access to current legislation and legal writings<sup>840</sup>.

The next western county to be inspected was Bytów. The vetting carried out there was also deemed faulty and hasty. For example, in the village of Trzebiatowo, there were ten Polish families most of whom had still not received their civic rights<sup>841</sup>. It was considered necessary to make the local population aware of rehabilitation matters and recommence the rehabilitation procedure. Success depended on the return of property confiscated from vetted persons and the prevention of robbery and violence, committed by, among others, the socio-political officer for that area. It is worth noting that inspector Dybowski praised

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838 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/364, WKW, *Sprawozdanie*, for III 1946, p. 270.

839 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo w sprawie planowanego wyjazdu M. Dybowskiego w dniach 11-13 VI 1946 r. do Sztumu*, p. 221.

840 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/56, *Sprawozdania naczelników wydziałów z przebiegu drugiego Turnusu Kursów Szkoleniowych*, pp. 97–98.

841 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do SP w Bytowie*, 10 V 1946 r., p. 57.

vetting procedures in one district – Tuchomyśl – as very well organised. The chief executive, militia commandant and teachers had, in harmonious cooperation, introduced: “social justice and Polish order in this area, which had been Germanised for centuries.” It was believed that due to the publicity campaign, the number of persons vetted in Bytów county, as ethnically Polish, would soon increase. The post-inspection recommendations included the appointment of three vetting boards, each one covering three districts.

At the end of January 1946, a major part of the pre-war Polish population of Bytów was either interned in camps or had been deported by the Soviet authorities. Of the 2,173 persons vetted there, one third had no news of where their relatives, mostly husbands and sons, were. This would suggest that most of the vetted persons were women. Bytów chief executive Jerzy Chrzczonowicz asked the voivodship authorities to arrange the release of those still in detention. In a letter to the voivodship Socio-Political Department, he wrote: “Many of these citizens belonged to the Union of Poles in Germany, have preserved their Polish-Kashubian speech, and have always openly admitted to being Polish, and for this they were persecuted or shut away in Nazi camps<sup>842</sup>”

An inspection of the vetting in Lębork county also revealed considerable shortcomings. The authorities there were still unable to distinguish between vetting and rehabilitation. Moreover, despite the guidelines provided by the voivode of Gdańsk, vetting in Lębork was conducted by the Office of Information and Propaganda, which the head of the Socio-Political Department considered an outrage that could arouse abroad suspicions of political pressure<sup>843</sup>. In this county, there were still cases where *Declarations of loyalty to the Polish nation and state* were filed in German. The voivodship authorities therefore urged the Polish government representative in Lębork county to pay particular attention to vetting, but without exerting any pressure or coercion<sup>844</sup>.

It was quite common, and somehow natural, to use German. However, the Ministry of the Regained Territories took a closer interest in this and, in a confidential circular, urged the voivodship authorities, and especially the security service, to intervene whenever German was spoken in public places. People

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842 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Sprawozdanie z inspekcji w powiatach Słupsk, Sławno, Miastko i Bytów w sprawie stwierdzenia stanu akcji weryfikacji i położenia ludności zweryfikowanej*, 16–19 IV 1946, pp. 94–97, and 106.

843 *Zarządzenie Pełnomocnika Rządu RP na Obwód Lębork...*, p. 60.

844 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Pismo WSP do PO w Lęborku*, (undated), p. 250.

speaking German were to have their identities checked and would be detained if there were doubts about their Polish nationality<sup>845</sup>.

There was also an inspection in the district of Wierchucino, coastal county, which, as we know, belonged to Germany before the war. The inspection revealed that vetting had been particularly hampered by a forester, Leon Klimek, who robbed vetted families, thus compelling them to move to Germany. The district chief executive, Roman Paszke, refused vetting to certain Poles speaking fluent Polish, and had them removed from their farms<sup>846</sup>.

As mentioned above, in May 1946 some western counties (Sławno, Miastko, Słupsk and Bytowo) were separated from Gdańsk voivodship and annexed to Szczecin voivodship. Słupsk country was inhabited by several hundred descendants of Germanised protestant Kashubians, called the Slovenians<sup>847</sup>. The start of this process of annexation is marked by a letter dated 29 October 1946 from Czesław Pilichowski, head of the western chapter of the Union of Poles in Germany, to the voivode of Szczecin, asking that the northern part of Słupsk county along the shores of the lakes Gardno and Łebsko be excluded from resettlement for academic reasons and on the grounds that these areas should be made Slavic again. The Polish Western Union even tried to keep the Slovenians in Poland because it was believed they could play an important role in the Polonisation of Western Pomerania<sup>848</sup>. However, the Slovenians felt no kinship either with Poles or, mainly due to their Protestant faith, with Kashubians. Hieronim Rybicki wrote: "In an atmosphere of Poland's triumphal return to Piast lands, the Slovenians were to serve as living evidence that these territories are Polish and Slavic<sup>849</sup>." Although at first a certain part of this group declared it wanted to remain in Poland, this was not backed by ethnic considerations.

845 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/360, Regional issues, re-Polonisation, *Poufny okólnik MZO*, 24 VI 1947 r p. 6.

846 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Protokół z pierwszego zebrania WKW w Gdańsku*, 29 III 1946, p. 14, *Pismo do SP w Wejherowie*, 11 IV 1946, p. 53, *Pismo do Sądu Grodzkiego w Malborku*, 24 IV 1946, p. 93.

847 The Słupsk chapter of the Polish Western Union claimed there were about 550 of them, but the county authorities said there were 443. AAN, MZO, 196/1059, *Sprawozdanie w wyjazdu służbowego inspektora MZO, Jerzego Strzałkowskiego do Słupska w/s zagadnienia Słowińców*, 1 III 1948, pp. 1–2. Cf.: M. Ujdał, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

848 Cf.: *Ibid.*, pp. 85–86.

849 H. Rybicki, *Udział Polskiego Związku Zachodniego i Towarzystwa Rozwoju Ziem Zachodnich w polonizacji potomków ludności kaszubskiej nad jeziorem Łebsko i Gardno* [in:] *IV Konferencja Kaszubsko-Słowińska*, ed. H. Rybicki, Słupsk 1996, p. 93.



Hostility towards Protestants, discrimination against settlers and the local administration, and the unfavourable economic situation caused a rapid change in this state of affairs<sup>850</sup>. The Polish authorities tried to stop the Slovenians from leaving for Germany, but many of them still left their homes in 1946–1948. Some of the Slovenians, especially the residents of Kluki, were subjected to compulsory vetting<sup>851</sup>.

The difficulties hampering the process of vetting were: 1: a lack of identity with Poland on the part of the indigenous population; 2: tragic experiences and desperate material circumstances; 3: hostility from the newly settled population, including from the lower authorities; and 4: the policy pursued regarding the indigenous population, i.e. the process of individual vetting and procrastination with the granting of Polish citizenship<sup>852</sup>.

To the above factors we can add one more, also applicable to Gdańsk voivodship: deliberate action by the security authorities to extend and even cancel the vetting operation. For example, in September 1945 the city council of Elbląg received at least two reprimands from the voivodship authorities because final decisions on vetting were being made conditional upon approval from the Office of Public Security<sup>853</sup>.

The first stage of the ethnic vetting did not include all the inhabitants of the new counties of Gdańsk voivodship who held German citizenship. A successful outcome of vetting depended on the attitudes of the local authorities which, as we have shown, were guilty of many distortions and caused intensely dramatic situations. However, the greatest impediment to vetting seems to be the absence of specialist knowledge on the part of the officials who conducted the vetting. Socio-political officials were often ignorant of the basic criteria governing the vetting procedure<sup>854</sup>.

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850 P. Madajczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

851 For more on this issue, see: H. Rybicki, *Nazywano ich Słowińcami*, Słupsk 1995, pp. 123–138.

852 L. Belzyt, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

853 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/361, rehabilitation issues, *Pismo do ZM w Elblągu*, 15 IX 1945, p. 150, *Pismo Z. Moczyńskiego do ZM w Elblągu*, 19 V 1945 r., p. 158.

854 AAN, MZO, 196/68a, the indigenous population, *Sprawozdanie M. Dybowskiego z inspekcji w mieście i powiecie Elbląg w sprawie położenia ludności zweryfikowanej*, 27 IV 1946, p. 35.

The initial period of vetting gave people a high degree of national consciousness and high level of social energy. Until as late as 1950, vetting in some counties was still being conducted in a hasty manner, albeit in a better economic, social and political climate<sup>855</sup>.

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855 L. Belzyt, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

## IV Rehabilitation and Vetting under the New Legal Regulations

During the period preceding the great political struggles – the referendum intended to gauge society’s attitude towards the political changes and the parliamentary election intended to secure full power in Poland for the communists – ways were sought of expanding influence over as much of Polish society as possible, including the indigenous population. Apart from the propaganda slogans about the indigenous population’s historic role in guarding Polish culture under Prussian partition, attempts were made to reconcile this population with the new authorities on the basis of their citizenship. It was recognised that the greatest problem for a major part of this population was its still unregulated legal status. As mentioned above, between April and June 1946, i.e. just before the referendum, specific legal actions were taken whose effects will be examined later in this chapter.

On 27 April 1946, the National People’s Council adopted the law on the referendum, and on 28 April adopted a law on holding this referendum. On the same day, the question of citizenship of the population of the Regained Territories was settled, and two days before the referendum, the legislation governing rehabilitation was relaxed<sup>856</sup>. Before the next election campaign, this time for the Sejm, the authorities again sought to win over people who had not yet been rehabilitated. As mentioned above, the election rules gave voting rights to a part of the indigenous population and to people who had been forced to enrol on the *Deutsche Volksliste*.

This marked the start of stage two of rehabilitation and vetting, when the post-war authorities adopted a more liberal stance towards the issues we are discussing. On a local level, however, problems continued with the shortcomings of the local administration and with persistent discrimination against the indigenous population in social life.

A conference in May 1946 devoted to ethnic issues in Gdańsk voivodship with the participation of Zygfryd Cegiełka, inspector at the Control Department of the Ministry of the Regained Territories, head of the voivodship Socio-Political Department Stefan Drozd, and head of the Ethnic Section Zygmunt Moczyński,

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856 AAN, MZO, 196/497, vetting of the indigenous population in the Regained Territories, *Pismo okólne MZO*, 4 V 1946, p. 7.

examined the course of both these operations up to that point. The conference concluded that the voivodship authorities had proved equal to the task of conducting the processes of rehabilitation and vetting efficiently, and gaining society's understanding for these matters. Both operations were summed up and once again the differences between rehabilitation and vetting were highlighted and made public in the form of announcements. The conference adopted the principle of 'not a single drop of Polish blood', to be applied in granting civic rights. This gave rise to the requirement of 'broad rehabilitation and vetting', for, as it was said: "it will be easier in future to review vetting documentation than to restore a person's citizenship that was unlawfully taken from him." A remark made during the conference whereby "Kashubians are subject merely to rehabilitation, while Gdańsk residents have to be vetted," merits a comment. This was an oversimplification because on the one hand, Kashubians also inhabited the western county of Bytów and, to a lesser extent, the district of Wierzychucino, where, as we know, ethnic vetting was required. On the other hand, the pre-war Gdańsk population included people subject to rehabilitation because they were on the *Volksliste*<sup>857</sup>.

#### 4.1 Criminal Proceedings against those Included on the German National List

As we saw in Chapter II, the 1946 amendment to the legal regulations concerning persons included on the *Volksliste* was aimed at judging and punishing those persons in proportion to their guilt. This principle was set forth in the abovementioned decree of 28 June 1946 *On criminal responsibility for the waiver of nationality during World War II*. The formula of rehabilitation would henceforth be replaced by possible criminal action against those who had renounced their Polish nationality<sup>858</sup>.

On 9 November 1946, the Ministry of Public Administration announced that the provisions of the law of 6 May 1945 *On the exclusion of hostile elements from Polish society*, introducing the duty to submit a *Declaration of loyalty to*

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857 AAN, MZO, 196/1068, situation reports of the voivode of Gdańsk, *Sprawozdanie z dochodzenia w sprawach narodowościowych oraz artykułu z 5 V 1946 r. w Zrzesz Kaszubsko, 5 II 1946 r.*, pp. 83–84.

858 Apart from people included on the German Nationalist List, the 1946 regulations also applied to persons who had declared themselves German nationals after reaching the age of 18 and had done so during the war, or before 1939. A declaration of German nationality resulted in deportation beyond the Oder.

*the Polish nation and state*, had ceased to apply. The voivodship authorities were obliged to conduct a publicity campaign about the new rules and cease to accept declarations of Polishness<sup>859</sup>. Consequently, the Voivodship Vetting Board in Gdańsk also had to reorganise its work. Any issues not yet considered and all queries about rehabilitation were henceforth to be referred to the Prosecutor's Office of the District Court<sup>860</sup>.

At this stage, the state authorities were mainly concerned with a rapid solution to the so-called German question and to the unexpected duration of the problem of citizenship of the indigenous population. Steady pressure from the government merely caused chaotic situations where, at a local level, proceedings based on both the old and the new regulations were conducted at the same time.

As late as 1947 in some counties, Polish citizenship was being restored on the basis of the May law. This is indicated in reports that describe the processes the same as before. For example, in reports from the field we continue to read about the rehabilitation of Germanised persons. Thus, in Kościerz county, 23,466 people were rehabilitated by the end of 1946, and in the first quarter of 1947 the number of rehabilitated people reached 23,487<sup>861</sup>. In Tczew county, 31,505 people had applied for rehabilitation by the end of October 1946<sup>862</sup>. In Malbork county, this figure was 133<sup>863</sup>, in Sztum county 165<sup>864</sup>, and in Lębork county 128<sup>865</sup>. Thus, despite the changed regulations, the previous practice of accepting *Declarations of loyalty* persisted<sup>866</sup>.

But occasionally, too, rehabilitation was officially declared closed in connection with the promulgation of the law of 28 June 1946<sup>867</sup>. In December 1946,

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859 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/281, *Pismo okólne MAP*, 9 XI 1946, p. 55.

860 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Pismo do starostw powiatowych i prezydentów miast*, 3 XII 1946, p.166. Cf.: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/281, *Pismo WKW do starostw powiatowych i prezydentów miast*, XI 1946, p. 56; MRN-ZMG, 1165/1354, *Pismo WKW do starostów powiatowych i prezydentów miast*, 3 XII 1946, p. 1.

861 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/82, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Kościerzynie za lata 1945–1950*, I quarter 1947, p. 67.

862 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/88, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Tczewie za lata 1945–1951*, for X 1946, p. 84.

863 AP Gd, AP Gd, UWG, 1164/85, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Malborku za lata 1945–1950*, XI 1946, p. 102.

864 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/87, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Sztumie*, XI 1946, p. 59.

865 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/84, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Lęborku*, XI 1946, p. 57.

866 M. Romaniuk, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

867 AP Gd, AP Gd, UWG, 1164/81, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Gdańsku za lata 1945–1951*, XI 1946, p. 112.

**Tab. 1:** The status of rehabilitation as at 15 September 1946.

<b>Counties and separate cities</b>	<b>Rehabilitated persons</b>	<b>Persons rehabilitated by the municipal courts</b>
<b>Old counties</b>		
Gdańsk	716	-
Kartuzy	12,089	359
Kościerz	23,293	645
Wejherowo	38,958	1,126
Starogard	31,916	306
Tczew	31,354	795
<b>Separated cities</b>		
Gdańsk	18,449	-
Sopot	645	-
Gdynia	20,195	885
<i>Total</i>	<i>161 010</i>	<i>4 116</i>
<b>New counties</b>		
Elbląg	11	
Kwidzyn	489	
Lębork	122	
Malbork	123	
Sztum	156	
<b>Separated cities</b>		
Elbląg	15	7
<i>Total</i>	<i>916</i>	<i>7</i>
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>161,926</b>	<b>4,123</b>

Source: AAN, MAP, 199/2066, p. 144.

Lębork county leader Tadeusz Trapszo conveyed the rehabilitation files to the District Court<sup>868</sup>. Starogard county chief executive Tadeusz Ziółkowski did likewise<sup>869</sup>. In Tczew county, administrative rehabilitation was formally terminated on 21 October 1946<sup>870</sup>.

868 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/84, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Lęborku*, XII 1946, p. 77.

869 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/86, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjna SP w Stargardzie Gdański za lata 1945–1951*, XII 1946, p. 123.

870 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/88, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Tczewie za lata 1945–1951*, X 1946, p. 85.

Summing up, on the basis of the new regulations, Polish citizens who had declared themselves German nationals before or during the war were threatened with criminal proceedings, although the procedure had in general been simplified. Having submitted their application for the reinstatement of Polish citizenship, the applicant received a citizenship certificate, but with the annotation that criminal proceedings had been commenced against them by the prosecutor's office, in collaboration with the security services<sup>871</sup>. If there was no evidence, the proceedings were quashed. This also applied to those whose judicial sentence had expired and those released from their place of internment<sup>872</sup>. Thus did criminal responsibility for waiving Polish citizenship come about.

