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## BETWEEN UNIFICATION AND PARTICULARISM – POMERANIA AND INDEPENDENCE

### Abstract

The Vistula Pomeranian (the former Prussian province of West Prussia) remained the longest dependent part of the partitioning power of Poland, which was reborn after 1918. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Polish population of these lands, whose original ethnic component was Kashubians, strengthened their national awareness under the influence of modernisation processes. As in the entire Prussian partition, the dominant factor here was the idea of national solidarity built around an attachment to Catholicism. The defeat of Germany in World War I was associated by the local Poles with the incorporation of Pomeranian lands into the borders of the Polish Republic. The decisions of the Paris Conference of 1919 were awaited with hope and enthusiasm. Independence, however, brought disappointment caused by the economic crisis, as well as the inability of the central authorities to deal with the native population. Against this background, there were conflicts and misunderstandings throughout the entire interwar period. After 1920, the slogans of regional particularism gained popularity among the indigenous Pomeranian population. However, the German threat of the yoke forced local political and social activists to respond to the idea of unification of Pomeranian lands with the rest of the country, pushed by the central authorities.

**Keywords:** Pomerania, 1918, postimperial, transformation, post-WWI period

In September 1904, Wiktor Kulerski, a member of the parliament of the German Reich and an owner and a publisher of a popular newspaper in the Prussian partition, “Gazeta Grudziądzka”, printed an article under the provocative title, “Will Poland rise from the dead?”. This was highly controversial, and the article was met with a lively response from the Polish population of Pomerania and

a sharp reaction from the authorities<sup>1</sup>. The author, protesting against the intensifying wave of Germanisation and the openly anti-Polish measures of the government (the announcement of the forced expropriation of property belonging to Poles), prophesied the restoration of Polish independence and punishment of "the criminals who have torn Poland apart". For the words contained in the article, the rebellious editor was sentenced to several weeks in prison. However, the bold and rebellious speech gained "Gazeta Grudziądzka" new subscribers. The idea of Poland's independence and the unification of the lands where the Poles lived, including Pomerania and Kashubia, evoked unambiguous positive feelings in readers. This attitude was confirmed through the creation in the pages of newspapers and popular brochures of a glorious vision of the history of old Poland, the righteous "mother" of all its inhabitants, and the opposition to Prussian rule limiting all freedoms.

The process of awakening the Polish national sense, which had been initiated around the mid-nineteenth century by the local elite (including a few representatives of the nobility and intelligentsia as well as some Catholic clergy), significantly accelerated towards the end of the century. This was due to the escalation of actions taken by the Prussian state in order to assimilate and Germanise large sections of the Polish population<sup>2</sup>. Legal activity undertaken by Poles in the economic, social, and cultural fields (organic work), supported by the editors of Polish magazines – the cores of patriotism, was also a direct reaction to the rise of German nationalist tendencies. Established in 1894, the German Eastern Marches Society (known as Hakata) warned its countrymen against the alleged Slavic threat to the German borderlands and proclaimed the idea of a civilising mission for the Germans in the east. It was to be confirmed by the centuries-old presence of Germans in Prussia (including the lower Vistula region), begun by the Teutonic Order in the Middle Ages. Hakata ruthlessly supported the anti-Polish actions of the state authorities and initiated new legislation against the Polish minority. A large part of the active Hakatists (for example Franz Wagner, Hugo von Bieler or Paul Fischer) came from West Prussia and were perfectly aware of the ongoing identity processes among the Polish population of the lands located at the Baltic Sea<sup>3</sup>. The actions of Hakata consolidated Poles around the defence of endangered national values. The accelerated nationalisation of the Polish population of Pomerania around the Vistula River at the beginning of the 20th century is evidenced by mass support for the school strike in 1906–1907 in defence of

<sup>1</sup> Wiktor Kulerski, "Czy Polska z martwych powstanie?", *Gazeta Grudziądzka* 116 (27 IX 1904); Grażyna Gzella, "Wiktora Kulerskiego proces z 1905 roku," in *W kraju i na wychodźstwie. Księga ofiarowana Profesorowi Sławomirowi Kalembe w sześćdziesięciopięciolecie urodzin*, ed. Zbigniew Karpus, Norbert Kasperek, Leszek Kuk, Jan Sobczak (Toruń–Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2001), 303–311.

<sup>2</sup> Szczepan Wierzchosławski, *Elity polskiego ruchu narodowego w Poznańskim i Prusach Zachodnich w latach 1850–1914* (Toruń: Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 1992), 80.

