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## THE KINGDOM OF PRUSSIA AND THE MIGRATION OF POLES AT THE TURN OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES\*

### INTRODUCTION

The partitions of Poland carried out by Austria, Prussia and Russia in 1772, 1792 and 1795 led to the division of the hitherto united territories and their division by national borders. However, the divisions established during this period did not last long. As early as 1807, under the auspices of Napoleon Bonaparte, the Duchy of Warsaw was established. It consisted initially of the second, third and partly of the first Prussian partition, and from 1809 also of the third Austrian partition and some territories seized by the Habsburg state in the first partition. However, this creation did not last long either. Its collapse was the result of the fall of Napoleon's army. As a result of the resolutions of the Congress of Vienna, based on the Duchy of Warsaw, the Kingdom of Poland was formed in 1815, remaining in personal union with Tsarist Russia. As a result of these political changes, the statehood of some areas which had previously been part of the Republic of Poland changed several times. A perfect example is the fate of Warsaw. As the country's capital before the partitions, it became a provincial Prussian border city after its fall. As a result of further transformations, it became the Duchy

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of Warsaw's capital and then of the Kingdom of Poland. However, it also remained a provincial city within the Russian Empire.

These changes did not remain without influence on the Polish population living in the contested territories. Formally Poles became citizens of the countries into which they were incorporated. However, informally they maintained close economic, social and family ties that crossed the borders. Of course, these contacts transformed over time due to difficulties in crossing the border, customs duties and other impediments, and the development of links within the partitioning states, but they were never completely broken.

As a result of the changes occurring at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the movements of the Polish population should be understood as emigration, whether permanent or temporary, as they resulted in the crossing of national borders and the search for a place to live or work in other countries. On the other hand, there arose the specific phenomenon of migration within the lands, which in the perception of the people living there, were parts of one country - their homeland, which was only temporarily divided. In this sense, we can speak of internal migration, similar to movements within a single state.<sup>1</sup> It is all the more convincing as the population migrations took place primarily in the border areas – i.e., those previously part of the Republic.

The presence of subjects of foreign rulers who tried to move and settle relatively freely within the former homeland forced the state authorities to react. Their reaction was also related to the policy towards the population of Polish origin, which constituted the citizens of a given state. This problem can be observed in the Prussian authorities' policy, which correlated their actions against "their" Poles with actions against Poles from Russia and Austria.

#### THE KINGDOM OF PRUSSIA, IN VIEW OF THE MIGRATION

Three periods can be distinguished in the attitude of Prussian authorities to this "intra-Polish" migration: the period up to 1885, years 1885–1890, the period from 1890 to 1918.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kozłowski: *Emigracja okresu schyłkowego*, p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> Brożek: *Napływ robotników*, p. 4.



In the first period, the migration policy of Prussian authorities was relatively liberal. They allowed relatively unhindered border crossings and settlement of the Polish population on the national territory. As mentioned earlier, these movements primarily included the border districts: the Province of Silesia, the Province of Posen (formerly the Grand Duchy of Posen), East Prussia and West Prussia. Poles arriving in these areas were employed mainly to work on the land. To a large extent, these were seasonal migrations and local border traffic. During this period, however, the influx of people to the Kingdom of Prussia from the Kingdom of Poland and Galicia, especially those settling permanently, was relatively small and limited to the border regions. In the autumn of 1884, there were approximately 39,200 Russian-Polish and Austrian-Galician foreigners in the eastern provinces of Prussia, including their families: 16,200 in West Prussia, 7,200 in East Prussia, 6,800 in the Province of Posen, 9,000 in the Province of Silesia. According to another statement, 30,165 came from the Russian state, of which 10,863 resided in West Prussia, 8,760 in East Prussia, 4,679 in the Province of Posen, 3,231 in the Province of Silesia, and 2,632 in the Berlin area.<sup>3</sup>