The security authorities participated in these matters all over the voivodship of Gdańsk<sup>873</sup>. Militia files on offences committed in Gdańsk voivodship included people who gave up their Polish citizenship during the war. The heading "offences against the state" under which these files were placed was described thus:

"Offences committed during the occupation by persons who acted to the detriment of the Polish Nation and State, making denunciations to the occupiers and contributing to the deportation and mistreatment of Poles; these are the rehabilitation issues dealt with by the Prosecutor's Office<sup>874</sup>."

For example, during 13–27 March 1947 the Security Office in Kościerzyn reviewed a rehabilitation document held by the District Court in that town. Out of the 36 cases on file, Polish civic rights were restored to 22 persons and eight were formally charged. The charges formulated on the basis of the decree *On criminal responsibility for the waiver of nationality during World War II*, and were concerned not only with inclusion on the *Volksliste*, but also the denunciation of Poles, forgery of personal documents and membership of NSDAP. People charged included some who, in an attempt to evade justice, chose Gdańsk as a place of refuge, though not always successfully. For example, Franciszek Myszkowski, a *Volksdeutsche* from Warsaw and NSDAP member, having "a series of Poles from Warsaw on his conscience," was apprehended in Gdańsk on 6 February 1947.

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871 AP Gd, MRN-ZMG, 1165/1358, *Okólnik MAP no. 58 z 25 sierpnia 1947 r. w sprawie poświadczenia obywatelstwa dla osób, przeciwko którym wszczęto postępowanie karne z tytułu przynależności do narodowości niemieckiej, względnie co do których są podstawy do wszczęcia postępowania w trybie dekretu z 13 IX 1946 r.*, p. 180.

872 J. Rados, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

873 See IPN Gd, 0046/183, *Sprawozdanie dotyczące pracy Wydziału Śledczego Powiatowego Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, 14–24 VIII 1946, p. 33.

874 See IPN Gd, 05/54, vol. XI, *Sprawozdania miesięczne Komendy Wojewódzkiej MO w Gdańsku*, 1 VII-31XII 1947, p. 33.

The case was referred to the District Court in Gdańsk<sup>875</sup>. Similar situations were noted in Tczew county, among other places<sup>876</sup>.

Occasionally, a District Court cleared an accused person of charges, but still confiscated their property. That was the situation with Walter Mogilowski, who considered such verdict unfair and refused to accept Polish citizenship<sup>877</sup>. In another case in December 1947, the Security Office in Lębork referred the case of Brunon Gratt, still not rehabilitated, to be considered by the District Court of Słupsk<sup>878</sup>.

The District Courts in Gdańsk voivodship referred many cases under the new regulations back to the administrative authorities, waiving sentence<sup>879</sup>. However, following consultations with the security authorities and the local people's council, a case could still be considered on the basis of the decree of 13 September 1946 *On the exclusion of hostile elements from Polish society*<sup>880</sup>. The executive regulations to this decree appeared on 10 April 1947<sup>881</sup>. It applied to persons of ascertained German nationality who were subject to deportation. In such cases, rehabilitation assumed the dimension of a 'clearance of charges of forsaking Polish nationality'<sup>882</sup>. Consequently, pursuant to the June decree, most people on the German National List could recover their full civic rights unless they had been deprived of these rights earlier by a valid court verdict.

The Ministry of Public Administration ordered the prompt consideration of the above cases<sup>883</sup>. During 1947, district courts all over Poland sentenced 7,616 people (3,843 men and 3,774 women). Sixty-eight people received prison terms

875 AIPN Gd, 05/54, vol.14, *Sprawozdania miesięczne i raporty sytuacyjne Komendy Miejskiej MO w Gdańsku, Pismo do Komendy Wojewódzkiej MO w Gdańsku*, II 1947, p. 38.

876 AIPN Gd, 05/54, vol. 34, *Sprawozdanie miesięczne Komendy Powatowej MO Tczewie za 1947 r.*, 4 I 1947, p. 159.

877 AIPN Gd, 0046, 167, vol. 2, *Sprawozdanie dekadowe Referatu Śledczego PUBP w Kościerzynie*, 3–13 III 1947, pp. 100, 102, 106, and 136; AIPN Gd, 0046, 85, *Sprawozdanie dekadowe PUBP w Słupsku*, 4–14 VII 1946, p. 79.

878 AIPN Gd, 0046, 153, vol. 1, *Sprawozdanie z pracy Referatu Śledczego PUBP w Lęborku*, 15–31 XII 1947, p. 6.

879 See AP Gd, UWG, 1164/232, *Pismo Prezydenta Gdyni do Wydziału Administracyjnego UWG*, 13 IX 1947, p. 303; *Pismo SP w Kartuzach do WA UWG*, 29 IX 1947, p. 363.

880 L. Olejnik, *Zdrójcy ...*, p. 185.

881 Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland, No. 34, 1947, pos. 163; AP Gd, MRN-ZMG, 1165/1358.

882 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/241, *Pismo UWG do SP w Kartuzach*, 28 XI 1947, p. 199.

883 AP Bd, UWP, 851/1125, *WSP, Okólnik MAP No. 41*, 19 VI 1947, pp. 21–25.



of over five years, and 274 received from three to five years. Prison terms of one to two years were imposed on 2,743 people, while 1,468 people received from two to three years, and 2,050 received from six months to one year. Some 1,014 people received less than six months. Persons who had previously been detained had their period of detention counted towards their new sentence. At the end of 1947, there were 43,109 criminal cases in progress against people who had forsaken their Polish nationality and enrolled themselves on the *Volksliste*.

Needless to say, the prosecutor's offices did not include all members of this group in its files, as confirmed by the analysis of the documentation in Gdańsk mentioned earlier. However, a total of several dozen people (but fewer than 50,000) are said to have been judged on the basis of the decree *On criminal responsibility for the waiver of nationality during World War II*. In November 1948, 2,425 persons (1,444 men and 981 women) convicted on the basis of that decree were in prison<sup>884</sup>.

The authorities' primary intention in executing these legal instruments was to: "weed out from Poland persons of German nationality as an alien element that was harmful to the State<sup>885</sup>." However, the executive regulations on the exclusion of Poles with German nationality were not aimed at their complete elimination<sup>886</sup>, because decisions on such exclusion were not to be reached on the basis of objective criteria of nationality such as the person's descent. Rather than that, the preservation of separate German identity was to be taken into account, expressed by the use of the German language, membership of German organisations and the person's attitude towards the Polish population<sup>887</sup>.

A person deprived of Polish citizenship forfeited their property and was subject to deportation to Germany. However, they could appeal to the District Court within seven years<sup>888</sup>. Officials were instructed to complete the review of these cases by 31 December 1948. They were asked to exercise "a particular sense of responsibility and resilience to side influences that could harm the State in the realisation of such an important matter<sup>889</sup>." The decree in question remained in

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884 L. Olejnik, *Zdrójcy...*, p. 190.

885 AP Gd, MRN-ZMG, 1165/1358, *Tajne pismo WA UWG do starostów powiatowych i prezydentów miast*, 10 VII 1948, p. 171.

886 L. Olejnik, *Zdrójcy ...*, pp. 185–186.

887 M. Romaniuk, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

888 AP Gd, MRN-ZMG, 1165/1358, *Instrukcja w sprawie trybu pozbawienia obywatelstwa polskiego osób narodowości niemieckiej (Volksdeutsche)*, pp. 17–179.

889 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/260, *Okólnik no. 41 MAP dot. postępowania w sprawach o wyłączenie ze społeczeństwa polskiego osób narodowości niemieckiej*, 19 VI 1947, pp. 172–174.

force until the end of 1950. Towards the end of that year, the city council of Gdańsk stripped another 21 people of their Polish citizenship, deporting six of them to Germany.

The loss or waiver of Polish citizenship, deportation to Germany, and the preparation of vetting documentation were the subject of talks among the political parties<sup>890</sup>. There were cases where the security authorities applied the September decree in order to deprive vetted persons of their Polish citizenship, accusing them of being German nationals. In memorandum No. 12 dated 5 September 1948, the Director of the Cabinet of the Minister of Public Security, Juliusz Burgin, condemned this practice because, as we know, this decree applied only to people who had been Polish citizens before 1 September 1939. However, he upheld the possibility that a positive decision on vetting could be repealed on the basis of a directive from the President of Poland of 22 March 1928, e.g. if the applicant presented forged documents or if fresh negative circumstances came to light<sup>891</sup>.

On the other hand, if someone declared him or herself a German national, he or she could not be punished for renouncing his or her Polish nationality. This possibility of evading punishment was occasionally exploited<sup>892</sup>. For example, in Tczew county in November 1946, there was an increased number of applications for voluntary relocation to Germany by persons not yet rehabilitated and included in Group II of the *Volksliste*<sup>893</sup>. Consequently, in a secret telegram in October 1947, Edward Osóbka-Morawski, Minister of Public Administration, ordered a halt to the issue of certificates of the waiver of Polish citizenship on the basis of the decree of 13 September 1946<sup>894</sup>.

In December 1947, a summary was drawn up of the results of the withdrawal of Polish citizenship on the basis of the decree of 28 June 1946 *On criminal*

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890 AP Gd, KW PPR w Elblągu, 2599/10, *Protokół z konferencji wójtów i sekretarzy z urzędami zespolonymi i niezespolonymi oraz wojska i partii politycznych*, 12 IX 1947, p. 41.

891 AIPN Gd, 0046/233, vol. 1, *Okólnik no. 12 Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, 5 XI 1948, pp. 260–261.

892 K. Strykowski, *op. cit.*, p. 460.

893 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/88, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Tczewie*, XI 1946, p. 93.

894 AAN, MAP, 199/766, rehabilitation of persons on the German national list, *Tajny i pilny telefonogram do wojewodów i prezydentów Warszawy i Łodzi*, X 1947, p. 169.

*responsibility for the waiver of nationality during World War II and the decree of 13 September 1946 On the exclusion of hostile elements from Polish society*<sup>895</sup>.

In Gdańsk voivodship, this summary was based on a report relating to the so-called German question produced by an inspector from the Ministry of Administration, Tomasz Kosmala, on 9–13 September 1947. His report revealed that there were 4,015 persons on the *Volksliste* against whom criminal proceedings were in progress. He also found that 1,253 people had declared themselves German nationals to avoid punishment. It is worth adding that as late as 1947, there were suggestions, including from the chief executive of the coastal county, that the entire population of German descent should be relocated to other parts of Poland. The number of such persons in Gdańsk was said to be about 1,000. In Gdańsk voivodship, the number of persons vetted and currently deprived of their Polish citizenship was reckoned at 267, and the number of German nationals who had been Polish citizens before 1939 and against whom action was being taken to strip them of this citizenship was 381. It was believed that a further 560 people might lose their citizenship, but 27 people had appealed against a court ruling on this subject. In addition, in the voivodship there were 469 indigenous inhabitants who either wished to leave Poland or who claimed German nationality.

An investigation in Gdańsk county revealed that there were 547 people earmarked for relocation to Germany but who wished to remain in Poland. No pre-war Polish citizens consequently stripped of their citizenship were noted. Likewise, there were no German nationals against whom proceedings to deprive them of their Polish citizenship were in progress.

In Gdynia, it was established that there were only 12 former citizens of the German Reich or Free City of Danzig, and 27 persons were the subject of proceedings to deprive them of their Polish citizenship. On 10 December 1947, there were 24 people in Gdynia who had been enrolled on the *Volksliste* during the war and who had attempted to evade punishment by declaring themselves German nationals. In Sopot, there were no cases where German nationals who had formerly held Polish citizenship had now been deprived of this citizenship, but five people were the subject of criminal proceedings and two had declared a desire to move to Germany.

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895 As the deportation of Germans had also been halted, the Ministry of the Regained Territories also decided to gather materials on the subject of the so-called German question. Cf.: K. Kersten, *Kształtowanie...*, p. 79.

The figures relating to the Kashubian counties are decidedly greater. For example, in Kartuzy county there were 458 former citizens of Germany or Gdańsk, and 1,600 pre-war Polish citizens had been deprived of citizenship. Four people filed appeals against their court verdicts, but 50 people were still expected to face criminal proceedings. Only 12 people in that county declared a desire to leave Poland, and 311 people on the *Volksliste* were subject to criminal proceedings for renouncing Polish citizenship. Indictments regarding the loss of Polish citizenship were served on 1,700 persons enrolled in the *Volksliste* who had declared themselves German nationals in order to evade punishment.

In the coastal county there were 495 former citizens of Germany or Gdańsk. Seventy-four German nationals were stripped of Polish citizenship, and 42 German nationals were subject to proceedings to deprive them of this citizenship. Four of them had filed appeals. It was estimated that 217 German nationals might yet lose their Polish citizenship. Twenty people had declared a desire to move to Germany or had claimed German nationality. Criminal proceedings for renouncing Polish citizenship were aimed against 396 people enrolled on the *Volksliste*. Some 217 people on this list had declared themselves German nationals in order to evade punishment for renouncing their Polish nationality.

In Starogard county, there were 92 citizens of the former Reich or Free City of Danzig and over 40 Germans devoid of Polish citizenship. Two German nationals were involved in proceedings to deprive them of their Polish citizenship, and another eight were expected to face such proceedings. Seven persons had appealed against District Court verdicts.

Tczew county had 80 former citizens of the Third Reich or Free City of Danzig. Thirteen pre-war Polish citizens had lost their Polish citizenship. Six former Polish citizens of German nationality had also been deprived of their citizenship, but three of them had appealed against this verdict. Some 40 German nationals were expected to face similar proceedings. Out of a total of over 4,000 people enrolled in Group II of the *Volksliste* during the war, 1,800 were the target of court proceedings on the basis of the decree of 28 June 1946<sup>896</sup>.

In early 1948, the policy of the Polish authorities towards the German population began to assume the shape which the voivode of Silesia-Dąbrowa, Aleksander Zawadzki, had been demanding for several months. It called for

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896 AAN, MAP, 199/759, the German population in individual voivodships, *Sprawozdanie z podróży służbowej na teren województwa gdańskiego, poświęconej zebraniu materiałów do zagadnienia niemieckiego*, 9–13 XII 1947, pp. 11–15, *Pismo SP w Gdańsku do WSP UWG*, 11 XII 1947, pp. 18–20, 22–23, 27, 29–30, 31–34, and 101.

the deportation of persons of undeniable German nationality and the retention in Poland of indifferent persons who should be submitted to Polishisation. The progressing standardisation of political life in Poland permitted a similar procedure in other voivodships as well. We should agree with E. Mironowicz that the reports reaching Warsaw from the voivodes no longer spoke of a threat from Germans who had not yet been resettled or that the indigenous population felt little association with Poland<sup>897</sup>. Again, the Ministry of Public Administration held a review of the materials on the subject of the German question for the areas under its authority. These areas were inhabited by about 100,000 Germans, 0.8 % of the total population<sup>898</sup>. Among them were 9,416 people deprived of Polish citizenship, of whom 267 were in Gdańsk voivodship. Of the 18,565 Polish citizens against whom proceedings involving the deprivation of citizenship were in progress, 2,003 resided in Gdańsk voivodship. Another 63,000 faced the possibility of such proceedings. Again, a part of this population were Polish nationals but had declared German nationality through fear of punishment. On 1 December 1948, there remained 773 applications to the Office of Public Security to deprive citizenship under the terms of the decree of 13 September 1946<sup>899</sup>.

Although the authorities of Gdańsk formally announced the end of rehabilitation on 4 December 1946<sup>900</sup>, the granting or deprivation of citizenship under the terms of the June and September laws continued to be described as rehabilitation in many official documents.

In June 1948, work commenced on terminating the Polish citizenship of German nationals living abroad. Polish consular establishments turned to the offices of public security for advice on this matter under the terms of the decree of 13 September 1946.

At a conference on 2 March 1949, the Ministry of Administration set forth the following principle by which Polish consulates were to deal with repatriation: "Indigenous persons, miners and steelworkers whose families are in Poland, and prisoners, both indigenous and *Volksdeutsche* who have returned from Soviet internment and have not yet visited the western territories, are to be

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897 E. Mironowicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 82–83.

898 This percentage corresponded to the overall number of Germans in Poland at the time.

899 AAN, MAP, 199/842, deprivation of Polish citizenship from German nationals in individual voivodships. Lists, correspondence, *Tajne pismo WA UWG do Departamentu Administracyjno-Prawnego MAP*, 30 XII 1948, p. 8.

900 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/74, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne ZM w Gdańsku*, XII 1946, p. 177.

referred to Poland without prior approval from the Ministry of Public Security if the consulates have no reservations about this<sup>901,9</sup>.

The consulates referred applications to the first instance administrative authorities. The Ministry of Public Administration recommended the appointment of legal representatives for persons stripped of their citizenship, to whom the decisions on the deprivation of citizenship were to be handed. Decisions regarding persons outside Poland were to be delivered by the consulates. It was recommended that decisions also include a ruling regarding the citizenship of spouses and children<sup>902</sup>.