<sup>3</sup> Tomasz Krzeziński, "Szkice z dziejów grudziądzkiej Hakaty z lat 1894–1914," *Rocznik Grudziądzki* 26 (2018): 93–108.

education taught through the mother tongue, as well as the participation in the manifestations of Polish cultural life through reading press and books and increased participation in musical life<sup>4</sup>. On the other hand, German moral patterns were attractive, which fostered assimilation and acculturation processes. The pragmatics of everyday life greatly facilitated the penetration, even more so as the Polish–German district in this region had deep traditions dating back to the Middle Ages. The German language and culture were not foreign to the local population of Polish origin and, moreover, they were the only way to social and material advancement. In such an unfavourable situation for Polishness, the vision of regaining independence and finding the Pomeranian lands within the reborn homeland was treated as a distant dream, the realisation of which may only come true in later generations. Therefore, special emphasis was placed on preserving national identity, cultivating the language, adherence to the Catholic faith and, extremely important, securing the material foundations of existence. At the beginning of the 20th century, the national rivalry between Poles and Germans in Pomerania, despite the characteristic colouring resulting from complex historical processes, had analogies in Central Europe, which at that time constituted a mosaic of cultures, languages, religions, and nationalities. Therefore, similar phenomena occurred in Upper Silesia under Prussian rule<sup>5</sup>, but also in Transylvania, which was part of the Crown of Saint Stephen, where Romania experienced Magyarisation, similar in form to the actions of the Prussian government towards Polish subjects. Similarities in the formation of national processes and the reactions of representatives of the ethnically diverse population, rooted in and tied to their land (such as Polish and German Pomeranians), also occurred in the Czech lands<sup>6</sup>.

Aware of their Polishness, Pomeranians were conscious of the peripheral location of the region in relation to the centres of national culture (Warsaw, Kraków, Lviv or even Poznań), as well as the lack of broader knowledge of the demographic relations in the northern borderlands among compatriots from other districts of the country torn apart by partitions. The region identified with the former Royal Prussia and was treated as a specific land with an original ethnic

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<sup>4</sup> Lidia Burzyńska–Wedlandt, *Strajki szkolne w Prusach Zachodnich w latach 1906–1907* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Mirosława Siuciak, “Historyczne podstawy świadomości narodowej Ślązaków,” *Białostockie Archiwum Językowe* 11 (2011): 226–227.

<sup>6</sup> Marcin Czyżniewski, “Kwestia mniejszości niemieckiej u zarania państwa czesko-słowackiego,” in *Na drodze do Niepodległej... Dylematy, działania i programy polityczne Polaków i Czechów w latach 1914–1918*, ed. Zbigniew Girzyński, Jarosław Kłaczek, Aleš Zářický (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2019), 12–15; Florian Kühner-Wielach, *Siebenbürgen ohne Siebenbürger? Staatliche Integration und neue Identifikationsangebote zwischen Regionalismus und nationalem Einheitsdogma im Diskurs der Siebenbürger Rumänen 1918–1933* (Wien: Universität Wien, 2013), 55, <https://phaidra.univie.ac.at/open/o:1301168>; Piotr Eberhardt, *Między Rosją a Niemcami. Przemiany narodowościowe w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w XX w.* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1996), 91; Piotr Eberhardt, “Przemiany narodowościowe na obszarze Transylwanii,” *Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* 43 (2008): 228.

and social structure resulting from a complicated historical process<sup>7</sup>. Historical ties with old Poland and the fact that there were people of undoubtedly of Slavic origin (Poles and Kashubians) were arguments in favour of linking these lands with the future independent Polish statehood. The historical research of Fr. Stanisław Kujot, president of the Scientific Society in Toruń, confirmed this kind of statement. The centuries-old existence of Poles, Kashubians and Germans as well as the "mosaic" distribution of the nationally and religiously diverse population justified treating Pomerania as a different and unique district<sup>8</sup>. It also gave rise to the birth of the Pomeranian-Kashubian regional movement. The linguistic and cultural identity of the Kashubian population was problematic, and the Prussian authorities tried to use it. The Young Kashubian movement, which was developing at the beginning of the 20th century under the influence of the younger generation of representatives of the intelligentsia, led by Dr. Aleksander Majkowski, opposed the absolute assimilation of the Kashubian region to Polishness, while emphasising the relationship between the Kashubians and Poland, its tradition and culture<sup>9</sup>. However, this type of attitude was not appreciated by the majority of social and political activists of the Prussian partition, including those coming from Pomerania, e.g., Fr. Antoni Wolszlegier – the chairman of the Polish Election Committee for West Prussia. Young Kashubian ideas, emphasising the specific cultural autonomy of the coastal region in relation to the imagined homeland of all Poles, did not find recognition among the leading representatives of Polish political and cultural life in the entire Prussian district, which was reflected by the lack of supporters of this movement among the members of the National Council established in 1913 in Poznań – the organisation aspiring to the role of official representation of the Polish population in the German Reich.