A drastic change in the Prussian policy came in 1885 when Poles who were Russian and Austrian subjects were forcibly resettled from the Prussian Kingdom's borders, based on decrees issued by the Minister of Internal Affairs. The resettlements were based on regulations issued by the Prussian Minister of the Interior on 26 March and 26 July. These regulations also decreed that Poles from outside Prussia should not be granted German citizenship in the future. In motivating the decree he issued on 26 March 1885, the Minister of the Interior wrote:

The refugees supply us not only with Polish elements but also provide them with a considerable number of propagandists who, although they behave apparently without reproach, are dangerous insofar as they are carriers of revolutionary contacts with the Russian Poles.<sup>4</sup>

This decision was connected with Germany's conviction of German's demographic and cultural retreat in the east and a rise in nationalistic ten-

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<sup>3</sup> Gronikowski: *Emigracja z ziem zaboru rosyjskiego*, p. 213.

<sup>4</sup> Brożek: *Napływ robotników*, pp. 8–9.

dencies.<sup>5</sup> This process also resulted in a stricter Germanisation policy and a growing sense of threat of repolonisation of the eastern parts of Prussia. The attitude of government circles toward the Polish population is perfectly illustrated by Bismarck's statement in a letter to his sister from 1861, in which he characterises his attitude towards Poles as follows:

Beat up on the Poles so that their will to live goes away; I personally sympathize with their plight, but there is nothing left to do but exterminate them if we wish to exist. Nor is the wolf responsible for the fact that God made him as he is; therefore, kill him whenever you can.<sup>6</sup>

In 1886, Bismarck spoke about displacement in the Prussian Parliament, where he said:

Because we have enough of our own, the number of Poles in the Eastern provinces of Prussia must be diminished, and that of the Germans increased. The former object is being attained by the expulsion of foreigners; the latter may be attained by introducing German settlers.<sup>7</sup>

In the Prussian expulsions of Poles (*rugi pruskie*), about 30,000 newcomers from the Russian and Austrian partitions<sup>8</sup> were displaced. In the case of the population who were Russian subjects, the numbers were as follows: West Prussia 10,400, East Prussia 3,700, the Province of Posen 5,200, the Province of Silesia 6,600.<sup>9</sup>

The third period are the years 1890–1918. During this period, state policy was relaxed toward Polish migration from the other annexations. In particular, this relaxation occurred during Caprivi's chancellorship in 1890–1894. During this period, private teaching of the Polish language in schools was permitted, Polish cooperatives were allowed to have their auditors, and a Pole, Father Florian Stablewski, was appointed to the archbishopric of Gniezno-Posen. However, this did not mean a complete abandonment of

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<sup>5</sup> Kucharczyk: *Prusy. Pięć Wieków*, p. 633.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 624.

<sup>7</sup> Schönwälder: *Invited but Unwanted?*, p. 200.

<sup>8</sup> Kucharczyk: *Prusy. Pięć wieków*, p. 633.

<sup>9</sup> Gronikowski: *Emigracja z ziem zaboru rosyjskiego*, p. 213.

the anti-Polish policy.<sup>10</sup> In terms of migration, however, a limited supply of labour organised by industry was allowed.<sup>11</sup>

When the Polish population was allowed to migrate from the other annexations, this phenomenon began to assume mass proportions. For example, in 1912/1913, 283,000 Poles from the Kingdom of Poland and 75,000 from Galicia came to the Reich. Of those 358,000 Poles, as many as 316,000 were employed in agriculture.<sup>12</sup> The general rule was to employ people of Polish descent in agriculture. In the eastern provinces, they could be employed in the industry only with special permission from the authorities.<sup>13</sup>

However, it should be emphasised that the influx of workers into the Polish territories of the Prussian partition led to reinforcing stereotypes hostile to newcomers, not only among Germans but also Poles. Poles from Poznań and Pomerania felt they belonged to a better world than the one from which their countrymen from Białystok or Tarnobrzeg had come.<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that the locals also remained distrustful of their countrymen returning from emigration either in the western provinces or abroad.<sup>15</sup>

In this area, state policy aimed to ensure that migrants from Russia and Austria did not permanently settle within the German Empire's borders. For this purpose, a grace period was introduced, usually lasting from two to ten weeks. During this period, people coming from behind the cordon had to go to their places of permanent residence, both in Galicia and the Kingdom of Poland.<sup>16</sup>

The foreign workers were also bound to their workplace by identity cards, introduced on 1 February 1908. Following the Ministry of the Interior regulations of 21 December 1907, all foreign workers had to deposit their documents at the appropriate points. In return for the appropriate fee, they received uniform cards with an expiration date up to the grace

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<sup>10</sup> Zieliński: *Historia Polski 1864–1939*, p. 57.