In 1946–1950, the General and Administrative Department (until July 1947, the Socio-Political Department<sup>903</sup>) of the Voivodship Office in Gdańsk, acting on the basis of the new regulations, issued certificates of Polish citizenship<sup>904</sup>. These were received by people who had been rehabilitated and vetted, but others as well. They were also issued in complicated cases that had been impossible to resolve under any of the laws discussed above, and to persons who had previously been denied citizenship but who had subsequently appealed<sup>905</sup>. This included people currently outside the new counties who had not resided in them on 1 January 1945, and who therefore did not hold the status of permanent resident of the Regained Territories, which, as we have seen, was a condition for positive vetting pursuant to the law of 28 April 1946<sup>906</sup>. Frequently in such cases, in circumvention of post-war legislation, Polish citizenship was granted under

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901 AAN, MAP, 199/766, rehabilitation of persons on the German national list, *Pismo MAP do Biura Konsularnego Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych*, (undated), p. 252.

902 AAN, MAP, 199/841, deprivation of Polish citizenship from German nationals. Circulars, correspondence, lists, report by the Interministerial Commission for Volksdeutsche Affairs, *Pismo MAP do wojewodow, prezydentów Warszawy i Łodzi, starostów i prezydentów miast*, X 1948, pp. 55 and 45–46; P. Strykowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 467–468.

903 See: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/281, general regulations and instructions 1945–1951, *Pismo wojewody do wydziałów administracyjnych i społeczno-politycznych na terenie województwa gdańskiego*, 29 VII 1947, p. 69.

904 This procedure was also described as confirmation or recognition of Polish citizenship. See: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/240/241, confirmation of citizenship 1947; AP Gd, ZMG, 1165/1357, confirmation of citizenship; 1165/1358, regulations and orders applicable to those deprived of Polish citizenship and a register of such persons.

905 See: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/233, recognition of citizenship 1947, *Pisma SP w Kartuzach do WO UWG*, 20 I 1947, 2 V 1947, pp. 229 and 225.

906 See, e.g. AP Gd, UWG, 1164/231, recognition of citizenship 1946, *Pismo WO UWG do SP w Tczewie*, 9 IX 1946, p. 239.

the terms of article 3 the Polish Citizenship Act of 20 January 1920, to which we referred in the previous chapter<sup>907</sup>. In such situations, the above-mentioned J. Tiałowski recommended that: “one should investigate whether an applicant really was of Polish stock, whether he used Polish at home and among his family, in what spirit he was raised, in what spirit he raised his children, and whether he observed Polish habits and customs<sup>908</sup>.”

The contentious issues included the vetting of an employee of the College of Commerce of the Free City of Danzig, Prof. Anastazy Benk-Bembanowski, where he taught Polish. However, acting in line with a directive from the Ministry of the Regained Territories of 6 April 1946, which firmly denied Polish citizenship for teachers in German schools, the Voivodship Vetting Board withdrew the professor’s vetting certificate. An official at the General Department, S. Niesłuchowski, explained this case thus: “The applicant’s conduct before the war was typical of a certain group of Poles who worked for German employers or in the German public service: without denying his Polish descent, Benk-Bembanowski was not a member of the Polish community of Gdańsk.” But in the end, due to the professor’s Polish roots and advanced age, the Voivodship Office in Gdańsk relented and granted him Polish citizenship, again on the basis of the act of 1920<sup>909</sup>.

## 4.2 The Work of the Inter-Ministerial Commission. The Elimination of the Problem of the *Volksliste*

There remained the problem of labour camps and the internment of *Volksdeutsche* and *Eingedeutsche* in them. A great deal of injustice occurred when people were deprived of their Polish citizenship. Having lost their status as a Polish citizen, Polish and German nationals were placed in labour camps, and only then resettled beyond the Oder.

Due to the scale of the phenomenon, an Inter-Ministerial Commission was appointed in spring 1948, composed of representatives of the Ministries of Public Administration, Public Security and Justice. Its task was to inspect the

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907 Dz.U. RP, No. 7, 1920, pos. 44. See: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/231, recognition of citizenship 1946, *Korespondencja WO UWG ze starostami powiatowymi oraz MAP z 1946 r.*, pp. 157, 249, 251, 255, 259, 271, 277, 279, 397, 433, 453, 479, 513, and 519.

908 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/233, recognition of citizenship 1947, *Pisma WO UWG do Zarządu Miejskiego w Gdyni*, 11 IV 1947, p. 275.

909 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/233, recognition of citizenship 1947, *Pisma WO UWG do Departamentu Administracji MAP*, 6 VI 1947, p. 335.

work of the security and administrative authorities when withdrawing Polish citizenship and review the justification of detaining persons enrolled on the German National List.

The Commission performed its activity mainly inside the labour camps in which persons enrolled on the *Volksliste* were held. For example, from 21 June to 9 July 1948 the Commission was active at the central labour camp in Jaworzno, subsidiary labour camps in Chrusty, Oświęcim, Krakow, Katowice, Chorzów and Wielkie Hajduki, and the transitional camp in Gliwice<sup>910</sup>. It discovered that those deprived of Polish citizenship included people who professed to be Polish<sup>911</sup>. Therefore, it was decided to review their cases<sup>912</sup>.

In September and October 1948, the Inter-Ministerial Commission carried out three inspections at the labour camp in Potulice where, as we know, people from Gdańsk voivodship were also held. It transpired that many of those questioned (scores of them elderly persons and invalids) had families in Germany, and were therefore convinced they would quickly find themselves on the opposite bank of the Oder river. Most of the internees, some 10,000 people, were employed at farms in the vicinity and other businesses. Six thousand of them featured on the *Volksliste*. The Commission instructed the security and administrative authorities to question them again. Between 7 October and 16 November 1948, there were special points throughout the voivodship where many inmates applied for permission to remain in Poland. In many cases, previous refusals were reversed.

In total, 7,052 persons appearing on the *Volksliste* were questioned between 12 September and 7 October 1948. As a result, 177 persons had their decisions to strip them of Polish citizenship annulled<sup>913</sup>, the applications of 507 people on this matter were withdrawn, and in 12 cases the Commission actually intervened to grant them Polish citizenship. According to the abovementioned inspector T. Kosmala, those interned in Potulice were more German and decidedly more

910 AAN, MAP, 199/766, rehabilitation of persons on the German national list, *Sprawozdanie z działalności Komisji Międzyministerialnej dla sprawy volksdeutschy*, 9 VII 1948, pp.183–191.

911 It was discovered that 862 camp inmates of profoundly pro-Polish attitudes had been unjustly stripped of Polish citizenship, L. Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa...*, p. 184.

912 AAN, MAP, 199/841, deprivation of Polish citizenship from German nationals. Circulars, correspondence, lists, report by the Interministerial Commission for *Volksdeutsche* Affairs, *Pismo MAP do wojewodów i prezydentów Warszawy i Łodzi*, 21 VII 1948, p. 38.

913 In the camp there were 3,970 people whose Polish citizenship had already been removed.



hostile to the previous Polish reality than, e.g. those interned in Jaworzno, so it is no wonder that there were 1,807 decisions on the rapid removal of Polish citizenship. There was also a small group of 76 internees (mainly children and elderly people enrolled in Group III) whose immediate release was ordered. A total of 3,445 children were found to be kept at the labour camp in Potulice.

The courts and prosecutor's offices were instructed to convey acquittal verdicts to internees via the security authorities that had dealt with their case or that administered the prison or camp where they were held<sup>914</sup>. However, this instruction was ignored regarding internees in Potulice. Polish citizens continued to be kept interned. There were situations where the courts passed sentences on the deprivation of Polish citizenship on persons who were Polish nationals beyond all doubt<sup>915</sup>.

Polish citizenship was restored mainly to persons of mixed Polish-German marriages who were usually indifferent about their national identity. It was also restored to persons with a clear sense of Polish identity, therefore the original decisions to deprive them of their citizenship must be considered completely unjustified.

The number of so-called renewals regarding persons of German descent mainly concerned women with Polish husbands who had been released after serving their sentences for waiving their Polish nationality, or who, in a show of solidarity with their spouses, had applied for the withdrawal of Polish citizenship and resettlement. In turn, decisions confirming the withdrawal of Polish citizenship mainly concerned persons of a clear pro-German disposition. The assets of a person often played a role in the process of withdrawing Polish citizenship and accelerated this procedure. Those subject to these accelerated procedures included the rich peasantry who were to be alien not only in an ethnic sense, but also in a class sense<sup>916</sup>.

The conclusion reached by the Inter-Ministerial Commission at the end of 1948 after its inspections of the labour camps was that these camps were unjustified in the first place. As we have seen, 80 % of those on the *Volksliste* were

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914 L. Olejnik, *Zdrajcy...*, p. 192.

915 AAN, MAP, 199/766, rehabilitation of persons on the German national list, *Notatka w sprawie działalności Komisji Międzyministerialnej w obozie pracy w Potulicach*, 24 IX 1948, pp. 192–193, *Sprawozdanie z działalności Komisji Międzyministerialnej dla spraw „Volksdeutschy”*, 12 IX-7 X 1948, pp. 196–198, 7 X-16 XI 1948, pp. 201–203, *Pismo Komisji Międzyministerialnej dla zbadania Obozu Pracy w Potulicach do Ministerstwa Sprawiedliwości*, 5 XI 1948, p. 206.

916 K. Strykowski, *op. cit.*, p. 464.

outside these camps, so the camps were not fulfilling their basic function of isolating such people and their continued existence was unjustified. Therefore, a major role was played here by the economic factor, i.e. free compulsory labour.

The Ministry of Public Administration explained that the mere withdrawal of Polish citizenship did not constitute grounds to deprive these people of their freedom, because they remained Polish citizens until such time as decisions to strip them of their citizenship were issued. Employers were asked to pay them fair wages according to the rates in force. Most of all, employment relationships were to be voluntary. Finally, the managements of the state farms were asked primarily to recruit people who had been enrolled on the German National List before the war<sup>917</sup>.

As at 31 March 1948, there were 1,494 Polish nationals whose citizenship status was still pending, and 1,866 German nationals appearing on the *Volkliste*, of whom 1,426 had not been rehabilitated earlier and were therefore waiting to be resettled beyond the Oder. However, by November 1948 only 182 of these had been deported, if we rely on a report from that month saying that there were 1,684 of them remaining. Another 12 Polish nationals on the *Volkliste* were stripped of their Polish citizenship in November 1948<sup>918</sup>.

A record was kept of Germans and of persons on the *Volkliste* whose status remained unresolved. They each received a registration certificate valid for six months that could be renewed if necessary. In April 1949, there were still 3,035 German nationals in Gdańsk voivodship. By the third quarter of that year, this number had fallen to 2,959. This would mean that only 66 people departed for Germany. There were still 1,504 pre-war Polish citizens of German nationality who had been enrolled on the *Volkliste* during the war and who had not been deprived of Polish citizenship. As we can see, their number fell slightly during the year, and some of them must have changed their minds because about 40 % no longer wished to go to Germany. The remainder, however, still wished to do so.

Despite the work of the Inter-Ministerial Commission, the process of cancelling Polish citizenship did not end on 31 December 1948, the date originally planned, but was extended twice, first to 31 December 1949, and then to the end of 1950<sup>919</sup>.

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917 AAN, MAP, 199/766, rehabilitation of persons on the German national list, *Notatka służbowa w sprawie działalności Komisji Międzyministerialnej dla spraw byłych volksdeutschy, znajdujących się w obozach pracy*, 31 I 1949, pp. 212–214, and 253.

918 AAN, MAP, 199/57, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne wojewody gdańskiego*, I quarter of 1948, p. 302.

919 K. Strykowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 470–471.

On 24 August 1950, the Social-Administrative Bureau of the Council of Ministers sent the Voivodship People's Council in Gdańsk a confidential telegram ordering a stop to the removal of Polish citizenship and the resettlement of Germans enrolled on the *Volksliste*<sup>920</sup>. This was the very first action from the top echelons to put an end to the so-called German question in that voivodship, even though people of German descent still resided there.

In general, decisions regarding the destiny of people included on the *Volksliste* in Poland were decided in a Council of Ministers plan drawn up in December 1950, which altered the previous procedures. The above-mentioned Social-Administrative Bureau made the following decisions, in which this time the deciding factor was to be attitudes before World War II:

1. Those who had declared themselves German nationals before 1 September 1939 were to be deprived of their Polish citizenship and deported.
2. Those who had declared themselves Polish nationals before 1 September 1939, including those already included on the deportation lists, were to be allowed to remain in Poland, including anyone who had families in Germany. However, women and children remaining in Poland were to be provided with special care<sup>921</sup>.

From 1951, the question of people included on the *Volksliste* ceased to occupy the attention of the institutions dealing with ethnic issues. Even though their status had been regulated in a formal legal sense, they remained the focus of attention of the security services. For a long time yet, any sign of Germanisation was viewed as a threat to state security and such persons were automatically suspected of cooperation with foreign intelligence. "This was a manifestation of the suspicion prevalent during that period, which provided the security services with the basis of their activity<sup>922</sup>."

We cannot avoid the impression that both the procedure of Germanisation used by the Nazis and discussed in Chapter I and the Polish policy of eliminating the effects of this Germanisation were based on similar principles, all the way down to complex official mechanisms so that new members of the respective governments could quickly be chosen. The Germans were intent on Germanising the "temporarily

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920 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/281, general regulations and decrees 1945–1951, *Telefonogram Prezydium Rady Ministrów do Prezydium WRN w Gdańsku*, 24 VIII 1950, p. 203.

921 *Niemcy w Polsce 1945–1950. Wybór dokumentów*, ed. W. Borodziej and H. Lemberga, vol. I, *Władze i instytucje centralne. Województwo olsztyńskie*, Warsaw 2000, pp. 373–374.

922 L. Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa...*, p. 187.

Polonised” inhabitants of Pomerania who had been compulsorily Germanised (this was called re-Germanisation) for commercial and military purposes. The post-war Polish authorities also called for “rapid rehabilitation” for their own political ends.

As a result, the population of Pomerania was ceaselessly subjected to social disintegration between 1939 and 1950. First, they were divided into better and worse Germans, then after 1945 they were divided into those who had enrolled on the *Volksliste*, those who had resisted the terror and refused to go on the list, and those who, for various reasons, avoided being entered on the list (occasionally by simply rejecting the application form). Those not on the *Volksliste* found support from the settlers, whose wartime experience was different and who often dismissed the population of Pomerania as traitors. Of course, we must remember those Poles who, despite pressure, consistently refused to be entered on the *Volksliste*.

There is no doubt that the moral dimension of the topic we are discussing represents one of the most painful chapters of Poland’s recent history and still arouses emotions. Another issue is that it is impossible to provide exact figures on rehabilitation because source materials have major loopholes and the surviving documentation does not always provide exact figures.

Problems appear at county level when we try to compare wartime figures with post-war figures, i.e. determine to what extent the number of people enrolled on the *Volksliste* during the war corresponds to the number of people rehabilitated after the war. The demographic situation in 1941–1950, when the processes of direct Germanisation, rehabilitation and removal of Polish citizenship were at their broadest, changed so much that we can only state the factors that caused such changes. Moreover, due to the nature of this period, the statistical documentation covering both the war and the post-war periods is highly unreliable, therefore there seems to be little sense in making comparisons because this would raise too many doubts to be able to reach rational conclusions.

For example, we note that rehabilitation occurred at a faster pace in some areas, such as the coastal county, than in others, such as Kartuzy and Tczew counties. But this also depended on other factors such as detention in camps, deportations, repatriation and voluntary relocation to Germany.

Nevertheless, it is worth referring to the local statistics of the security authorities in Gdańsk voivodship. It was estimated that 95 % of the population of counties such as Kościerz<sup>923</sup>, Starogard<sup>924</sup> and

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923 AIPN Gd, 05/54, vol. 56, *Sprawozdanie z pracy polityczno-wychowawczej Komitet Powiatowego MO w Starogardzie Gdańskim*, 22 XI 1946.

924 AIPN Gd, 05/54, vol. 38, *Sprawozdanie okresowe i miesięczne Komitet Powiatowego MO w Kościerzynie*, 5 XII 1946, p. 200.

Tczew<sup>925</sup> were on the *Volkliste*. However, these figures seem to reflect the way in which these areas functioned in the minds of the security service and militia and their attitudes towards the local population. As we know, because the voivodship of Gdańsk was considered typically post-German, the figure of 95 % reflects this fact.

We know that over 320,000 people were included in the most numerous third group of the *Volkliste* in those areas that were amalgamated into Gdańsk voivodship after the war. By the end of 1946, over 162,000 of them had been rehabilitated in this voivodship. Some 2,000 applications for rehabilitation were rejected and in February 1946, about 45,000 applications were still being processed. During the period when criminal legislation was applied to people on the *Volkliste*, several thousand were stripped of their Polish citizenship, and towards the end of 1947 proceedings in this matter were still in process concerning over 4,000 people. The authorities of Gdańsk certainly failed to include many people in these statistics because they were still in labour camps. We can assume that a certain number of people on the *Volkliste* died at the hands of both the Germans and the Soviets during wartime hostilities. As we know, the Soviets deported some 25,000 indigenous inhabitants from Gdańsk voivodship, including Germanised Poles. The remaining category of persons comprised those who relocated to Germany voluntarily or under pressure.

