

Abstract of the doctoral thesis of M.A. Michał Turski

Abstract of the doctoral thesis 'Biografien unter der Lupe: Die Deutsche Volksliste und die deutsche Minderheit in der Region Lodz, 1914-1970' written under the supervision of Prof. Leszek Olejnik from the Faculty of Philosophy and History at the University of Lodz and Prof. Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg from the Faculty of Historical and Cultural Sciences at the Justus-Liebig University in Giessen, Germany.

The subject of this study is the German National List (colloquially the Volksliste, in Polish: volkslista) and the German minority in Łódź and the Łódź region in the years 1914-1970 in biographical terms.

Chapter 1 introduces the main methodologies and theories of the historical and social sciences used in the dissertation, as well as introducing the key archival collections for the work. Biographical sciences, historical and qualitative discourse analysis, conflict studies, ego-document theory as well as the theory of loyalty, which was developed relatively recently in Germany, were used to analyse the problems of the Volksliste and the reconstruction of biographies. The most important archives used in this dissertation are the Archiwum Państwowe in Łódź and Poznań, the Archives of Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, and to a lesser extent the Archiwum Akt Nowych in Warsaw, Instytut Zachodni, Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe, the Bundesarchiv and the Archiv Bad Arolsen. Due to the vastness of the archival holdings of Volksliste questionnaires and post-war court records as well as the withholding of many files for decades (sensitive data, taboos), I describe the specifics of access to archival collections about the Volksliste in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 is a discussion of the history of Lodz Germans from the outbreak of the First World War until August 1939. Due to the existence of many publications describing various aspects of the life of the German minority in Poland and the unfamiliarity of this topic in Germany beyond a narrow circle of experts, I decided to describe thematically and chronologically the political evolution of the attitudes of Lodz Germans after 1914 and to indicate the most important factors distinguishing this group of Germans from other groups of the German population in Central and Eastern Europe rather than to present data factographically.

The Germans of Lodz were, before 1939, a population with a not very strong national identification with Germany and Germanness (evident in existence of 'German-speaking' instead of 'German' associations and clubs), with a good command of Polish and Russian, and with a completely different history of Polish-German relations, i.e. being a newly arrived minority under non-German rule instead of living in the territories lost by the German state after World War 1. For this reason, in my opinion, the political evolution of Lodz Germans after 1918 is characterised not only by the rise of right-wing and pro-Nazi parties as noted by Polish historiography, but also with the relative popularity of currents oriented towards cooperation and peaceful coexistence with Poles and Jews like DKuWB or DSAP.

Chapter 3 contains an analysis of the German National List as well as the situation of the German minority in Lodz and the Lodz region during the Second World War. The chapter discusses the evolution of the Volksliste and the concept of citizenship in the lands annexed to the Reich from 1937 as well as after the outbreak of the Second World War - from inclusionist projects of granting citizenship to all non-Jewish citizens of a given area, as in the case of Austria or, on a smaller scale, the Sudetenland, to the hierarchisation of citizenship first in the Wartheland and, from March 1941, in all lands annexed to the Reich.

Chapter 3 also discusses the administrative issues involved in enrolling on the Volksliste, from the enrolment procedure and appeals against decisions by officials or refusals to accept the Volksliste to the German National List offices themselves and their functioning. The procedure for granting citizenship entailed an automatic classification into the category of Us and Them, and the discourses demarcating the boundaries between the two sets. The Volksliste was a system of exclusion of selected social groups that did not fit into the framework of Germanness set by National Socialist ideology, and also involved a process of cataloguing and assessing individuals on the basis of a number of factors - both phenomena I analyse in Chapter 3. During the German occupation, the Volksliste functioned on the criteria of language, socialisation and pre-war self-identification (declaration of belonging to a nation or culture, i.e., in part, acculturation) - these criteria, however, were insufficient in Lodz due to the multilingualism, the acculturation of many Germans into Polish culture and Poles and Jews into German culture as well as the fluctuating loyalty of Lodz's inhabitants to political authority.