Before the outbreak of the Great War, there was a clear tendency among the Pomeranian population identifying with Polishness to further strengthen their national awareness and identity (e.g., through participation in social, cultural and sports organisations). However, during the aggravating international situation, the vision of rebuilding statehood was still distant. The peasant and petit-bourgeois character of the Polish-Kashubian community of Pomerania, characterised by a still small number of native intelligentsia, perpetuated the attitude of long-term resistance in defence of the values endangered by the invader and identified with non-existent Poland. The social structure of the Polish population also determined their political preferences. Nationalist slogans, democratism and a rather conservative view of all cultural issues were recognised. Before the outbreak of the war, the national-democratic ideology gained decisive political

<sup>7</sup> Roman Wapiński, *Polska i małe ojczyzny Polaków. Z dziejów kształtowania się świadomości narodowej w XIX i XX wieku po wybuch II wojny światowej* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1994), 117–119.

<sup>8</sup> "Dzielnicość a Prusy Zachodnie," *Gryf – pismo dla spraw kaszubskich* 10 (1912): 273–283.

<sup>9</sup> Janusz Kutta, *Druga Rzeczypospolita i Kaszubi 1920–1939* (Bydgoszcz: Pozkał, 2003), 41–49; Józef Borzyszkowski, *Aleksander Majkowski. Biografia polityczna* (Gdańsk–Wejherowo: Instytut Kaszubski, 2008).

influence in the region. Even the people's movement, which was in opposition to it and promoted the ideas of emancipation of the lower social classes from the domination of the hitherto elite in the world-outlook, was similar to nationalists when it came to political views in reality. A similar situation prevailed in the province of Poznań. The information coming from Galicia about the activity of paramilitary organisations, whose aim was to fight for independence, did not arouse much enthusiasm. The leading magazine of the region, "Gazeta Grudziądzka", openly condemned the actions of the "shooters", whose main task was to initiate an armed uprising and fight for an independent existence against Russia, recalling the uprising of 1848 that was fatal for Poles in the Prussian partition<sup>10</sup>.

During the First World War, the Polish society of the Pomeranian district took a wait-and-see attitude. Despite the initial administrative harassment caused by the chaos of war, Poles performed their mobilisation duties loyally and complied with all the rigours of the military law<sup>11</sup>. Thousands of Polish soldiers lost their lives and health in the interests of a foreign country. Attempts to undertake an activist policy and to create tactical cooperation with Germany that would not be devoid of features of realism, found no support. Little interest in activism was caused by the unattractiveness of the overly vague and delayed announcements of extending cultural and linguistic freedoms for Poles. In the face of the commonly expected breakthrough, which was to be brought about by the result of the war, hopes were constantly growing for a solution that would be beneficial also for the Polish population of Pomerania, and especially from 1917 to incorporate these lands into the united and reborn Polish statehood. In the face of the military defeat of the German Reich in November 1918 and, above all, after the announcement of the peace programme of the President of the United States, Thomas Woodrow Wilson, the issue was becoming increasingly real<sup>12</sup>.

The period of the World War was a time of heavy sacrifices and a deterioration of financial status for the inhabitants of Pomerania. In its final phase, a quick conclusion of peace was expected, which, in the common opinion, had a positive effect on the situation of providing essential provisions<sup>13</sup>. At that time, the Polish

<sup>10</sup> "Sprawa powstania w Królestwie Polskiem," *Gazeta Grudziądzka* 29 (8 III 1913).

<sup>11</sup> Paweł Kosiński, *Prusy Zachodnie 1914 – Pomorze 1920. Ludność regionu wobec przemian politycznych okresu I wojny światowej* (Warszawa: Neriton, 2002), 62–70.

<sup>12</sup> Mieczysław Wojciechowski, "Społeczeństwo polskie w Prusach Zachodnich w dobie I wojny światowej (1914–1918)," in *Społeczeństwo polskie na ziemiach polskich pod panowaniem pruskim w okresie I wojny światowej (1914–1918)*, ed. Mieczysław Wojciechowski (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 1996), 68; Przemysław Hauser, "Niemieckie władze i społeczeństwo Prus Zachodnich wobec polskich dążeń rewindykacyjnych w okresie październik 1918 – czerwiec 1919," in *Społeczeństwo polskie na ziemiach polskich pod panowaniem pruskim w okresie I wojny światowej (1914–1918)*, ed. Mieczysław Wojciechowski (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 1996), 85–87.

<sup>13</sup> Tomasz Krzemiński, "Pierwsza wojna światowa – pomorskie doświadczenia codzienności," in *Pomorskie drogi do Niepodległej*, ed. Józef Borzyszkowski, Cezary Obracht–Prondzyński, (Gdańsk: Gdańskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 2018), 72–91.

vision of improving their material and political life by combining their own statehood that was reborn in the Congress Kingdom became consolidated. The relationship with independent Poland began to be perceived in terms of the fulfilment of, not only dreams of political freedom, but also in the context of a significant extension of social rights, including in the field of employee and pension security, for example. In the autumn of 1918, in the pages of the Pomeranian press, a modern vision of independence as the emergence of "People's Poland" which coincided with the concept of the previous programme of the national movement in the Prussian district, the basic assumption of which was national solidarity between individual groups within society<sup>14</sup>.