### 4.3 The Intensification of Ethnic Vetting

The status of the indigenous population was regulated in law in the spring of 1946, prompting the Ministry of the Regained Territories to issue a memorandum on 28 May 1946 stating that vetting was now entering a phase of “proper implementation of the legal instruments in this matter.” Everyone recognised as a Polish national was to receive Polish citizenship automatically<sup>926</sup>. The indigenous

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925 AIPN Gd, 05/4, vol. 13, *Sprawozdanie z pracy polityczno-wychowawczej Komitet Powiatowego MO w Tczewie*, I-II 1947, p. 3.

926 Identity cards confirming Polish citizenship were issued under a decree by the Ministry of Public Administration of 17 July 1945 on the issue of identity cards on demand, pursuant to a decree of 16 March 1928 *On records and the control of population movements*. Minister Władysław Kiernik noted that this did not contradict the provisions of the law of 6 May 1945 *On the exclusion of hostile elements from society*. AAN, MAP, 199/927, *Pismo Departamentu Administracyjnego MAP do wojewodów oraz prezydentów miast Warszawy i Łodzi*, 17 VII 1945, p. 2.

Polish population of the Regained Territories continued to be a core subject of western policy. The central authorities also urged that this question be accorded particular importance, stressing that rapid and efficient vetting was desirable in view of the approaching referendum<sup>927</sup>. Therefore, the broadest participation of the indigenous Polish population in this referendum was considered an issue of national importance.

In June 1946, the Voivodship Vetting Board of Gdańsk ordered that a review of all applications for citizenship and other cases that had been rejected be carried out under the new legislation<sup>928</sup>. Opinion in party circles claimed that only control by the political parties could intensify the vetting operation. For example, at a meeting of the Interparty Commission in Kwidzyn, Feliks Górecki (PPR) and Pawlikowski (PPS) said that the vetting was too lax and harmful to the settlers, and spoke out in favour of submitting the documentation on the vetting in the county to the Voivodship Interparty Commission in Gdańsk and to the County People's Council in Kwidzyn. Parallel with these demands stemming from party ideology, other people called for leniency towards the rehabilitated and vetted population<sup>929</sup>.

The adoption of citizenship legislation in the Regained Territories in spring 1946 made ethnic vetting the subject of numerous discussions and reports. One such report was produced by a member of the Silesian Commission for the Regained Territories, Lieut.-Col. W. Nadolski, and entitled *The problem of vetting the indigenous Polish population of the Regained Territories*. He considered it important to treat rehabilitation and ethnic vetting as a single subject, but added that although the vetting would soon be completed despite numerous faults, some 300,000 people were still awaiting rehabilitation in the western voivodship.

Nadolski said that the greatest obstacle to efficient vetting was the spread of rumours that the Regained Territories were to be returned to Germany. Other hindrances were in his opinion the incompetence of the Vetting Boards, attempts to gain advantages at the expense of the indigenous population, regional antagonisms that caused mutual distrust, and a frequently corrupt administrative apparatus able to impose its decisions by force. His report states: "The vetting of

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927 Cf.: Cz. Osekowski, *Wyboru...*, p. 19.

928 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do ZM w Gdańsku*, 25 V 1946, p. 128, *Pismo do MZO*, 15 VI 1946, p. 258, *Pismo w sprawie rewizji odrzuconych wniosków weryfikacyjnych*, 25 VI 1946, p. 368. Cf.: UWG, 1164/363, WKW, *Pismo do SP w Miastku*, 15 VII 1946, p. 100.

929 AP Gd, KP PPR in Kwidzyn, 2602/6, *Protokoły posiedzeń Międzypartyjnej Komisji Porozumiewawczej Stronnictw Politycznych w Kwidzynie*, 13 IV 1946, pp. 22–23.

Poles in the Regained Territories requires in each individual case the highest attention, fairness, good will, precision and, above all, a knowledge of the area and its specific nature, a knowledge of people, absolute impartiality and objectivism, and an awareness of the circumstances applicable to the Regained Territories and its larger interests.” As the development of national consciousness in these areas had slowed somewhat and Germanisation was exerting greater influence here and there, vetting was now meant to ascertain whether an individual’s attitudes and behaviour were an obstacle to his or her recognition as a full Polish citizen<sup>930</sup>.

The Ministry of the Regained Territories presented its stance on the new vetting legislation in the broader context of the lands annexed to Poland in 1945. Secret memorandum No. 18 of 26 April 1946 on the acceleration of re-Polonisation in these areas underscored vetting as a weapon against Germanisation, listing the following tasks: 1. Eradicating the German language, 2. Removing German signs, 3. Polonising names, and 4. Combating all traces of Nazi ideology and Germanisation. All state authorities were put under a duty to take part in the Polonisation work and appoint coordinators in their socio-political sections to supervise this work<sup>931</sup>. The case of Kwidzyn, as noted above, showed how necessary such coordinators were. We can observe that in Kwidzyn country and in other parts of Gdańsk voivodship, the criteria governing vetting and an improvement to this process only occurred after the issue of successive ministerial memoranda after April 1946.

An improvement in the process of vetting was reported in summer 1946 by J. Przybysz, head of the Socio-Political Department in Kwidzyn. Following a publicity campaign among the population, the number of vetted persons rose from 978 in April of that year to 1,399 in the space of three months. In July, the County Vetting Board considered a further 117 applications and approved 109 of them. The Gdańsk authorities reported a continuing influx of fresh applications. They were probably not taken into account in the September 1946 report by the Ministry of the Regained Territories, from which the figures in the following table are derived, therefore the figures for Kwidzyn do not reflect the real number of people vetted there. At the same time, the abovementioned Przybysz reported that a start had been made on restoring confiscated property and that state authorities had been asked to settle all debts regarding vetted persons.

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930 AAN, MZO, 196/68, *Tezy i wnioski do referatu „Problem weryfikacji polskiej ludności autochtonicznej na ziemiach odzyskanych”*, (undated), pp. 67–80.

931 AAN, MZO, 196, *Tajny okólnik No. 18 Ministerstwa Ziem Odzyskanych*, 26 IV 1946, pp.33–35.

Cooperation at county level also improved. The county authorities, in consultation with the County Repatriation Office, granted farms to vetted persons. This served to improve relations between the population of the counties. Vetted persons were paid benefits amounting to 250 zlotys, whilst farmers were promised additional support in the form of livestock and clothing. The need for further care for this population was stressed, mainly on account of malnutrition and the arrival of relatives from abroad. The above action by the Vetting Board in Kwidzyn was reported as having “resounded in an echo of understanding among repatriated persons<sup>932</sup>.”

An acceleration of vetting was also noted in the other counties along the Vistula river. For example, in Malbork county a further 4,559 persons were positively vetted by 31 July 1946<sup>933</sup>. In Sztum county, 5,313 people were positively vetted by the end of November 1946<sup>934</sup>. In Elbląg county, 1,082 people received their vetting certificates by the end of that year<sup>935</sup>.

On 30 April 1946, Gdańsk City Council, summing up the results of vetting, announced that 10,812 people had been positively vetted and the applications of 1,290 others had been rejected<sup>936</sup>. However, in the summer of 1946 the number of positive vettings in Gdańsk fell considerably. In May, 723 vetting certificates were issued, but in August only 86. This may be attributed to the creation of a Border Unit within the Socio-Political Department, charged with issuing residency permits for the border zone and considering decisions by the mayor of Gdańsk to remove “harmful or superfluous elements”. Some 310 people were ordered to leave Gdańsk in August 1946.

Vetting in Gdańsk accelerated. By the end of 1946, 549 people had been vetted, most of them having returned from Germany and England. In spring 1947, a further 326 people were vetted, followed by 419 in the autumn of that year and 214 in the final quarter. The number of rejections was 111, 25 and 15 respectively<sup>937</sup>. The number of persons positively vetted in Gdańsk county by

932 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo kierownika Referatu Polityczno-Społecznego w Kwidzynie do UWG*, 10 VII 1946, p. 456.

933 AAN, MZO, 196/1076, *Sprawozdanie dotyczące załatwiania spraw obywatelstwa na Ziemiach Odzyskanych, w szczególności w powiatach malborskim i kwidzyńskim*, 20 VI 1946, p. 50.

934 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/87, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Sztumie*, XI 1946, p. 59.

935 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/79, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Elblągu za lata 1945–1951*, XI 1946, p. 105.

936 AP Gd, MRN-ZMG, 1165/1112, *Pismo do WSP UWG*, 30 IV 1946, p. 19.

937 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/74, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne ZM w Gdańsku*, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, and XII 1946, pp. 59, 126, 134, 150, 154, 159, 177, 184, 192, and 201.



**Tab. 2:** The status of ethnic vetting as at 15 September 1946.

<b>Counties and separate cites</b>	<b>Vetted persons</b>
<b>New counties</b>	
Elbląg	90
Kwidzyn	1,401
Lębork	1,506
Malbork	532
Sztum	4,950
<b>Separate cities</b>	
Elbląg	493
<i>Total</i>	8,972
<b>Old counties</b>	
Gdańsk	3,860
Kartuzy	687
Kościerz	204
Wejherowo	866
Starogard	190
Tczew	182
<b>Separate cities</b>	
Gdańsk	12,644
Sopot	2,813
Gdynia	76
<i>Total</i>	21,522
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>30,494</b>

Source: AAN, MAP, 199/2066, p. 144.

the end of June 1946 was 3,650. Thanks to a more liberal procedure for granting civic rights, 70 % of those who received their vetting certificates were German speakers<sup>938</sup>. The number of persons vetted in the western recovered parts of Gdańsk voivodship also increased. In July 1946, 1,506 people were positively vetted in Lębork county<sup>939</sup>.

As we have seen, the process of vetting also took place in areas that were part of Poland before the war, albeit to a lesser extent. Excellent results were

938 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/80, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne SP w Gdańsku*, VI 1946, p. 89.

939 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/71, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne PO w Lęborku za lata 1945–1950*, VII 1946, p. 145.

produced by an inspection in the coastal county where, as we know, vetting applied mainly to residents of the district of Wierzychucin and a small number of citizens of the former Free City of Danzig. The official responsible for this operation, Stróżyk, showed a keen interest in vetting and kept excellence records of his work. However, there was a different problem here: rehabilitation and vetting certificates were traded<sup>940</sup>. On 1 August 1946, there were about 1,000 suspected cases where persons who had declared a desire to remain in Poland sold their citizenship certificates to people who had problems obtaining them. The Polish Western Union (PWU), and especially its branches in Wejherowo and Puck, was particularly active in dealing with this phenomenon.

In June 1948, an inspection by the Polish Western Union in Gdańsk revealed that some 5 % of the Germans in this area had received vetting certificates with the support of Polish relatives, plus a certain number of Poles on the *Volkliste* who had collaborated with the Germans during the war. It was deemed necessary to revoke these persons' civic rights because "such situation prevents elements with weak national awareness from identifying themselves with the Polish state and society<sup>941</sup>."

The example of the coastal county provided a justification for the fears of state officials like Edward Quirini from the Ministry of the Regained Territories, who said that the adoption of a general law on citizenship was premature and should have been postponed until all of the Germans in Poland had been expelled<sup>942</sup>.

By 31 October 1946, 992,318 people had been positively vetted in Poland as a whole. Of these, 25,000 were in Gdańsk voivodship, 850,000 in Silesia voivodship, 67,000 in Olsztyn voivodship, 24,000 in Szczecin voivodship, 15,000 in Wrocław voivodship, 6,318 in Poznań voivodship and 5,000 in Białystok voivodship. There were said to be 1,067,318 people in Poland who not yet been vetted. Some 45,000 of these were in Olsztyn voivodship.

The work of the officials responsible for the vetting operation earned increasing praise. The Vetting Board in Elbląg was considered a benchmark. The voivode of Gdańsk even said that the vetting in that county could serve as a pattern for other counties and towns to follow. Ewa Kozel, head of the local socio-political section, received a commendation and an award of 2,000 zlotys for her work. To encourage proper effort and the best results in "such a vital yet difficult segment

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940 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/363, WKW, *Pismo do wicewojewody Podhorskiego*, 7 VIII 1946, p. 264.

941 M. Ujdał, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

942 G. Strauchold, *Autochtoni polscy...* p. 62.

of state work,<sup>943</sup> the voivode announced prizes for all mayors and local government chiefs<sup>943</sup>. However, Ewa Kozel's award did not make such an impression on her surroundings, because in March 1947 two employees at the Elbląg Socio-Political Department, Stanisław Glegoła and Eugeniusz Zimoch, took bribes for issuing vetting certificates and pocketed the money<sup>944</sup>.

In July 1946, the Voivodship Vetting Board in Gdańsk again extended the deadline for vetting, this time until 1 August of that year. For the first time since the start of the process, the Gdańsk authorities said that both the vetting and the rehabilitation had reached a higher standard than previously. The Vetting Board performed a further four inspections in the counties of Miastko, Bytów, Wejherowo and Sztum<sup>945</sup>.

Vetting in Gdańsk continued through the spring of 1947, but the number of applications fell markedly. Most of the applicants were people returning from abroad, including Germany and England. Most persons obliged to undergo vetting received their vetting certificates by the autumn of 1947. Guaranteeing them security and a proper social position became a prestigious issue for the Polish authorities. Nevertheless, despite the improved results of the vetting, the local population's situation did not generally improve. The abovementioned local inspections revealed moral and material harm to the indigenous population, largely due to a lack of cooperation between the institutions responsible for interpersonal relations, i.e. the Resettlement Sections, Repatriation Offices and Land Offices, and were mainly connected with the distribution of farms left by the Germans. The property of prosperous indigenous people was often taken from them and given to settlers. The Voivodship Office in Gdańsk continued to receive news that public security officials were hiding the lists of vetted people, thus making it difficult for them to find jobs.

Attempts were made at a national level to protect people of Polish origin who had not yet been vetted from deportation to Germany. The Ministry of the Regained Territories even issued a directive on 2 November 1946 in which people who had not yet applied for vetting be excluded from repatriation to Germany. This was a result of attempts by the Polish Western Union (PWU) to introduce vetting at national level as part of a national ethnic policy. At the

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943 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Pismo wojewody gdańskiego do Prezydenta Miasta Elbląga*, 3 VII 1946, p. 123.

944 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/352, *Pismo Sądu Okręgowego w Elblągu do WSP UWG*, 21 IV 1947, p. 83.

945 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Sprawozdanie*, 30 VII 1946, p. 127.

end of 1946, the PWU formulated the theory of three levels of national consciousness through which all societies pass: 1. The people, characterised by a common language and sense of identity, 2. Nationality, a bond of tradition at a higher level than the people and a feeling of solidarity, and 3. The nation, the highest form of national consciousness in human communities, characterised by the creation of permanent institutions to encourage and protect separate spiritual and economic development. In other words, an ethnically Polish population, not displaying consciousness at a national level, should automatically be included in the Polish nation because it is incapable of self-determination in an ethnic sense<sup>946</sup>. This theory was reflected in practice when compulsory vetting was imposed upon persons, especially Masurians, who were unable to decide which nationality they should have.

Without a doubt, one of the negative factors affecting the situation of the indigenous population in Gdańsk voivodship was the way in which their complaints were settled. Local authorities often failed to follow the guidelines set by the authorities at central and voivodship level. Mirosław Dybowski estimated that “80 % of the paperwork of the Voivodship Vetting Board provides no results<sup>947</sup>.” Continuing social conflicts between settlers and the indigenous population only served to diminish the social and economic status of the latter. Therefore, it was decided to create yet another institution to resolve this situation: Committees for Care over Vetted Persons (CCVP).

CCVPs were created by a motion of voivode Stanisław Zrałek of 4 May 1946, and in the summer they assumed some of the tasks connected with the legal-economic and social status of the indigenous population in Gdańsk voivodship<sup>948</sup>. Seeing and experiencing anarchy and discrimination, and thus a threat to its own safety, the indigenous Polish population cut itself off from politics and adopted a passive wait-and-see attitude towards the new authority in Poland. In response, the latter decided that the indigenous population was required clarification. In the document appointing the CCVPs, voivode Zrałek argued that “repatriated persons and settlers availing themselves of the care of the Polish Repatriation Office and other state offices possess full rights on the Regained Territories,

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946 M. Musielak, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

947 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/367, general CCVP files, *Pismo M. Dybowskiego do WKW*, 25 VI 1946, p. 8.

948 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/367, general CCVP files, *Pismo WKW do przewodniczącego WRN*, 17 VI 1946, p. 6; 1164/365, WKW, *Sprawozdanie*, 30 VII 1946, p. 127; 1164/281, general rules and regulations 1945–1951, *Pismo wojewody gdańskiego do Prezydium WRN*, 4 V 1946 r., p. 45; Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz polskich wobec ludności rodzimej...*, p. 65.

whereas vetted persons are treated as outlaws and are exploited by people of bad will<sup>949</sup>.”

The basic purpose of the CCVPs was to extend moral, material and cultural care over vetted persons. On 4 June 1946, the Voivodship People's Council created the Voivodship Committee of Care over Vetted Persons in Gdańsk, chaired by Władysław Zdunek, secretary of the PPR voivodship committee for propaganda, member of the Voivodship People's Council, and deputy to the National People's Council. The vice chairman was Zygmunt Moczyński, and the members of the executive committee were Jan Młynarczyk, education officer for the voivodship, B. Bukowski, and S. Romanowski. The voivode of Gdańsk appointed as his proxy M. Dybowski, whom we have already met and who was appointed secretary of the Committee. Zrałek gave him the task of creating field committees and formulating the regulations and procedures governing their activity.