<sup>11</sup> Brożek: *Napływ robotników*, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Wajda: *Wymiana siły roboczej*, p. 66.

<sup>13</sup> Drewniak: *Z dziejów polskiej emigracji*, p. 44.

<sup>14</sup> Chwalba: *Historia Polski 1795–1918*, p. 538.

<sup>15</sup> McCook: *The Borders of Integration*, p. 91.

<sup>16</sup> Brożek: *Polityka imigracyjna*, p. 122

period. These identity cards were exchanged for the deposited documents when leaving Prussia. A job change could only occur if the appropriate annotations were made on the identity card.<sup>17</sup>

Prussian authorities also used other control measures against the Polish population. For example, the provincial and district authorities exchanged alphabetical lists of registered Polish workers to facilitate the search for possible Polish fugitives.<sup>18</sup>

The Prussian authorities' policy on Polish migration also involved a specific approach to marriage issues. As far as employment was concerned, Polish families were prohibited from working on Prussian territory. This ban was formally specified in a decree issued by the Minister of the Interior on 4 September 1899. A derogation from this rule was only possible with the special permission of the Ministry of the Interior. Due to a large number of applications, this authority was later transferred to the heads of provinces.<sup>19</sup>

At the same time, the authorities discouraged German women from marrying Russian citizens. Under the law of 1 June 1870 on the acquisition and loss of federal and national citizenship, marriage to a foreign citizen resulted in the loss of German citizenship.<sup>20</sup> Although this practice stemmed from the subjective approach to women and applied to marriages with foreigners of any nationality, the Prussian authorities treated Russian subjects in a specific way. In 1892, the interior and religious affairs ministers issued a circular obliging the civil registrar to inform German women of the loss of German citizenship and its consequences in the event of marrying a Russian citizen.<sup>21</sup> Although the provisions of the act of 1870 were not directed against one group of people, the circular's issuance proves a specific policy towards Russian subjects, primarily Poles, because mostly that group got married in German territory. It should also be emphasised that similar regulations were not issued for other groups of foreigners residing in the Kingdom of Prussia.

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<sup>17</sup> Brożek: *Napływ robotników*, p. 18.

<sup>18</sup> Archiwum Państwowe w Toruniu: *Akta miasta Torunia, Handakten des Meldeamts Thorn*, sign. C17600S: *Abschrift von J. No. 915/3,03*, p. 149–151.

<sup>19</sup> Drewniak: *Napływ robotników sezonowych*, p. 64.

<sup>20</sup> *Gesetz vom 1. Juni 1870 über die Erwerbung*, pp. 355–360.

<sup>21</sup> *Zirkular [...] vom 16. Februar 1892, betr. die Eheschließungen*, p. 166.

The Prussian authorities' exceptional treatment of the Polish population is also emphasised by their policy towards Ukrainians, who, in 1902–1903, began arriving in Germany from Galicia.<sup>22</sup> The Prussian authorities even supported this migration because they did not see it as a threat to the German character of the eastern provinces.<sup>23</sup> Ukrainians were not covered by the grace period either.<sup>24</sup> With time, the Prussian authorities' policy led to an inversion of proportions between the two population groups. Between 1907/1908 and 1909/1910, between half and two-thirds of all Galician seasonal emigrants to Germany were Poles. In 1911–1913, this proportion was reversed; the vast majority were Ukrainians.<sup>25</sup>