The military defeat of Germany and the fall of the monarchy sparked enthusiasm among Pomeranian Poles. Many of them joined the German revolutionary movement by joining workers-soldiers' councils. The elites of the Polish movement, however, called for Poles to refrain from participating in activities undertaken by the German revolutionaries. A separate network of Polish people's councils was created, elections to which were held on the occasion of the election of deputies to the District Parliament convened in Poznań. The democratic ordinance (including the women's right to active and passive participation in elections) was the basis for the establishment of central bodies representing the interests of Poles in the Prussian district where Poles lived densely (Greater Poland, Pomerania, Silesia, East Prussia) as well as in the territory of the German Reich. However, the fate of the western Polish lands and the course of the new Polish–German border were to be resolved by the decisions of the peace conference, whose debates began in January 1919. Until the formal conclusion of peace, these areas still belonged to the German state, and despite the functioning of the system of Polish people's councils, Prussian administrative bodies still operated there. As a result of an armed uprising, Greater Poland abandoned slavery earlier as a consequence of a victorious uprising, and in practice, from the beginning of 1919, the province began to function as an autonomous quasi-state (the so-called commissariat state). Central and local authorities and even military administration structures were established there. They were characterised by great independence from the Warsaw authorities, and the Polish National Committee in Paris was politically oriented. It was caused by both a different political profile and a sense of cultural and mental distinctiveness of Poles from the former Prussian district towards their compatriots from central and eastern Poland. Pomerania was not included in the uprising action, although some political activists took this option into account. However, the demographically different relations (predominance of the German population) and the predominance of German troops, which did not presage any success for the military action, contributed to the abandonment of the extension of the uprising in the lower Vistula region. Strong Prussian garrisons were stationed in the strongholds of Toruń, Grudziądz, Chełmno and Gdańsk that were difficult to control for erratic troops.

<sup>14</sup> *Dziennik Polskiego Sejmu Dzielnicowego w Poznaniu w grudniu 1918 r.*, ed. Andrzej Gulczyński (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk, 2018), 43.

Attempts to take military action, e.g., in the vicinity of Chełmża, were pacified by the Germans<sup>15</sup>. The Pomeranians supported their fellow countrymen fighting in Greater Poland by joining the ranks of the insurgents. Separate regiments were formed from Pomeranian volunteers, overwhelmed by the patriotic enthusiasm of the representatives of the young generation, who, from the beginning of 1919, struggled through the demarcation line which separated Pomerania from the Poznań Province<sup>16</sup>. This period was also characterised by increased repression by the Prussian authorities and anti-Polish actions by the German population. Protests against Pomerania belonging to Poland, as well as acts of terror against Poles who were involved in political and social activity, mobilised the latter to strengthen patriotic attitudes and to wait for the decisions of the Paris peace conference.

While peace negotiations were taking place in Paris, and also after the signing of the treaty by Germany on June 28, 1919, Poles were preparing to take full control of the Pomeranian lands and incorporate them into the borders of the independent Republic of Poland. The role of the disposition centre played by the Subcommittee of the Supreme People's Council in Gdańsk, was organisationally subordinate to the Poznań authorities. Gradually, the foundations of local administration were formed, based on the network of the former people's councils. On August 1, 1919, the Pomeranian Province was established by the Act of the Legislative Sejm<sup>17</sup>. Despite the unfavourable behaviour of the population and the German authorities, administrative structures acted in accordance with the previous pragmatics of Prussian offices. This created a situation of functioning of a specific "autonomous" structure of power that was neither subject to the Prussian authorities nor to the central Warsaw centres. Separation and independence in the economic, social and, in a way, political sphere was emphasised by the creation of a separate Ministry of the former Prussian District, which administered the territories of Greater Poland and Pomerania<sup>18</sup>. After the signing of the peace treaty, the process of the gradual transfer of management to Poles by the Prussian administration began. Pursuant to the provisions of the peace treaty, the German population obtained the right of option and departure to the Reich, which was used in the first place by most of the former German officials<sup>19</sup>.

The process of annexing the territories of the Pomeranian Voivodeship consisted in taking over this territory by the Polish Army and the gradual taking over

<sup>15</sup> Mieczysław Wojciechowski, *Powrót Pomorza do Polski 1918–1920* (Warszawa–Poznań–Toruń: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1981), 79–80.