At its first plenary meeting in June 1946, the Committee adopted its rules and regulations and issued its first appeal<sup>950</sup>. But despite the voivode's instructions, over the following month it failed to create the field bodies that were supposed to improve the vetting process and provide the indigenous Polish population with moral and material assistance. Thus, despite strong efforts by the voivodship authorities, the Presidium of the Voivodship People's Council failed to implement immediately the abovementioned motion adopted by the voivode on 4 May. Consequently, vetting continued to be beset with shortcomings<sup>951</sup>. Not until 6 July 1946 did the Voivodship People's Council appoint CCVPs at county and municipal level, composed of at least one vetted person.

At the same time, cooperation between the Gdańsk CCVP and PWU in matters regarding the indigenous population improved<sup>952</sup>. On 5 October, they held a joint session inaugurating their combined activity and resolved to convene a congress of the indigenous population of Gdańsk voivodship to mark the 25th anniversary of the PWU. The PWU also undertook to look after the indigenous Polish population and cooperate in the full Polonisation and enfranchisement

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949 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo wojewody gdańskiego Prezydium WRN w sprawie utworzenia KOnZ*, 4 V 1946, pp. 34–35.

950 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, 4 V 1946, pp. 34–45, *Pismo do Wydziału Opieki Społecznej UWG*, 11 VI 1946, p. 238, *Pismo do wojewody gdańskiego S. Zrałka*, 25 VI 1946, p. 362. See also: 1164/363, WKW, *Pismo do Prezydenta Miasta Gdańska*, 24 VIII 1946, p. 447.

951 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Sprawozdanie*, 30 VII 1946, p. 127.

952 S. Bykowska, *Rehabilitacja...*, pp. 45–46.

of vetted persons. In spring 1947, the offices of the voivodship CCVP and PWU were merged<sup>953</sup>.

Due to the unregulated legal status of the Voivodship CCVP, in February 1948 the well-known Polish activists of Gdańsk, K. Banaś-Purwin and F. Błęński, wrote to Polish president Bolesław Bierut: “During its two years of activity, the Vetting Board has saved for Poland the surviving valuable Gdańsk Poles as heirs of the valiant fighters for the Polishness of Gdańsk, and has removed hostile elements from Polish society, placing them in the hands of the courts. That is also the aim of the Municipal Committee of Care over Vetted Persons in Gdańsk<sup>954</sup>.”

#### 4.4 Attempts to End Vetting. The Indigenous Population during the Final Stage of Vetting

Between September 1946 and June 1947, the Ministry of the Regained Territories twice announced that ethnic vetting was over. On 4 September, it issued a circular in which it closed down the Vetting Boards<sup>955</sup>.

The Voivodship Vetting Board in Gdańsk first announced an end to vetting in August 1946. *Declarations of loyalty* were to be accepted only in exceptional cases, e.g. from people returning from abroad<sup>956</sup>. Anyone who had not applied for vetting earlier was to be considered a German and deported. Only in a few cases was belated vetting tolerated: sickness, lack of funds or unawareness of the importance of civic rights<sup>957</sup>. But the number of people in such exceptional cases was so large that subsequent reports stated that vetting had to be continued.

The scale of the work of the Voivodship Vetting Board in Gdańsk in the second half of 1946 and in 1947 proved that the announcement of the end of vetting was premature. By the end of 1946, the Board had made a further three field trips to inspect the vetting and resolve complicated issues. Objections to and appeals against vetting decisions continued to be the matters most often considered by

953 M. Ujdał, *op. cit.*, pp. 80–81.

954 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/352, opinions on determining Polish nationality, *Pismo P. Banasia-Purwina i F. Błęńskiego do Bolesława Bieruta*, 4 II 1948, pp. 59–61.

955 This circular is formally considered to mark the end of stage two of the vetting. AAN, MZO, 196/497, vetting of the indigenous population in the Regained Territories, *Pismo okólne*, 4 IX 1946, pp. 22–24. L. Belzyt, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

956 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Sprawozdanie*, VIII 1946, p. 129.

957 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/363, WKW, *Pismo do ZM w Gdańsku*, 10 IX 1946, p. 317, *Pismo do SP w Elblągu*, 30 VIII 1946, p. 514.

the Vetting Board, often involving the complicated process of obtaining reliable information<sup>958</sup>.

From March to May 1947, the work of the Voivodship Vetting Board was suspended because there was no chairman. Kazimierz Banaś-Purin, who had been recommended for this post, failed to obtain support, most probably because of his earlier conflict with the voivode<sup>959</sup>. In spring 1947, the Vetting Board was granted the status of a mere opinion-giving body<sup>960</sup>. It was finally dissolved by voivode Stanisław Załek on 1 October 1947, whereas the Vetting-Rehabilitation Board for Gdańsk Poles continued in business until 30 October 1947<sup>961</sup>. Any cases still unresolved on that date were transferred to the Administrative Section of Gdańsk City Council<sup>962</sup>. From then on, applications for Polish citizenship from Gdańsk residents were considered by the People's Councils<sup>963</sup>.

Likewise, the county vetting boards in Gdańsk voivodship were abolished on 1 October 1947 pursuant to a memorandum of 5 June 1947 from the Ministry of the Regained Territories<sup>964</sup>. Vetting files were transferred to the first instance administrative authorities (administrative-legal departments)<sup>965</sup>. We shall see what the formal aspect of the vetting process was like after the abolition of the institutions originally appointed to deal with it.

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958 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Sprawozdanie sytuacyjne*, IX 1946, p. 139, XII 1946, p. 165, III 1947, p. 170.

959 L. Belzyt, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

960 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/66, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne UWG miesięczne*, 15 VII 1947, p. 52.

961 AP Gd, MRN-ZM, 1165/1095, decrees on the subject of vetting, *Pismo Prezydenta Gdańska, Bolesława Nowickiego, do przewodniczącego Komisji Weryfikacyjnej przy ZM w Gdańsku, P. Banasia-Purwina*, 17 X 1947, p. 33; AP Gd, UWG, 1164/352, opinions on the determination of Polish nationality, *Pismo P. Banasia-Purwina i F. Błęńskiego do prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej, B. Bieruta*, 4 II 1948, pp. 59–61.

962 AP Gd, MRN-ZM, 1165/1113, list of persons who had been denied provisional certificates of Polish citizenship, *Protokół w sprawie przekazania Wydziałowi Administracyjnemu ZMG nie załatwionych spraw Komisji Weryfikacyjnej w Gdańsku*, 30 X 1947, pp. 11–13.

963 Cf.: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/242, determination of citizenship 1948, *Pismo ZM w Gdańsku do WO UWG*, 25 IX 1948, p. 561.

964 AP Gd, MRN-ZMG, 1165/1095, decrees on the subject of vetting, *Okólnik MZO no. 38*, 6 VI 1947, p. 37.

965 AAN, MZO, 196/497, vetting of the indigenous population in the Regained Territories, *Pismo wojewody gdańskiego do starostw i prezydentów miast powiatów Ziemi Odzyskanych*, X 1947, p. 114; AP Gd, MRN-ZMG, 1165/1095, decrees on the subject of vetting, *Pismo UWG*, 21 IX 1946, p. 32.

The Vetting Boards lasted the longest in Gdańsk and Sopot, mainly as opinion-giving bodies<sup>966</sup>. In the coastal county, from September 1947 citizenship matters were handled by the socio-political section<sup>967</sup>. In the county of Elbląg, as late as spring 1949 decisions to grant or withdraw Polish citizenship were still issued by the Social-Political Section, and the Gdańsk voivode's post-control instructions included the transfer of these matters to the Administrative-Legal Section, leaving the Social-Political Section to issue an opinion on applications. The voivode also stated that any documents missing in the vetting files must be replaced. His following instruction is somewhat surprising: "Close the file. 'Record and control the movements of vetted persons number Sp. PP. IV. 3c'<sup>968</sup>." Malbork chief executive A. Lewandowski informed the authorities of Gdańsk voivodship that the Socio-Political Section vetted 557 people as late as in January 1949, of whom 83 spoke no Polish and 102 only spoke it poorly<sup>969</sup>.

As we have already seen, because the Vetting Boards were attached to the administration, their formal abolition did not significantly affect procedures. A novelty, however, was that applications for vetting now had to be approved by the presidia of the People's Councils and field administrations of the Polish Western Union. Those areas where indigenous inhabitants had not applied for vetting were identified, a stop to the deportation of Germans from these areas was ordered, and a fresh list of people earmarked for deportation was drawn up. In Gdańsk voivodship, this topic related to Lębork county<sup>970</sup>.

In a confidential and urgent memorandum of April 1948, the Ministry of the Regained Territories stressed that any further procrastination with citizenship matters relating to the population of the Regained Territories hampered the normalisation of socio-political and economic relations in this area. Therefore,

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966 AP Gd, MRN-ZMG, 1165/1101, directives from the Ministry of the Regained Territories on re-Polonisation and vetting, *Pismo WSP UWG do starostw powiatowych i prezydentów miast*, 21 VII 1947, p. 32.

967 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/107, protocols of local inspections in Gdańsk voivodship, 1947–1949, *Sprawozdanie*, 4 IX 1947, p. 10.

968 AAN, MAP, 199/2072, inspections by municipal authorities in Gdańsk voivodship, reports, protocols, directives, *Zarządzenia pokontrolne dla SP w Elblągu*, 15 V 1949, pp. 4 and 6.

969 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/360, regional problems, re-Polonisation, *Pismo SP w Malborku do WSP UWG*, 4 I 1949, p. 145.

970 See: Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz polskich wobec ludności rodzimej...*, p. 74.



**Tab. 3:** Status of vetting as at 1 January 1949.

<b>Name of city or county</b>	<b>No. of persons vetted</b>	<b>No. of cases in progress</b>	<b>No. of rejections</b>
Gdańsk	5,884	80	700
City of Gdańsk	13,424	30	1,824
City of Sopot	3,172	5	135
City of Gdynia	108	1	5
Wejherowo	1,040	15	62
Tczew	190	-	5
Kościerz	273	12	12
Starogard	275	-	3
Kartuzy	788	1	4
Malbork	697	-	8
Kwidzyn	1,821	16	35
City of Elbląg	761	-	79
Elbląg	126	-	-
Lębork	2,622	38	-
Sztum	5,972	44	62
<b>Total</b>	<b>37,152</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>2,934</b>

Source: AAN, MZO, 196/497, p. 89.

the Ministry recommended that all outstanding applications for citizenship be processed by 1 June 1948<sup>971</sup>.

We must note that ethnic vetting was praised by some sections of society, especially former Polish citizens of Gdańsk, who underscored the need to resolve the nationality issues in that area<sup>972</sup>. However, there were some exceptions to the statutory rules governing vetting, adapted to life's circumstances. For example, a Norwegian woman married to a vetted Pole was herself vetted<sup>973</sup>.

There were also cases where the authorities of Gdańsk made positive vetting conditional upon having children "who might be useful members of Polish society<sup>974</sup>." That was the case with the vetting of Brunon Teszner, who was told

971 AAN, MZO, 196/497, vetting the indigenous population in the Regained Territories, *Poufne pismo okólne MZO*, IV 1948, p. 73.

972 See, e.g. the report by Budzimir Wojtalewicz-Winke of March 2005, in the author's possession.

973 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Pismo WSP UWG do PO w Sztumie*, 4 V 1946, p. 323.

974 Cf.: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/363, WKW, *Pismo do ZM w Elblągu*, 13 VII 1946, p. 90.

that if he had no children, “he would be of no value to the Polish nation and Polish *raison d'état*,” and would then, according to the Voivodship Vetting Board, have to be denied Polish civic rights. The case of Teszner provides an example of yet another procedure. Having failed to gain full civic rights in the place where he lived during the war, which we recall was a condition for vetting, Teszner reapplied to be vetted by a Vetting Board elsewhere. Thus, having been denied vetting in Malbork, Teszner reapplied in Sztum and succeeded<sup>975</sup>. The Voivodship Board described this as a “trick anyone who is trying to settle his case can play<sup>976</sup>.”

Another issue examined by the voivodship authorities that occurred on quite a large scale was the possibility of marrying someone who had been entered in Group II of the *Volksliste*. This must have applied to other voivodship apart from Gdańsk because the central government authorities also discussed it. In August 1945, the Legislative Section of the Ministry of Justice informed the Ministry of Public Security that it saw no legal basis for refusing such marriages, but considered it expedient to keep a record of them to prevent people attempting to hide their nationality<sup>977</sup>. In Tczew county, 207 vetted persons were Polish citizens who had married Germans during the war<sup>978</sup>. If a woman in Group II of the *Volksliste* got married during the war, this protected her from judicial rehabilitation because as a German and acquiring her husband's citizenship, she became subject to ethnic vetting. As in the case of applicants for vetting with children, a declared intention to marry a Pole opened the way to Polish citizenship<sup>979</sup>.

Meanwhile, the situation of the indigenous population continued to diverge widely from the policy set forth by the central authorities or, more precisely, the Ministry of the Regained Territories, which was also stressed in a confidential

975 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Pismo WKW do Sądu Grodzkiego w Malborku*, 24 IV 1946, p. 93.

976 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/362, WKW, *Pismo do ZM w Gdańsku*, 7 VII 1946, p. 39, *Pismo do prokuratury SSK w Gdańsku*, 18 V 1946, p. 90.

977 AAN, MAP, 199/766, rehabilitation of people included on German national lists during the war. *Pismo Ministerstwa Sprawiedliwości do MBP*, 31 VII 1945, p. 61.

978 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/360, regional problems, re-Polonisation, *Pismo SP w Tczewie do UWG*, 1 X 1947, p. 14.

979 See: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/363, WKW, p.1 *Pismo do SP w Wejherowie*, 11 VII 1946, p. 75, *Pismo do ZM w Elblągu*, 13 VII 1946, p. 83, *Pismo do ZM w Gdańsku*, 25 and 30 VII 1946, p. 160, *Pismo do SP w Gdańsku*, 30 VII 1946, pp. 205 and 222.

memorandum of 20 February 1947<sup>980</sup>. Numerous complaints still flooded in about the way the indigenous population was being treated by the local administrative and security authorities, e.g. in Sztum county. Former activists of the Union of Poles in Germany complained about their difficult situation. Polish Army soldiers resorted to beatings, theft and even murder in order to seize the property of pre-war Polish activists. The property of the indigenous population continued to be confiscated without court verdicts, on the basis of false denunciations<sup>981</sup>.

The authorities of Gdańsk tried to resolve the situation via the Military Prosecutor's Office. One letter from the Voivodship Board insists: "Vetting is not the business of the army, but of the administration, and any military involvement in these matters must be considered an abuse of authority, causing confusion and undermining the status of state authority." For example, in Lębork county vetting was hindered by the head of the Polish Army unit stationed there, Col. Rybacki<sup>982</sup>.

The voivode of Gdańsk informed the Ministry of the Regained Territories, among others, of the very difficult material circumstances of the indigenous population. In March 1947, the Voivodship Vetting Board in Gdańsk reported numerous cases where the rights of the indigenous population were being restricted throughout the voivodship, which should be: "counteracted steadfastly and energetically"<sup>983</sup>. Therefore, the local authorities again issued directives and announcements on protecting the rights of the indigenous Polish population<sup>984</sup>.

A similar situation persisted in other areas annexed to Poland after the war, leading the Ministry of the Regained Territories to issue memorandum No. 39 dated 5 June 1947 *On improper attitudes towards the affairs of citizens permanently settled in the Regained Territories*<sup>985</sup>. This memorandum indicated that the law of

980 AAN, MZO, 196/497, vetting of the indigenous population in the Regained Territories, *Poufne pismo okólne MZO*, 20 II 1947, pp. 47–48; AP Gd, MRN-ZMG. See also: 1165/1095, *Zarządzenia w sprawie weryfikacji*, pp. 51–52.

981 AAN, MZO, 196/1076, Sztum county. Post-inspection reports and instructions, *Pismo działaczy byłego Związku Polaków w Niemczech, Jana Szreibera, Franciszka Wojciechowskiego i Floriana Wichlacza*, 18 VIII 1946, pp. 41–42.

982 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/363, WKW, *Pismo do Rejonowej Prokuratury Wojskowej w Sopocie*, 7 VIII 1946, p. 258.

983 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/365, WKW, *Sprawozdanie*, III 1947, p. 170.

984 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/360, regional problems, re-Polonisation, *Pismo UWG do Departamentu Administracji Publicznej MZO*, 2 XII 1947, p. 25.