An important part of Chapter 3 is the fields of conflict between Poles and Jews and Germans as well as within the German community itself in occupied Lodz - on the one hand, there were the Lodz Volksdeutsche, pre-war citizens of the Second Polish Republic and inhabitants of the Lodz region, and on the other hand, immigrant Germans from the Baltic countries and Germans from the Reich. Additional tensions were also created by the hierarchisation of citizenship and grade I mentioned above - those with the lowest category of Volksliste had to reckon with a number of restrictions in their professional and private lives resulting from the refusal to extend the privileges of the Volksliste to the entire population of volksdeutsche, and the distrust of the National Socialists for insufficiently German individuals.

Chapter 4 contains an analysis of the position of the German minority in the Lodz region after the liberation in January 1945 and an analysis of the legislation and lawsuits against the Lodz Volksdeutsche until 1949/1950. The German minority from a group privileged during the war by the German occupier was considered undesirable and excluded from post-war society in Lodz and the Lodz region.

As part of the analysis of the trials, the arguments of the Volksdeutsche before the courts as well as the verdicts in these trials, I discuss the trials before the Special Criminal Court (specjalny sąd karny) in Warsaw with its seat in Łódź, the District Courts (sąd grodzki) in Łódź, Pabianice, Zgierz, Tuszyn and

the Regional Court (sąd okręgowy) in Łódź brought against the Lodz Germans. These are trials for, on the one hand, crimes or participation in the administrative apparatus of the occupying forces, and on the other hand, trials for the rehabilitation of Volksdeutsche and reintegration into Polish society as Polish citizens and for enrolling on the Volkslist during the occupation.

I argue in the paper that the post-war transformation of the judiciary and the peculiarities of Lodz as an ethnically mixed city necessitated a more lenient punishment of Germans by the courts than in other regions of Poland. The Volksdeutsche who achieved rehabilitation were mostly children, young people or seniors; there is also a noticeable predominance of women among the applicants and the rehabilitated.

In this chapter I analyse the arguments put forward by Volksdeutsche and Volksdeutsche for their rehabilitation by the municipal courts. German women and Germans used a variety of arguments, most of them, however, choosing to use arguments from socialisation ('my house was run in a Polish way'), non-participation in German political and social life as well as language and helping Poles. Children and entrepreneurs are groups using clearly distinct arguments stemming either from their age and socialisation at school or from their social position and the property they had to save from expropriation as well as, above all, helping Polish workers.

The post-war treatment of the German minority in the Lodz region also requires an analysis of anti-German propaganda in the Lodz press, including press reports on rehabilitation processes, crimes by and against Germans, as well as addressing the issue of the cataloguing and assessment of Germans by various institutions through, for example, the issuing of certificates to Poles for impeccable behaviour and the collection of information. Also in this chapter, a number of fields of conflict are discussed - from conflicts over resources (property and jobs) to issues of religion and mixed marriages. The chapter also outlines the subject of the displacement of Germans and their forced labour in the Sikawa camp.

Chapter 5 analyses the period after 1950, characterised by a decline in the significance of the German minority. The administration of the Lodz region and, to some extent, the structures of the security services of the Polish People's Republic attached less importance to the local Germans, already fully-fledged citizens of Poland. In this chapter, I also discuss various aspects of German life in Lodz and the Lodz region, such as harassment and data collection at workplaces as well as requests to emigrate. Most of the rehabilitated Volksdeutsche wished to emigrate to the FRG after 1949, which involved requests to state and Communist party institutions and a family reunion campaigns. The construction of the image of the Lodz Germans in the PRL after 1950 is also an interesting side thread.

The last chapter contains the reconstructed biographies of volksdeutsche I have selected for the Łódź region, with an emphasis on the years 1939-1950. I have chosen to discuss one family or person each from a dozen social groups important to Łódź in the twentieth century or of significance as examples of the fate of Łódź Germans of that period. In this chapter, I discuss a variety of exemplary reconstructed

biographies ranging from ordinary workers and communists to factory workers or people from the elite of pre-war Lodz.

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