<sup>16</sup> Aleksander Smoliński, "Skład oraz przekrój społeczny oddziałów Frontu Pomorskiego wkraczających na Pomorze w styczniu i lutym 1920 r.," *Rocznik Toruński* 46 (2019): 238.

<sup>17</sup> Stanisław Salmonowicz, "Podziały terytorialne i organizacja administracji w województwie pomorskim (1919–1939)," in *Historia Pomorza*, Vol. V: 1918–1939. *Województwo pomorskie i Wolne Miasto Gdańsk*, part 1, *Ustrój, społeczeństwo i gospodarka*, ed. Szczepan Wierzchośłowski, Przemysław Olstowski (Toruń: Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 2015), 70–72.

<sup>18</sup> Andrzej Gulczyński, *Ministerstwo bylej Dzielnicy Pruskiej (1919–1922)* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk, 1995).

<sup>19</sup> Marek Stażewski, *Exodus. Migracja ludności niemieckiej z Pomorza do Rzeszy po I wojnie światowej* (Gdańsk: wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 1998).



of administration by the Polish state authorities. The Polish population enthusiastically welcomed the military units entering their lands, and the symbolic wedding of Poland to the Baltic Sea by General Józef Haller caused applause from the representatives of the native Kashubian population participating in them. With the advent of Poland, the end of the hitherto national persecution as well as the end of food supply difficulties stretching from the times of the World War were commonly identified. The local Germans accepted the implementation of the Versailles peace verdict with resignation and hostility<sup>20</sup>. In Pomerania, unlike the neighbouring Greater Poland or Upper Silesia, there were no acts of violence and armed opposition to the existing, ethnically alien power. However, the mood of the population of Polish descent in this district was identical to the reactions and expectations of the inhabitants of Poznań and Upper Silesia, who enthusiastically welcomed the soldiers of the Polish Army entering their land in 1922, just as the people of Pomerania did in 1920<sup>21</sup>.

Fulfilling the dreams of the local Poles and the enthusiasm it caused, however, quickly turned into bitterness and criticism with the disapproval of the new state relations growing with each passing month. Poland, caught up in a conflict with Bolshevik Russia and recovering from the economic depression caused by the devastation of the Great War, was not able to positively influence the economic situation in Pomerania and, in general, the western districts. Administrative moves in the economic field (including the forced introduction of an unstable Polish currency in place of the German one) or the influx of speculators to the Pomeranian region caused a very hostile mood among the native population towards the new governments. Existing food supply difficulties increased. The newcomers from central and eastern Poland bought up all the goods, paying for them with Polish marks that were losing their value. The Germans leaving for the Reich tried to get rid of their existing property and assets quickly, selling them to entrepreneurs from behind the former cordon (very often they were merchants of Jewish origin), who had cash. For Pomeranians, this showed the signs of unfair speculations made, in their opinion, mainly by representatives of ethnically and culturally foreign people, which was confirmed by local newspapers describing the situation in the darkest colours<sup>22</sup>. The behaviour of the officials and officers who came here, especially the army, was not conducive to building and consolidating a positive image of the Polish government. The soldiers entering Pomerania at the beginning of 1920 only recruited from the inhabitants of the former Prussian district to a small extent, including young Pomeranians who broke into Greater Poland in 1919. A significant part of the soldiers came from other regions of the reborn Republic of Poland, many had frontline experience of fighting in the East. They were no longer volunteers, like the Pomeranian or Greater Poland people, but recruits of forced labour<sup>23</sup>. The army was initially treated by the local population as a symbol of Polish statehood returning after a century and a half. With

<sup>20</sup> Wojciechowski, *Powrót Pomorza do Polski*, 198–205.

<sup>21</sup> Siuciak, *Historyczne podstawy*, 231.

<sup>22</sup> “Unifikacja,” *Słowo Pomorskie* 11 (15 I 1921).

<sup>23</sup> Smoliński, *Skład oraz przekrój społeczny*, 238.



time, however, individual servicemen, including officers, broke the generally accepted standards in relation to the civilian population. From the point of view of a significant part of the soldiers and officers, the local population differed in manners, mentality and, in the case of Kashubians, also used an incomprehensible language. Indigenous people were commonly regarded as Germanised and culturally alien to Poles from central and eastern lands as well as from Lesser Poland. Soldiers from Greater Poland and Pomerania were also badly treated by their officers, who did not listen to them in turn. This caused a very critical mood in the army, where there were insubordination and protests against officers who did not come from the lands of the former Prussian district. This situation was very dangerous for the security of the country, especially during the Bolshevik invasion<sup>24</sup>.