985 AP Gd, MRN-ZM, 1165/260, *Okólnik no. 39, W sprawie niewłaściwego ustosunkowania się do spraw obywatelstwa ludności stale osiadłej na Ziemiach Odzyskanych*, 5 VI

28 April 1946 had failed to provide the desired effects and stressed that complaints from the indigenous population were still reaching Warsaw, and that the administrative authorities still failed to appreciate the potential benefits of this piece of legislation. Yet again, the central authorities listed the faults of the problem at hand: dividing the population into indigenous or vetted people and settlers, undermining the Polish citizenship of the former, accusations against them with the intention of seizing their property, confiscation of vetting certificates, deportation to Germany, and a refusal to issue citizenship certificates<sup>986</sup>. On the basis of this memorandum, on 25 July 1947 Gdańsk voivode B. Podhorski-Piotrowski instructed the local authorities to:

- immediately stop using the terms *indigenous, vetted, former citizen of the Third Reich and Free City of Danzig* in daily contacts and official correspondence;
- automatically grant vetted persons Polish citizenship pursuant to the law of 28 April 1946;
- prohibit the invalidation or withdrawal of the provisional certificates of Polish nationality, which provided practical evidence of Polish citizenship;
- issue, if technically possible, certificates of Polish citizenship in lieu of the provisional certificates;
- apply severe official sanctions to any officials who display an improper attitude towards the affairs of the population permanently settled here;
- promptly report persons guilty of mistreating the indigenous Polish population to the prosecutor's offices for further investigation and punishment.

The above instruction was addressed to: the Presidium of the Voivodship People's Council in Gdańsk; the city and county people's councils; the prosecutors at the District Courts in Gdańsk, Gdynia and Elbląg; the Municipal Courts, the president of the Court of Appeal in Gdańsk, the Voivodship Office of Public Security in Gdańsk, the Regional Military Courts in Gdańsk and Gdynia, the Voivodship Civil Militia Command in Gdańsk; urban and county Civil Militia and Security Office commands; the Extraordinary Housing Board in Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot; the Special Commission for Combating Abuse; and the

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1947, pp. 138–139. Cf.: AP Gd, UWG, 1164/360, regional problems, re-Polonisation, *Zarządzenie SP w Łęborku*, 5 VI 1947, p. 3; see also: ZMG, 1165/1354, *Okólniki*, p. 430. Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz polskich wobec ludności rodzimej...*, p. 83.

986 Cf.: *Nie ma „autochtonów” i „zweryfikowanych”, są tylko Polacy*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 1947, No. 207, p. 3.

District Liquidation Office<sup>987</sup>. On many occasions the Ministry of the Regained Territories asked the Ministry of Public Security to cooperate in implementing common measures to calm relationships between people, and especially to “finally erase the differences between individual groups of people<sup>988</sup>.”

Meanwhile, the attitude of the Polish authorities to issues connected with the indigenous Polish population, including ethnic vetting, changed under the influence of the events begun by the plenary session of the PPR Central Committee in August and September 1948, which led to a radical political about-turn that removed Władysław Gomułka from office<sup>989</sup>. Attitudes towards ethnic issues also changed. The struggle within the communist camp against right-wing-nationalistic deviations, which rendered the slogan of an ethnically uniform Poland obsolete, represented a breakthrough<sup>990</sup>. Acceptance of progressing Sovietisation became a criterion of human and civic value as a Polish citizen, and it became dangerous to demonstrate Polish patriotism. From more or less the middle of 1947, attitudes towards the indigenous population ceased to be a key issue of post-war policy. For example, the stories covered by the *Dziennik Bałtycki* newspaper were increasingly flavoured with communist propaganda. The theory whereby ethnic conflicts were a feature of capitalist societies became increasingly popular. This is a clear sign that the authorities were moving away from a nationalist position towards class rhetoric. This was topical of the post-war period, and was suitably described by Grzegorz Strauchold in the title of his book: *Polish and German indigenous people, or...from nationalism to communism 1945–1949 (Autochtoni polscy, niemiecycy, czy...od nacjonalizmu do komunizmu 1945–1949)*.

Regarding the Regained Territories, their rapid re-Polonisation and integration among the indigenous population on the one hand and settlers on the other continued to be the prime objective. However, these matters were now given a class dimension and vetting began to be assessed according to new criteria<sup>991</sup>. This was

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987 AP Gd, MRN-ZM, 1165/260, *Pismo wicewojewody gdańskiego B. Podhorskiego-Piotrowskiego do starostw powiatowych i prezydentów miast*, 25 VII 1947, p. 140.

988 AAN, MZO, 196/497, Vetting of the indigenous population in the Regained Territories, *Pismo MZO do MBP*, 23 VI 1947, p. 59.

989 P. Kersten, *Narodziny systemu...*, p. 393–397; *Rok 1948. Nadzieje i złudzenia polskich socjalistów*, ed. M. Ożóg, Rzeszów 2000.

990 *Rezolucja KC o prawicowym i nacjonalistycznym odchyleniu w kierownictwie partii* [in:] *Polska Partia Robotnicza. Dokumenty programowe 1942–1948*, Warsaw 1984, p. 433–441.

991 Cf.: K. Lesiakowski, *Mieczysław Moczar, „Mietek”*. *Biografia polityczna*, Warsaw 1998, pp. 150–152.

also evident in cases where people were deprived of Polish citizenship. Summing up its work on 21 January 1949, the Ministry of the Regained Territories stated: "A serious error committed during the vetting operation was a failure to take class issues properly into account. Consequently, in many cases vetting certificates of Polish citizenship were awarded to capitalists in cities (petty manufacturers and rich merchants) who, during the occupation, had demonstrated no association with the Polish nation apart from their descent and who, for class reasons, hold a hostile stance towards our system. On the other hand, poor workers and peasants of Polish descent who, although possessing a low sense of national identity, were nevertheless qualified to be a part of our nation and state under the conditions of our system, were never vetted<sup>992</sup>."

This period also saw the launch of a new economic policy: the collectivisation of agriculture and the abolition of private trade, services and petty industry. All regional initiatives also began to be abolished because, as explained by J. Borzyszkowski: "regionalism (save for the kind contained in the dimension of folklore) became a suspicious phenomenon which conflicted with the realisation of the programme of integrating society that, according to plan, was to become a monolithic, centrally controlled mass<sup>993</sup>." The first arrests in the *Zrzesz Kaszubsko* community occurred as early as in December 1946, and Brunon Rychert ceased to be the editor-in-chief of that periodical, which was finally closed down in September 1947<sup>994</sup>. A year later, the Masurian Institute in Olsztyn was closed<sup>995</sup>.

It seems that we should agree with Grzegorz Strauchold that vetting was virtually complete by 1948<sup>996</sup>. Thus, by the end of November that year, a total of 1,015,360 people all over Poland had been positively vetted, 37,152 of whom were indigenous people in Gdańsk voivodship. Some 9,596 cases were still in progress, 242 of them in Gdańsk voivodship<sup>997</sup>.

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992 Cited via: Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz polskich wobec ludności rodzimej...*, p. 102.

993 J. Borzyszkowski, *Istota ruchu kaszubskiego i jego przemiany od poł. XIX w. do współczesności*, Gdańsk 1982, p. 50.

994 *Ibid.*, p. 52; C. Obracht-Prondzyński, *op. cit.*, pp. 449 and 659.

995 Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz polskich wobec ludności rodzimej...*, p. 103.

996 G. Strauchold, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

997 AAN, MZO, 196/497, vetting the indigenous population in the Regained Territories, *Statystyka ludności autochtonicznej*, 31 XII 1948, p. 75. The list included children aged under 14. The numerical status of vetting in the remaining voivodships was as follows: Białystok 2,792 persons, Katowice 848,131, Olsztyn 88,254, Poznań 5,131, Szczecin 18,754 and Wrocław 15,146. See also: J. Misztal, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa...*, p. 308.

Incoming applications for vetting encouraged the Gdańsk chapter of the PZU to conduct an inspection in July and August 1949, which concluded that the vetting operation was finished<sup>998</sup>. A report dated 31 July 1949 provided the following figures on vetted persons in Gdańsk voivodship: 12,500 families, comprising 37,750 people, excluding children aged under 14, except in the counties of Lębork, the coastal county, Kartuzy and the cities of Gdynia and Elbląg. Another 126 applications were awaiting consideration<sup>999</sup>. Eight people were vetted between 1 August 1949 and the end of that year<sup>1000</sup>. Voivode Stanisław Zrałek estimated that the total number of vetted persons, excluding children, was 70,000<sup>1001</sup>.

In the first half of 1950, 40 applications for vetting reached the Municipal People's Council in Gdańsk for its approval. It is worth stating the reason why applications were considered so late. It is because they came from people who had been repatriated from Germany and who had worked on private farms. Now that these farms had been abolished, "people seeking work from state employers are applying for vetting so that they can produce certificates of citizenship if their employers require them<sup>1002</sup>." On the one hand, a sign of the times was a maximum curb on private initiative as one of the final acts in the monopolisation of power by the communists – in this case an economic incentive for vetting. On the other hand, the prolongation of the procedures under discussion was the sign of yet another phenomenon: that ethnic groups in this area, mainly Kashubians, did not feel any strong attachment to a specific area marked by clear state boundaries, regarding this as a secondary issue. It seems that after the war, the inhabitants of Pomerania were prone to view their ethnic identity, shaped throughout the centuries, rather in terms of a collective identity relating mainly to the area they inhabited and their own culture.

The final stage of vetting in Olsztyn voivodship was particularly drastic. As some Masurians still delayed with the submission of their *Declaration of loyalty*, in January 1949 voivode Mieczysław Moczar announced a solution to the

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998 M. Ujdał, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

999 AAN, MAP, 199/765, the indigenous population, *Załącznik do notatki w sprawie problemu rodzin rozdzielonych spośród ludności rodzimej*, VII 1949, p. 77.

1000 AAN, MAP, 199/57, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne wojewody gdańskiego*, III quarter 1949, p. 86.

1001 AAN, MAP, 199/57, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne wojewody gdańskiego*, IV quarter 1949, p. 86.

1002 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/360, regional problems, re-Polonisation, *Pismo MRN w Gdańsku do WRN*, 7 VII 1950, p. 12.

problem within two or three months<sup>1003</sup>. During preparations for a so-called great vetting, any officials who opposed the use of coercion against the indigenous population were dismissed from state administrative bodies<sup>1004</sup>. As a result, “the entire militia and administrative apparatus worked like clockwork throughout February and March 1949<sup>1005</sup>.” The vetting was carried out during field visits and the entire security apparatus was placed at the disposal of the vetting boards. By 1 April 1949, some 19,000 people were vetted mainly by force. However, the operation continued for more than a year<sup>1006</sup>.

According to Leszek Belzyt: “There is no doubt that the methods used by the authorities, especially in the final stage of vetting, had an impact on the attitudes of the indigenous population later. Before 1956, one observed that a part of the population of Mazury and Warmia was going through a process of so-called re-Germanisation (...). After 1956, this population was seized with an ‘urge’ to move to Germany<sup>1007</sup>.”

The final stage of the vetting process in Gdańsk voivodship was the updating of vetting files, which commenced in early 1949. The purpose was to add the names of children who had been aged under 14 on the date of signing the *Declaration of loyalty*. The Socio-Political Section of the Voivodship Office of Gdańsk stressed that this did not represent a review of the granted vetting certificates, because pursuant to memorandum No. 45 by the Minister of the Regained Territories dated 23 June 1947, if an applicant had been correctly vetted previously, he or she certainly held full civic rights.

An inspection in February 1949 of the Socio-Political and Administrative-Legal Sections of Łęborg county also disclosed that the vetting documentarian was incomplete. Some files only contained the *Declaration of loyalty* with the signatures of the members of the Vetting Board. There were still attempts in that county to invalidate vetting because applicants had refused to change their names to Polish ones. On 15 November 1948, the Voivodship Office of Gdańsk issued a directive on this matter, calling on vetted people to alter their names to ones that sounded Polish. For this purpose, they were required to present their

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1003 P. Lesiakowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 147–152.

1004 L. Belzyt, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

1005 P. Małłek, *Polskie są Mazury*, Warsaw 1973, p. 323.

1006 L. Belzyt, *op. cit.*, p. 164; Z. Romanow, *Polityka władz polskich wobec ludności rodzimej...*, p. 105.

1007 L. Belzyt, *op. cit.*, p. 171.



vetting certificates which, following verification, were exchanged for certificates of Polish citizenship issued in the new name<sup>1008</sup>.

The national census conducted in 1950 disclosed 1,104,100 positive vettings, 50,843 of them in Gdańsk voivodship<sup>1009</sup>. This means that voivode Stanisław Zralek's estimate of 70,000 vetted persons at the end of 1949 was exaggerated.

The official vetting of the Polishness of the indigenous population, i.e. the check of their attitudes towards Poland, complicated the process of granting Polish citizenship to this section of society. This caused a series of economic and social problems for the indigenous Polish population in the Regained Territories, including in Gdańsk voivodship. Another issue was the attitude of the central and local authorities to the indigenous population and the question of ethnic vetting. The excessively formal and superficial approach of these authorities, devoid of any concern for these people's genuine national sentiments, led to their discrimination for a long time. There is no doubt that for certain groups of people, opting for Polish nationality was not a clear-cut issue. In turn, persons with a high degree of Polish identity, such as pre-war Polish activists in Danzig, members of the Union of Poles in Germany, and persons engaged in the Pomeranian resistance movement, found the process of vetting a humiliation. Last but not least, the declaration of loyalty to an authority whose legitimacy was in doubt and at a time when the permanence of its borders was in question gave rise to suspicion and withdrawal. Poor knowledge of Polish, a complicated procedure, ambiguous rules on vetting, reluctance and dishonesty on the part of officials, and high fees all hampered the vetting process.

We must agree with the following remark: "It is not the extent of the vetting that has proved to be most important and permanent, but its social consequences.

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1008 AP Gd, UWG, 1164/360, regional problems, re-Polonisation, *Pismo WSPUWG do SP w Wejherowie*, 10 II 1949, pp. 151–152.

1009 The numerical status of vetting in the remaining voivodships was as follows: Opole 418,251 persons, Katowice 350,160, Wrocław 83,421, Zielona Góra 14,569, Poznań 2,681, Szczecin 13,822, Koszalin 42,356, Olsztyn 103,122, and Białystok 4,504. A Sakson, *Socjologiczna charakterystyka mniejszości niemieckiej w Polsce ze szczególnym Uwzględnieniem Wielkopolski w latach 1945/1989–1993* [in:] *Polska-Niemcy–mniejszość niemiecka w Wielkopolsce*, ed. A. Sakson, Poznań 1994, p. 147. Cf. Data on vetting in 1950 established by P. Madajczyk. P. Madajczyk, *Niemcy [in:] Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce. Państwo i społeczeństwo polskie a mniejszości narodowe w okresach przełomów politycznych (1944–1989)*, ed. P. Madajczyk, Warsaw 1998, p. 71.

It is not figures, but human attitudes and conduct, that have determined the final nature and effects of this process<sup>1010</sup>.”

In 1951–1953, obligatory identity cards were issued to each Polish citizen<sup>1011</sup>. Again, this involved the need for each person to state their nationality. A considerable portion of the indigenous population of the Regained Territories spoke out in favour of German nationality. Some 3,000 such cases were noted in Gdańsk voivodship. Despite the fact that this operation was limited in extent and proceeded calmly, indigenous Pomeranians continued to doubt whether the new authorities would accept the declaration of nationality that they had submitted once and for all<sup>1012</sup>.

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1010 J. Schodzińska, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

1011 Cz. Osękowski, *Przebieg paszportyzacji ludności rodzimej ziem zachodnich i północnych w latach 1951–1953* [in:] *Ziemie Zachodnie i Północne Polski w okresie stalinowskim 1945–1956*, ed. C. Osękowski, Zielona Góra 1999, p. 229.

1012 C. Obracht-Prondzyński, *Kaszubi. Między...*, p. 180.

## Postscript

The character and specific nature of rehabilitation and ethnic vetting was determined by, on the one hand, the policies of the post-war authorities and, on the other hand, the attitudes of Pomeranian society during the war, as well as the attitudes of the German occupiers towards the indigenous population. The legal, economic and social status of this group determined its situation after 1945. Under the Prussian partition, the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich, German policy was aimed at eliminating all forms of Polish culture to erase Poland as a nation. Therefore, a national identity took shape under very difficult conditions, made additionally difficult by the characteristics of an ethnic borderland.

Enrolment on the *Deutsche Volksliste* and service in the *Wehrmacht* brought the greatest consequences after 1945. For a long time after the war, Pomeranians were still accused of national treason, causing some of them to emigrate. For many years, the holding of an *Ausweis* provided entitlement, granted by the Germans, to settle beyond the Oder river.

The indigenous Polish population of Gdańsk voivodship was a diversified community with fluctuating legal and social status. It had varying feelings of national (Polish or German) and ethnic (Kashubian) identity, and a capricious experience of history because before 1939 it had belonged to three distinct administrative entities: the Free City of Danzig, the Second Republic of Poland and the Third Reich. The territorial connection of a community largely determined its legal status. The post-war authorities adopted a different attitude towards people included on the *Volksliste* and holding German citizenship, giving individuals a varying perception of the post-war reality. This had a strong impact on the collective sentiments of Pomeranians, their attitudes, and the integration and disintegration of society in Gdańsk voivodship after 1945. The demographic and social changes in the voivodship ended the period of ethnic diversity and established cultural deviances determined by Polish settlers from various cultural backgrounds.

Rehabilitation and vetting were complicated issues that had both a nation-wide and a local dimension. Both processes appeared as an extension of the ethnic policy pursued by the Germans. For the communist authorities, they were a major challenge because these authorities had to tackle a problem that was not generally one of the chief objectives of the Polish Workers' Party: the monopolisation of power in Poland and the county's reconstruction according to the Soviet pattern. Therefore, the authorities hesitated before taking steps to

regulate the legal status of the indigenous Polish population. The fundamental aim of the communist left was to create an ethnically homogenous state from which all 'hostile elements' were to be removed. Included in this process was the deportation of the German and Ukrainian populations and the complete Polonisation of the indigenous Polish population. With the latter, measures were taken to prevent any form of political and cultural autonomy or regional diversity. The conduct of the post-war authorities towards the indigenous population was clearly inconsistent; on the one hand, they underlined this population's Polishness, but on the other hand, they compelled them to prove their usefulness to Poland by means of rehabilitation and vetting.

The situation of the indigenous inhabitants of Gdańsk voivodship, especially those who had been enrolled on the *Volksliste*, was marred by hostility from the army, the authorities and incoming settlers, who were not acquainted with the history and nature of this area and did not understand the ethnic relationships. The question of 'contentious farms' was a particularly troublesome one. The lack of clear legal regulations governing the rehabilitation and vetting procedures, and the legal status of the indigenous population, only complicated the situation further.

Legislation affecting people included on the *Volksliste* was subject to amendments, so that in the end the sharp tone adopted after the war softened, as reflected in the names of the legal instruments dealing with rehabilitation – from "hostile elements" (the law of May 1945) to "persons who had renounced Polish nationality" (the decree of June 1946). We should bear in mind that just after the war, the authorities were intent on playing upon anti-German sentiments in order to legitimise their political power. Eventually, they realised the advantages of an additional electorate by restoring the Polish citizenship of those who had been enrolled on the *Volksliste*. This was most evident in the legislation governing vetting. The status of the indigenous population of the lands annexed to Poland in 1945, the Regained Territories, was not regulated until 28 April 1946, when the law *On the Polish citizenship of Polish nationals residing in the Regained Territories* was passed. The law on holding a referendum was passed on the very same day, which may indicate the political background behind the decisions regarding the indigenous population.

Prior to the introduction of nationwide legislation, the authorities of Gdańsk voivodship introduced rehabilitation in April 1945 and vetting in June 1945. By issuing the indigenous Polish population with certificates of Polish descent, they were anxious to save them from deportation to the USSR or beyond the Oder river. Apart from administrative proceedings, there were also rehabilitation proceedings before the courts. First to be subjected to these procedures were the *Volksdeutsche* (Group II of the *Volksliste*), whereas after the legislative changes, procedures were applied to people who had renounced their Polish nationality.

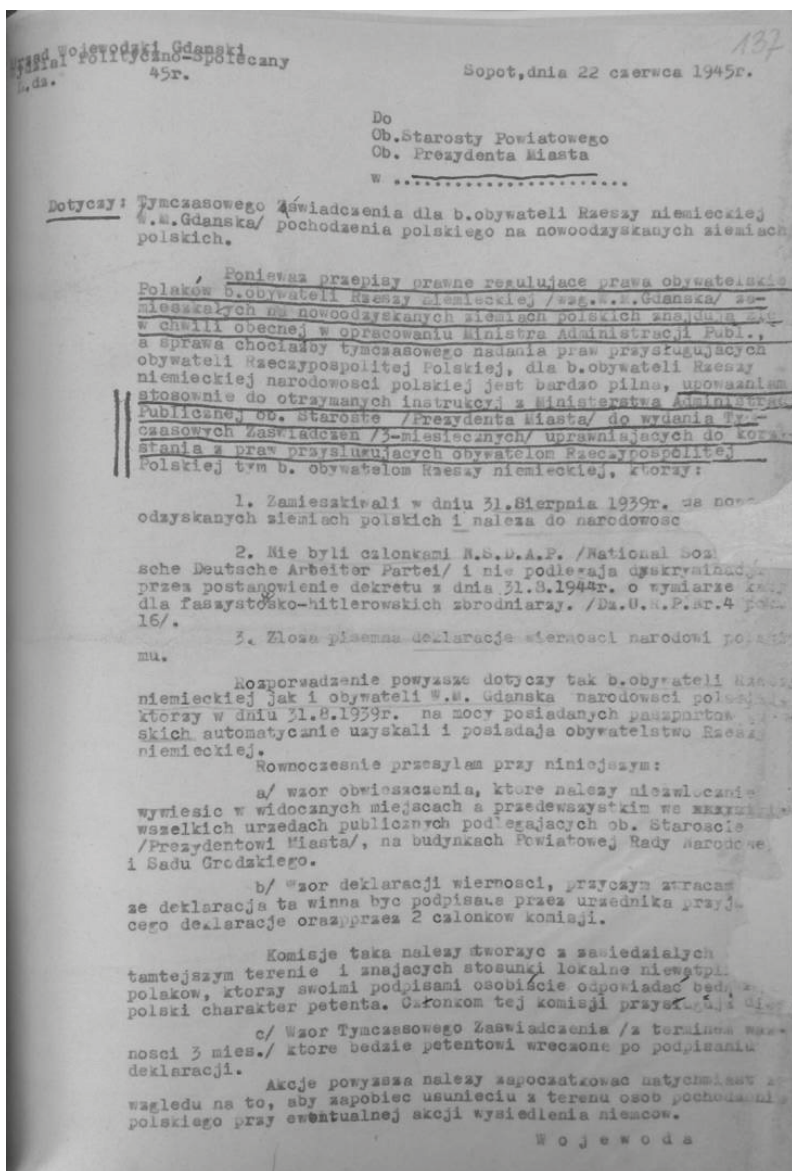
The legislative solutions are only one aspect of the issue under discussion. For those enrolled on the German national list or who held German citizenship, the positive outcome of rehabilitation and vetting determined their material-legal status, and thus provided the economic-social basis for their existence. The indigenous Polish population of Gdańsk voivodship experienced many dramatic situations during both of these processes, as well as earlier at the hands of the Soviet troops stationed there. Apart from deportation and resettlement, they were put in labour camps, deprived of their property, their certificates of civic rights were not recognised, and they were discriminated against in public life. The authorities of Gdańsk held field inspections in the old and new counties of the voivodship to gather information on discrimination. The victims themselves reported cases of injustice, including to the Voivodship Socio-Political Department. Social circles, especially the pre-war community of Gdańsk Poles, demanded an improvement in the situation of the local population.

To improve and coordinate both operations, in March 1946 voivode Stanisław Zrałek appointed the Voivodship Vetting Board, and a Committee of Care over Vetted Persons was created to provide material aid to the indigenous population. During the final stage of vetting and rehabilitation, this Committee assumed some of the duties connected with implementing the rehabilitation and vetting procedures. At the same time, the Voivodship People's Council and its local echelons were engaged as opinion-giving bodies.

These two separate dimensions of rehabilitation and vetting – political and social – co-existed and interacted, forming a single reality. But while creating legal solutions applicable to a major part of the indigenous Polish population, the ruling authorities designed a social order based on a pioneer-like ideology in which this population was assigned a secondary role. The propaganda rhetoric was addressed to this population, but only to exploit its usefulness in underscoring the Polish nature of the northern and western lands annexed to Poland. The indigenous Polish population was not recognised as Polish citizens with full rights, and this made them distrustful of the new authorities. In return, this lack of trust and self-isolation, especially on the part of the Kashubian population, provoked the communists into treating indigenous Poles from Gdańsk voivodship with suspicion. As the two procedures formed the most frequent point of contact between the authorities and the indigenous population, this contact was exploited in order to win the support of this part of the Polish population for the new political order. As mentioned above, the indigenous residents of Gdańsk voivodship continued to feel the effects of the ethnic policy pursued by the state administration and security authorities for a long time after the rehabilitation and vetting was over.



# Figures



**Fig. 1.** Document issued by province governor regarding certificates for former citizens of German Reich and Free City of Gdansk (Danzig), 1945. Source: State Archives in Gdańsk



1

Projekt regulaminu

dla komisji weryfikującej Polaków gdańszczyzn

Polacy gdańszczyznianie składają deklaracje wierności na formularzach jak dla obywateli rzeszy niem. w Gdańsku lub Sopocie, bez względu na ich miejsce zamieszkania, na rece delegowanych członków komisji,

Członkowie komisji winni swojemi podpisami stwierdzić:

- 1/ ze składający deklaracje jest Polakiem bez zastrzeżeń, to jest znany ogółowi, że łączył się przed wojną z Polakami oraz w czasie okupacji żył w odrębności narodowej, bez względu na grupę narodowościową niem lub bez względu na wykaz jaki posiada.
- 2/ Członkowie komisji czynią notatki pod drugą stroną deklaracji,
  - a/ miejsce zamieszkania i miejsce pracy przed 1.IX.39r.
  - b/ " " " " " obecne.

następnie stwierdzają: "Ze petent jest nam osobiscie dobrze znany z przed wojny jak i w czasie okupacji"

w wypadku nawet drobnych wątpliwości członkowie komisji deklaracje taką zatrzymują, dla przedstawienia całej komisji, poświadczając petentowi przybycie za tydzień, a w wypadkach zupełnie wątpliwych zadają przedstawienia w ciągu 3 dni. dokładnego życiorysu.

- 3/ Przynajmniej raz w tygodniu, względnie w miarę potrzeby zbiera się cała komisja / oddzielnie dla Gdańska, oddzielnie dla Sopot / dla omówienia dalszych prac, spostrzeżeń oraz rozpatrzenia i zapoinjowania obywateli o których członkowie komisji zdecydować nie mogli.
- 4/ Przy kwalifikowaniu Polaków członkowie komisji winni się kierować wyłącznie własnym sumieniem, najlepszą swoją wiedzą i rozsądkiem bez jakichkolwiek ubocznych przesłanek, jak sympatia, znajomość, pokrewieństwo lub powinowactwo.
- 5/ Członek komisji, który z premedytacją wydał opinie niezgodną może być pociągnięty do odpowiedzialności karnej nawet sądowej.
- 6/ Deklaracje członków rodzin, małżeństw mieszanych rozpatruje wyłącznie cała komisja.
- 7/ Od orzeczenia komisji petent ma prawo odwołania się do ob. Woj. lub sądu.

*ante*

402/1

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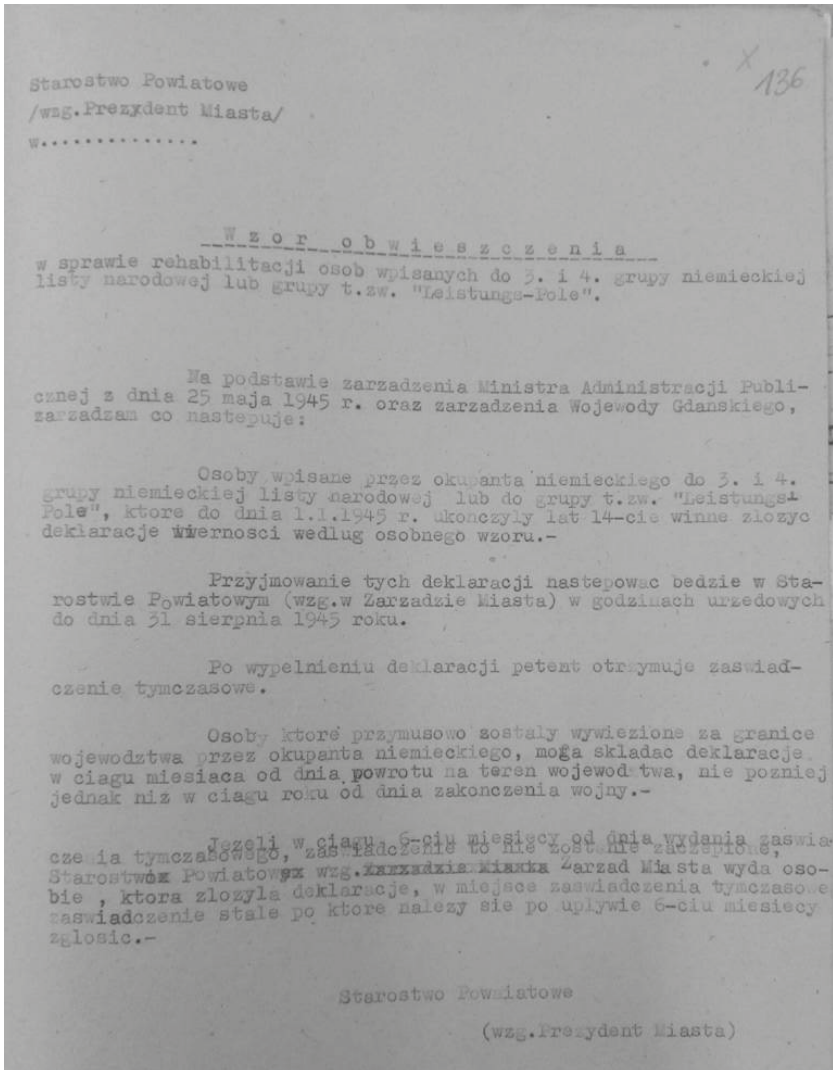
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8/Jeśli członek komisji z tytułu swej spełnianej funkcji lub w innej formie przyjął do wiadomości o jakimkolwiek Polaku /obywatelu Polskim lub gdańskim/ ze współpracował z Niemcami oficjalnie lub też skrycie na niekorzyść Państwa Polskiego lub Polaków wogóle lub też należał do partii hitlerowskiej w czasie okupacji lub przed 1.IX. 1939r. winien taką wiadomość przedstawić na piśmie komisji.

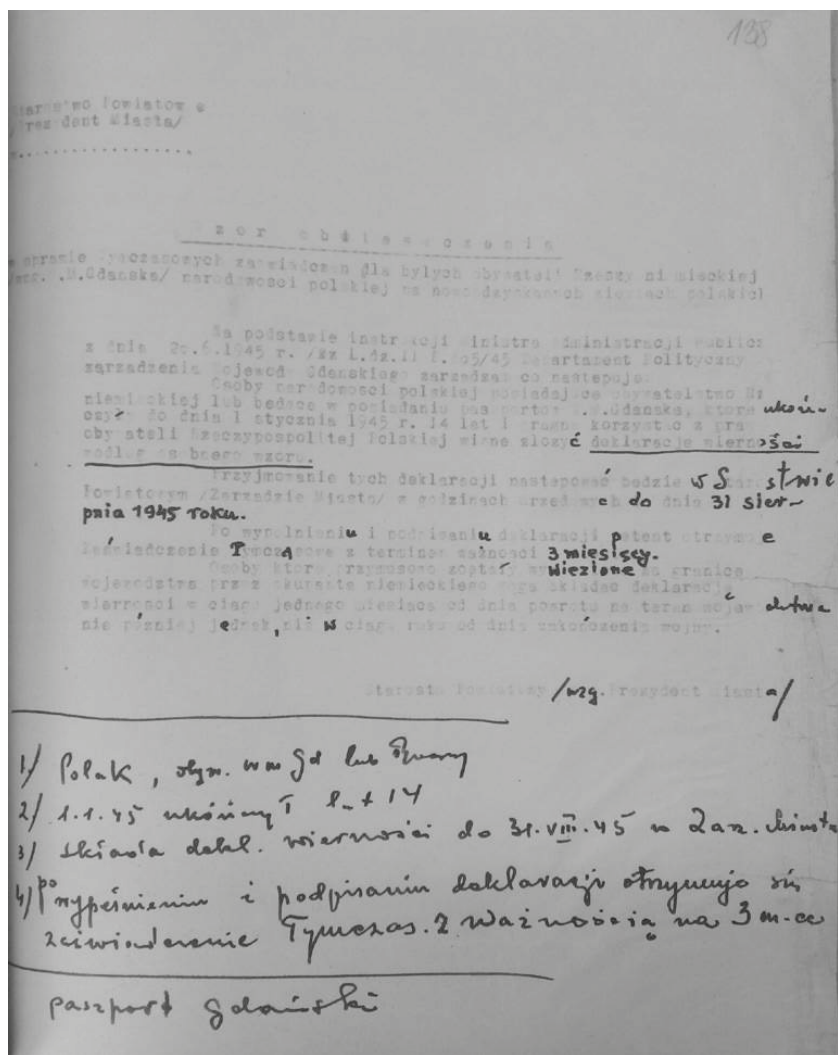
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**Fig. 2.** Project of regulation for the Verification Committee for Poles of Danzig, 1945. Source: Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences



**Fig. 3.** Example of proclamation regarding people included in 3 and 4 group of Volklist, 1945. Source: State Archives in Gdańsk



**Fig. 4.** Example of proclamation regarding temporary certificates for former citizens of German Reich and Free City of Gdansk of Polish nationality in regained Polish Lands, 1945. Source: State Archives in Gdańsk

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**Z E Z N A N I E**

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My niżej podpisani świadkowie pouczeni o skutkach prawnych wynikających z zapodanie fałszywych zeznań, oświadczamy na podstawie naszej osobistej wiedzy i woli, że..... *Lugens*.....

*Smolinska*..... urodz..... *6 sierpnia 1927*.....

składający deklarację wierności Narodowi Demokratycznemu Państwu Polskiemu należy do trzeciej /~~czwartej~~/ grupy niemieckiej listy narodowej.