The Pomeranian population, accustomed to the rule of law, order, well-worn forms and rules of conduct, indignantly accepted all manifestations of insubordination and outright abuses. “This army, greeted with indescribable adoration as liberators from the Prussian yoke, began to treat this modest, quiet, hard-working population as a conquered nation, behaving as in an occupied country. The army thought it was on the border between Russia and Asia and used inappropriate non-cultural, if not barbaric methods,” summed up the behaviour of military units in Pomerania in 1920 members of a special parliamentary commission appointed to investigate the complaints of the local population<sup>25</sup>. The resentment was also influenced by the behaviour of new border and customs formations, whose task was to supervise the newly established border line with Germany and the Free City of Gdańsk and to control the flow of goods. For the Kashubian poviats, the liquidation of traditional economic ties with the port of Gdańsk and the economy of the city created a disastrous economic situation and contributed to crime related to the smuggling and illegal trade of food products. Thus, the economic condition and restrictions introduced by the authorities of the Polish country contributed to an increase in the negative image of the new statehood among the Kashubian population<sup>26</sup>.

After January 1920, Pomerania became a destination for migration of people from the east and south of Poland as well as from the so-called Eastern Borderlands as well as the target for the return of former economic emigrants from western Germany. The newcomers from beyond the former eastern border of the Prussian partition were welcomed with a clear reserve and reluctance by the indigenous people, although along with speculators and hustlers, many representatives of free professions, creators of culture and teachers contributed positively to the development of the social life of the entire region. First of all, newcomers were noticed as competitors for prestigious jobs in administration

<sup>24</sup> Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe, Dowództwo Okręgu Korpusu nr VIII, sygn. I.371.8.A.112.

<sup>25</sup> *Sejm Rzeczypospolitej o Pomorzu w 1920 roku. Sprawozdanie Komisji Pomorskiej*, ed. Józef Borzyszkowski, Przemysław Hauser (Gdańsk: Zrzeszenie Kaszubsko-Pomorskie, 1985), 50; Juljusz Bijak, *Wspomnienia ze służby wojskowej* (Poznań: Fiszer i Majewski Księgarnia Uniwersytecka, 1929), 141.

<sup>26</sup> “Dzielnicość w wyższej płaszczyźnie I,” *Słowo Pomorskie* 119 (25 V 1927).

and education, but also dishonest speculators, taking advantage of opportunities whose transactions undermined the economic position of the indigenous people. The local press deplored the fact that such newcomers were taking control of offices and teaching positions, and local political activists protested against it. The newcomers encountered social ostracism and even manifestations of organised resistance, an example of which was, for example, the events widely commented on by the regional press around the "Toruń school trial" of 1925, the genesis of which was a disagreement and misunderstanding between the teaching staff and students coming from other regions<sup>27</sup>. At the beginning of the 1920s, the myth of the flooding of the Western lands by the local riches and jobs of culturally alien compatriots from the former Congress Poland and Galicia, as well as Jewish traders and businessmen, who grew rich rapidly due to the harm of the indigenous people, was formed<sup>28</sup>. The slogan "Pomerania for Pomeranians" gained popularity mainly among supporters of the conservative national movement. The forces of the political centre and the left wing were in favour of integration with the rest of the territory of the Republic of Poland. The centre of the regional political system was the Polish People's Party "Piast" and the National Workers' Party (NWP), a group formed on the basis of democratism although closely related to Christian and national values. Due to the minimal influence of the socialist and communist movement, the NWP played the role of the social left in Pomerania. In the supplementary elections to the Parliament in 1920, the party was successful, gaining 41 percent of the votes, which proved that the slogans they proclaimed for unification and dissociating themselves from district separatism were initially very popular among voters. With time, however, under the influence of the economic and social situation, this changed. Even among the peasantry and supporters of the national-Christian workers movement, there were tendencies to emphasise the issue of the separateness of Pomerania and the entire Prussian district from other Polish lands<sup>29</sup>. The problem of "district character", often formulated as a slogan of "separatism" understood not as the idea of a permanent separation, but rather an increase in the scope of self-government (including the

<sup>27</sup> Sylwia Grochowina, Arkadiusz Kerys, Anna Krygier, Przemysław Olstowski, *Gimnazjum toruńskie w latach 1920–1989 (Od Państwowego Gimnazjum Męskiego do I Liceum Ogólnokształcącego im. Mikołaja Kopernika)* (Toruń: Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 2018), 66–67.

<sup>28</sup> Janusz Kutta, "«My» i «oni» na Pomorzu w latach 1920–1939. Przyczynek do dziejów integracji społeczeństwa polskiego," *Zapiski Historyczne* 56, 2–3 (1991): 69; Przemysław Olstowski, "Separatyzm, dzielnicowość i unifikacja w II Rzeczypospolitej (1918–1939). Problemy integracji państwa i społeczeństwa po odzyskaniu niepodległości," *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego* 147, 4 (2020): 741–742.