Ponadto oświadczamy, że wyżej wymieniony/a/ nie należy do osób trzeciej grupy niemieckiej listy narodowej, co do których była władza okupacyjna arzeka się odwołania ich niemieckiej przynależności państwowej. /Staatsgehurgkeit auf Wiederruf mit Vercicht auf Wiederruf/.

1/nazwisko i imię..... *Lisutaka Leokadia*.....  
*pałona, wiatowy słowid Nr. 197 890 Głiw, ul. Wodna 1*  
 narodowość..... adres.....

2/nazwisko i imię..... *Lugens Lucja*.....  
*pałona, wiatowy słowid Nr. 175 916 Głiw, ul. Przebostwa 4*  
 narodowość..... adres.....

Za zgodność podpisów

*ms. Gogany*  
 burmistrz

Podpisano w mojej obecności

Urzędnik Starostwa Powiatowego

.....dnia.....1945r.

Opłata admialstr. w kwocie 5 - zł  
 pobrano pod poz. ks. rej. 1490  
*R.*

Fig. 5. Testimony of witnesses regarding the 3 group of Volkslist making the declaration of fidelity to Polish Nation and State, 1945. Source: State Archives in Gdańsk

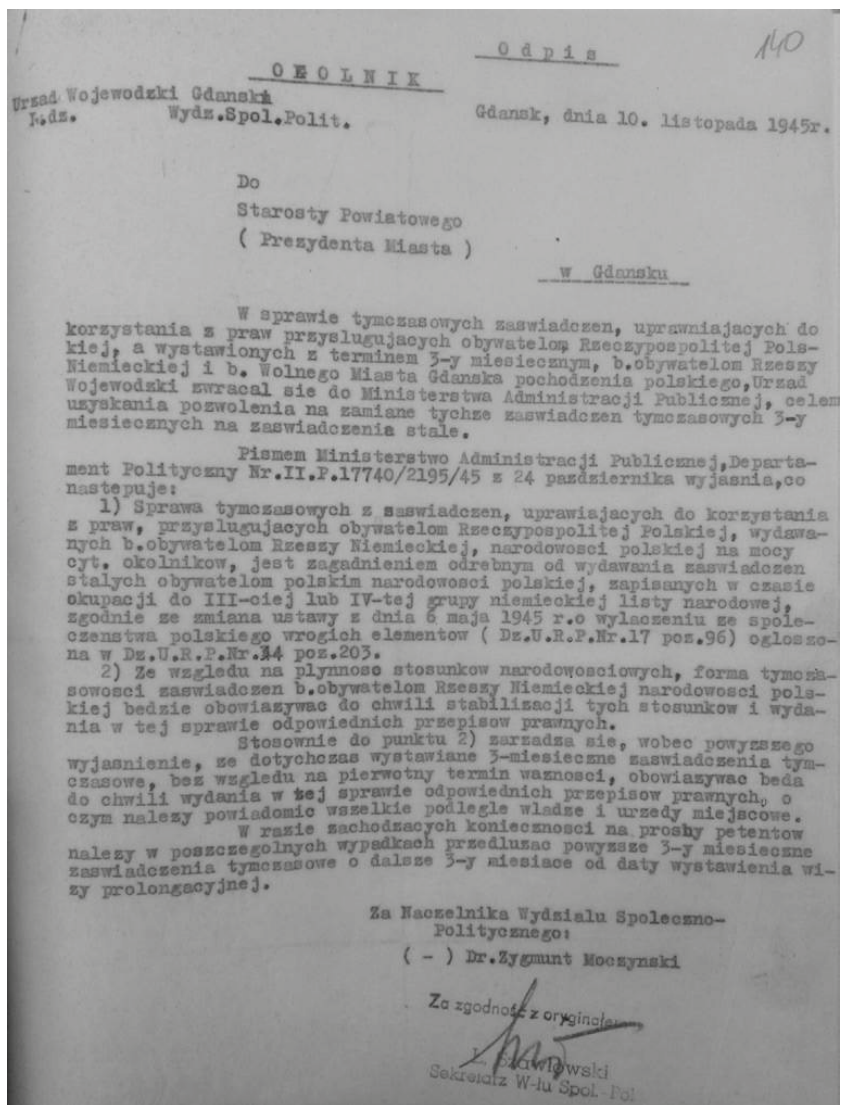


Fig. 6. Circular of the voivode of Gdańsk regarding temporary certificates, 1945. Source: State Archives in Gdańsk

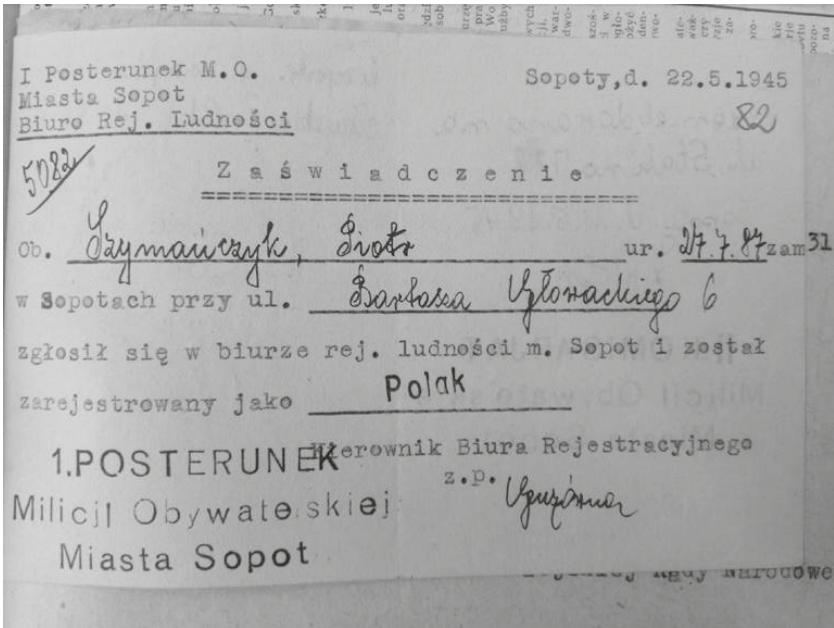
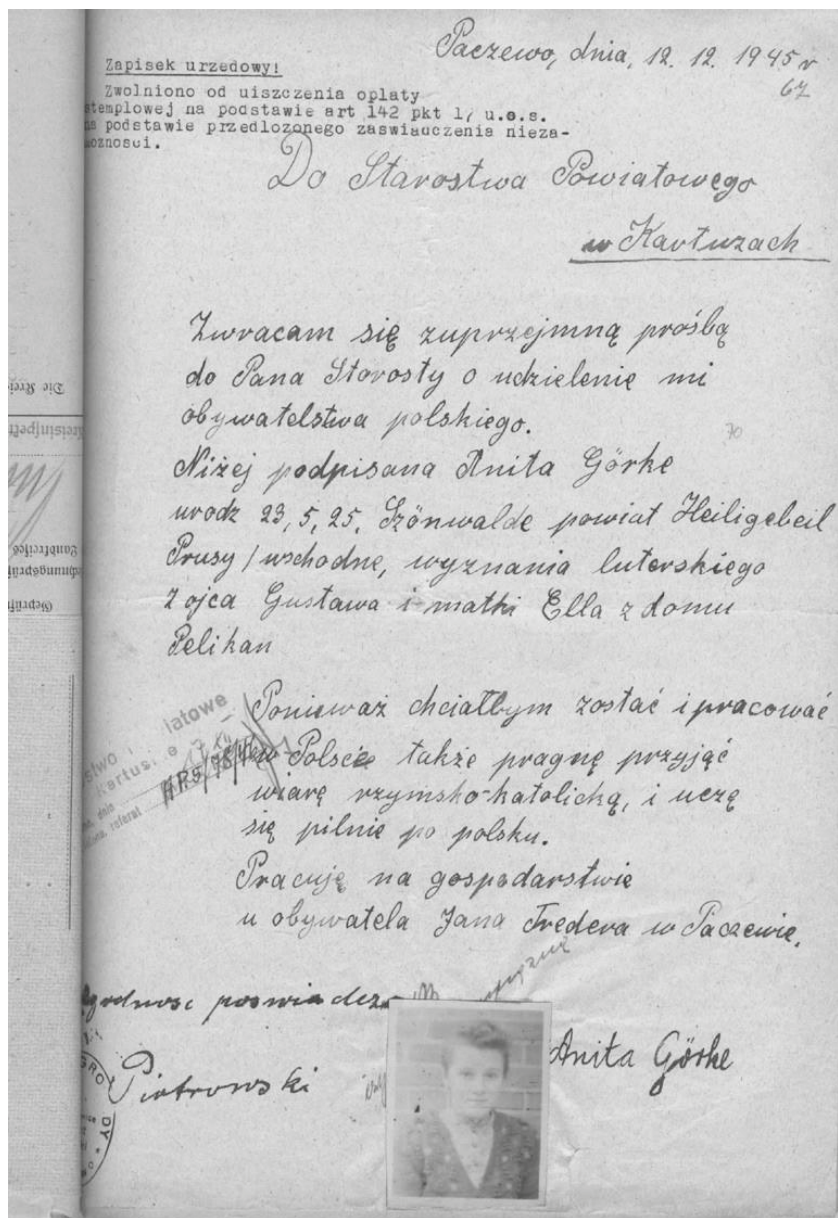
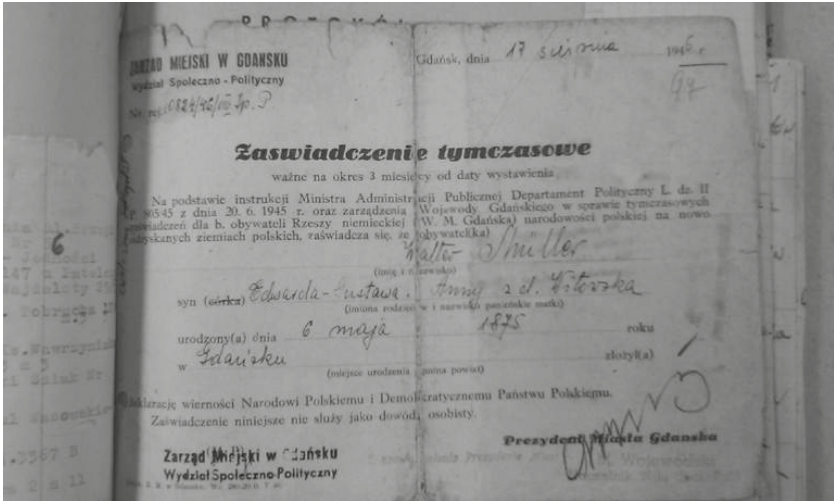


Fig. 7. Certificate issued by The Office of Peoples Registration by Militia in Sopot, 1945. Source: State Archives in Gdańsk

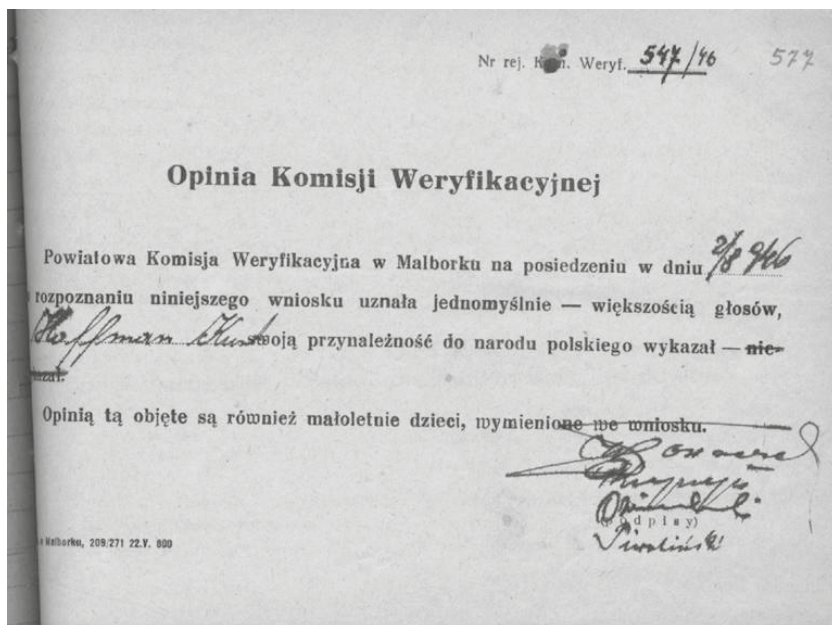


**Fig. 8.** Request to District Office in Kartuzy to obtain Polish citizenship, 1945.  
 Source: State Archives in Gdańsk

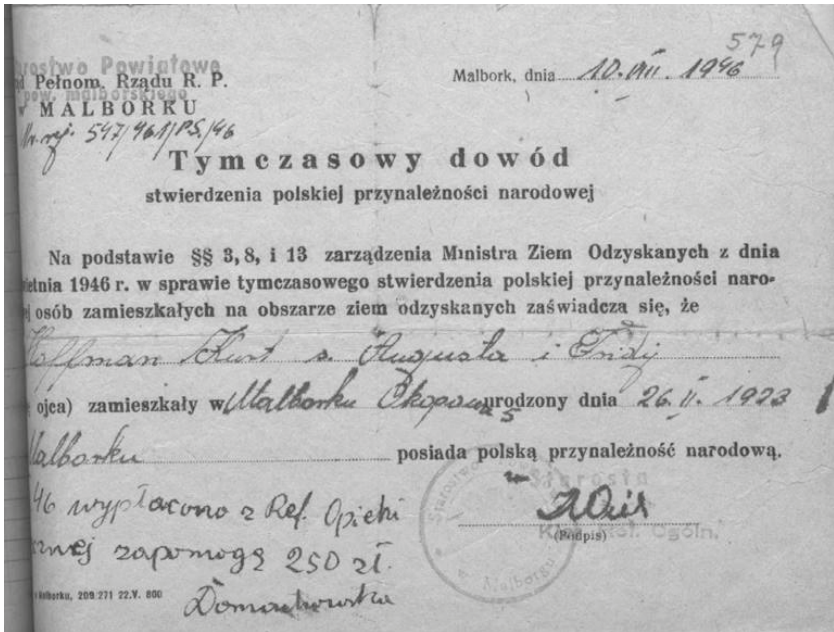




**Fig. 9.** Temporary certificate issued by the City Council in Gdańsk, 1945.  
 Source: State Archives in Gdańsk



**Fig. 10.** Opinion of the Verification Committee in Malbork, 1946. Source: State Archives in Gdańsk



**Fig. 11.** Temporary Certificate of Polish Nationality issued by District Office in Malbork 1945. Source: State Archives in Gdańsk

Załącznik 319  
do pisma Urzędu Wojewodzkiego  
Gdańskiego z dnia 25. VI. 45 r.  
L. P. S. 135/4.

### Deklaracja Wierności 3282

Podpisany (a) Waleria Szameitat z d. Siadkowska  
(imię i nazwisko, u mężatek nazwisko panieńskie)

syna (córka) Józefa i Teresy z d. Kleinm  
(imię ojca i matki oraz panieńskie nazwisko matki)

urodzony (a) dnia 1 września 1901 roku.

w Gruziec p. Świecki  
(miejscowość, gmina, powiat)

zamieszkały obecnie w Olśnie, ul. Siermaitkiego Nr. 3.  
(dokładne miejsce zamieszkania)

Świadczy, że został zaliczony do obywateli Rzeszy Niemieckiej z powodu długoletniego przebywania na tej ziemi. Nie należał do N.S.D.A.P. (National-Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei) ani też nie działał przeciwko interesom Narodu Polskiego.

Ja (a) swej polskiej przynależności narodowej, przyrzekam uroczyście dochować wierności narodowi i Demokratycznemu Państwu Polskiemu oraz sumiennie wypełniać moje obowiązki obywatelskie.

Gdańsk, dnia 29 sierpnia 1945 r.

Podpis składającego deklarację: Waleria Szameitat

Podpis urzędnika przyjmującego deklarację: [Podpis]

Podpisano w naszej obecności.  
(podpisy dwóch członków komisji): [Podpis]

21. Wzł. w Gdańsku Nr. 84 — VII/45/10000.

**Fig. 12.** Declaration of Fidelity to Polish Citizens and Nation, 1945. Source: State Archives in Gdańsk

583  
Nr. rej. 547  
4.1.461.

## Deklaracja wierności

Imię (a) Steffman Kurt (imię i nazwisko, u mężatek nazwisko panińskie)

Matka Augusta Sztyg (imię ojca i matki oraz panińskie nazwisko matki)  
z Papornicki

Imię (a) dnia 26.1.1946 roku, w Malborku (miejscowość, gmina powiat)

zamieszkały w Malborku Okopane 5 (dokładne miejsce zamieszkania)

Wobec swojej polskiej przynależności narodowej przyrzekam uroczyście dochowac wierności Narodowi  
Polskiemu oraz sumiennie wypelniać swoje obowiązki wobec Narodu i Państwa Polskiego.

Malbork dn. 26.1.46 roku

Kurt Steffman  
(Podpis składającego deklarację)

Podpisano w mojej obecności  
Helena  
(Podpis przyjmującego deklarację)

Druk w Malborku, 209 271 22.V. 808

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