<sup>29</sup> Tomasz Krzeziński, "Przekształcenie ludowego ruchu społecznego w partię polityczną na Pomorzu," in *„Zanim zbudowano Gdynię...” Wpływ odrodzenia państwa w 1918 roku na procesy modernizacyjne ziem polskich*, ed. Zbigniew Girzyński, Jarosław Kłaczek, Tomasz Łaszkiwicz, Przemysław Olstowski (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2020), 201; Przemysław Olstowski, "Życie polityczne," in *Historia Pomorza, Vol. 5 (1918–1939), Województwo pomorskie i Wolne Miasto Gdańsk*, part 2. *Polityka i kultura*, ed. Szczepan Wierchosławski, Przemysław Olstowski (Toruń: Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 2018), 41.

preservation and expansion of self-government at the county level) became one of the main threads of regional political discourse.

The supporters of the neighbourhood did not question the rights of independent Poland to the coastal lands, on the contrary, they considered Pomerania the most important district, guaranteeing economic development and security, which, however, was constantly threatened by aggression from those seeking retaliation and territorial recovery from Germany. However, they wanted a clear economic and legal separation from the disastrous influences of political culture from the eastern and southern regions of Poland<sup>30</sup>. The social attitudes that existed in Pomerania after its incorporation into Poland were almost identical to the reactions to the "reintegration" of Upper Silesia. Both in the Baltic borderlands as well as in the only autonomous voivodeship in the Second Polish Republic, there were symptoms of clear antagonism between the indigenous people and the immigrant population, which influenced the formation of views and beliefs changed by the new political reality after 1920<sup>31</sup>. Analogous processes also took place in Greater Poland, which was very similar in terms of social structures. In the eyes of indigenous people, it was flooded by newcomers from the East eager for material benefits, who were culturally and mentally alien to them<sup>32</sup>. In other parts, organised by the peace treaties ending the Great War of Central Europe, the phenomena of a particular disappointment and an increase in distrust towards ethnic kinsmen who came from other districts of the common state took a similar form in many places, arousing resentment, reviving the ideas of regionalism and sometimes turning into political programmes aimed at various types of separation<sup>33</sup>.

The authoritarian governments after May 1926 aimed at accelerating the process of integration and complete unification of the state, treated by Piłsudski and his supporters as the highest good. In Pomerania, where Piłsudskians had little political support before 1926, the year associated with limiting all manifestations of neighbourhood status. The actions of the Sanation camp towards Pomerania, boiling down to the appointment of the highest regional offices by people from outside the region as well as the ever-growing propaganda regarding the attribution of the most important merits to the issue of regaining independence by

<sup>30</sup> Cezary Obracht-Prondzyński, "Regionalna myśl polityczna na Pomorzu przed 1989 rokiem," in *Pomorskie. Twarzą do przyszłości*, ed. Grzegorz Grzelak (Gdańsk: Sejmik Województwa Pomorskiego, 2018), 105–106.

<sup>31</sup> Tatiana Majcherkiewicz, "Kształtowanie się polskiej elity administracyjnej a wyzwania reintegracji Górnego Śląska w latach 1918–1939," *Annales Academiae Pedagogicae Cracoviensis, Studia Sociologica II*, 54 (2008): 110.

<sup>32</sup> Damian Szymczak, "«Galicjoki z Kongresowy» – o obrazie mieszkańców Galicji i Królestwa Polskiego w prasie poznańskiej dwudziestolecia międzywojennego," in *Prasa regionalna jako źródło do badań historycznych okresu XIX i XX wieku*, ed. Joanna Nowosielska-Sobel, Grzegorz Strauchold, Tomasz Ślepowroński (Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza Atut, 2011), 102.

<sup>33</sup> Lech Kościelak, *Historia Słowacji* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 2010), 318–320; Peter Zat'ko, "Położenie Słowacji w Republice Czeskosłowackiej pod względem gospodarczym i politycznym," in *Kwestia Słowacka w XX wieku*, ed. Anton A. Baník, transl. Zofia Jurczak-Trojan, Maryla Pieprz (Gliwice: Greg, 2002), 131–134.

Piłsudski and his legionnaires caused a strong reaction from local Poles<sup>34</sup>. It fuelled the antagonism between the indigenous people and the immigrant population, as well as support for the idea of district character. This was due to the right-wing party opposing Sanation at the national and regional level: the National People's Union and (since 1928 the National Party) mainly through the pages of a widely read regional daily magazine entitled "Pomeranian Word", combining it with anti-Semitic rhetoric<sup>35</sup>. The defence of the Pomeranian flood by visitors from other parts of Poland and the strengthening of the Pomeranian regional identity based on attachment to Roman Catholic customs and religion was also included in the programme assumptions of the people's movement<sup>36</sup>. Moods unfavourable to the Piłsudski camp deepened during the Great Depression in the first half of the 1930s. Reluctance to Sanation often, especially in Kashubia, went hand in hand with the strengthening of the sense of regional distinctiveness<sup>37</sup>. Sanation also tried to take over some Pomeranian and Kashubian identity slogans in order to build its political base. The media coverage was strengthened, presenting the image of the Pomeranian Voivodeship as extremely important and, through the construction of the port in Gdynia, the most modern area in the country<sup>38</sup>.

An important manifestation of building regional identification was the increased interest in regional issues and the development of various cultural, social, and scientific projects. It became characteristic to emphasise the role of local activists in the work of regaining independence and in the struggle with the Prussian invader. Both in the press and in occasional publications, the role of Pomeranians in the activities for the preservation of their native language, customs and faith was stressed, while at the same time the specificity of this fight was highlighted, which was more characterised by hard, everyday work than fighting with a weapon. This activity was often a political game in which, on the one hand, figures involved in political life during the partition period were praised or discredited<sup>39</sup>. In the era of the cult of Marshal Piłsudski as the resurrector of the motherland, forced by the Sanation process, the activities of local Poles in the field of commemoration strengthened regional differences and were in a kind of opposition to the state ideology. However, the authorities tried to take control of the regional movement and form it in the pro-state spirit typical of the Sanation movement<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> Przemysław Olstowski, *Obóz pomajowy w województwie pomorskim w latach 1926–1939* (Warszawa: Neriton, 2008), 141–143.

<sup>35</sup> Roman Wapiński, *Życie polityczne Pomorza w latach 1920–1939* (Warszawa-Poznań-Toruń: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1983), 197.

<sup>36</sup> Tomasz Krzemiński, *Polityk dwóch epok Wiktor Kulerski (1865–1935)* (Toruń: Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 2008), 213–214.

<sup>37</sup> Kutta, *Druga Rzeczypospolita*, 293.

<sup>38</sup> Ryszard Sudziński, "Gospodarka Pomorza Nadwiślańskiego w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej," in *Historia Pomorza*, Vol. 5 (1918–1939), *Województwo pomorskie i Wolne Miasto Gdańsk*, part 1 *Ustrój, społeczeństwo i gospodarka*, ed. Szczepan Wierchosiński, Przemysław Olstowski (Toruń: Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 2015), 164–165.

<sup>39</sup> Krzemiński, *Polityk dwóch epok*, 211–213.

<sup>40</sup> Kutta, *Druga Rzeczypospolita*, 396–397.

Therefore, under the aegis of the provincial authorities, the memory of the independence act was cultivated, including as part of the Polish Society for the Study of the History of the Independence Movement in Pomerania, supported by the Polish Army, headed by Fr. Alfons Mańkowski. Ethnographic and historical research conducted in the 1920s and 1930s, undertaken e.g. by the Scientific Society in Toruń or the newly established Baltic Institute in 1925, made these activities professional and introduced Pomeranian and Kashubian issues into the circle of Polish culture<sup>41</sup>.

One factor shaping the regional identity and local mythology of national liberation was the attitude towards Germans and German nationalism. During the partitions, and also after the advent of independence, the Polish and Kashubian people of Pomerania did not treat their German neighbours as strangers. They were culturally closer to them than the newcomers from beyond the former partition cordon that appeared in the region after 1920. On the other hand, however, the fight against Germanisation, sticking to Polishness and not succumbing to the influence of German culture was the most important element of the Pomeranian identity. The fear of losing independence again, despite the democratic or authoritarian sentiments against Polish statehood, effectively consolidated both the natives and the newcomers. German revisionist slogans, slogans about the seasonality of independent Poland or, finally, propaganda about the Pomeranian "corridor" mobilised around patriotic slogans, so eagerly used by the Sanation. In the face of the threat of German aggression and the possibility of losing the crucial province that was Pomerania for the Polish country, the popular district ideas were clearly limited in favour of the slogan of defending the threatened independence. Among the victims of the Pomeranian crime, i.e. the methodical extermination of representatives of Polish leadership groups by the Germans in the autumn of 1939, there were both supporters of the regional movement and promoters of the district idea, as well as state officials who promoted the idea of unification and full integration of the region with the rest of Poland<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Przemysław Olstowski, "Szkolnictwo i oświata, ruch naukowy, biblioteki i muzea," in *Historia Pomorza*, Vol. 5 (1918–1939) *Województwo pomorskie i Wolne Miasto Gdańsk*, part 2, *Polityka i kultura*, ed. Szczepan Wierzchosławski, Przemysław Olstowski (Toruń: Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 2018), 202.

<sup>42</sup> Tomasz Ceran, "Ofiary zbrodni pomorskiej 1939 – portret zbiorowy," in *Rozstrzelana niepodległość. Ofiary zbrodni pomorskiej 1939 r.*, ed. Tomasz Ceran (Toruń: Fundacja im. Generał Elżbiety Zawadzkiej, 2020), 23–46.

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