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it should be emphasised that Prussian authorities' policy towards the migration of Poles within the First Republic lands changed over time. Initially, the unhindered movement of people across the border was allowed. However, with the development of German and Polish nationalism, fuelled by German concerns about the repolonisation of the eastern provinces of Prussia, the Prussian authorities' policy became more stringent.<sup>26</sup> Along with a tightening of Germanisation policy, this resulted in the expulsion of Poles who were Austrian and Russian subjects, from the Prussian Kingdom in 1885. However, five years later, due to the shortage of labour in the east of the country caused by the German population's migration to the west (*Ostflucht*)<sup>27</sup> and America and protests from industry and landowners, a conditional reopening of the borders took place.<sup>28</sup> After 1890, however, the Prussian government no longer accepted the Polish population's permanent settlement within its borders. To this end, identity cards and a grace period were introduced, forcing Poles to return to their country

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<sup>22</sup> Pilch: *Emigracja z ziem zaboru austriackiego*, p. 283.

<sup>23</sup> Brożek: *Napływ robotników*, p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> Pilch: *Emigracja z ziem zaboru austriackiego*, p. 284.

<sup>26</sup> Frackowiak: *Eine longue durée*, p. 39.

<sup>27</sup> Trzeciakowski: *Relations between the Polish*, p. 181

<sup>28</sup> Kępińska: *Persistence over Time*, p. 248.

of permanent residence temporarily. Decisions were also made to make it difficult for Poles from outside Prussia to obtain German citizenship and discourage German women from marrying them.

The Prussian authorities' attitude towards migrants was part of a broader trend of *Polenpolitik*, which involved issuing anti-Polish legal regulations and restricting the possibility of cultivating their culture, teaching their national language and acquiring land.<sup>29</sup> The Prussian authorities' unusual approach to the Polish population issue also emphasises the much better and less distrustful treatment of other groups of foreigners who were not subjected to similar restrictions. A particular case in point is the Ukrainians, who, emigrating from the same areas as the Poles, were not subjected to similar restrictions because their presence was not seen as a threat to the German character of the eastern provinces of the state.

### KRÓLESTWO PRUS WOBEC MIGRACJI POLAKÓW NA PRZEŁOMIE XIX I XX WIEKU

#### STRESZCZENIE

W artykule przedstawiono zmiany w podejściu władz pruskich do migracji Polek i Polaków na tereny leżące przed zaborami w granicach I Rzeczypospolitej (w przeważającej mierze), a zatem Prus Wschodnich i Zachodnich, Prowincji Poznańskiej oraz Śląska. Zwrócono również uwagę na wynikające z polityki migracyjnej i narodowościowej próby zniechęcenia poddanych pruskich (kobiet) do zawierania małżeństw z Polakami z Królestwa Polskiego (Kongresowego).

### DAS KÖNIGREICH PREUSSEN UND DIE POLENWANDERUNG AN DER WENDE VOM 19. ZUM 20. JAHRHUNDERT

#### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In dem Beitrag wurden Veränderungen in der Einstellung der preußischen Behörden zur Einwanderung von Polinnen und Polen in die Gebiete dargestellt, die vor den Teilungen Polens größtenteils innerhalb der Grenzen der Ersten Polnischen Republik lagen, d. h. Ost- und Westpreußen, die Provinz Posen sowie Schlesien. Es wurde auch auf die aus der Migrations- und Nationalitätenpolitik resultierenden Versuche hingewiesen, weibliche preußische Untertanen davon abzuhalten, Polen aus dem Bereich von Kongresspolen zu heiraten.

Übersetzt von Renata Skowrońska

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<sup>29</sup> McCook: *The Borders of Integration*, p. 95

## THE KINGDOM OF PRUSSIA AND THE MIGRATION OF POLES AT THE TURN OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

### SUMMARY

The article presents changes in the approach of Prussian authorities to the migration of Poles to the territories located within the borders of the First Polish Republic (mostly) before the partitions – i.e., East and West Prussia, the Province of Posen and Silesia. Attention was also drawn to attempts, resulting from migration and nationality policies, to discourage Prussian subjects (women) from marrying Poles from the Congress Kingdom of Poland.

### SŁOWA KLUCZOWE / SCHLAGWORTE / KEYWORDS

- Prusy; Polacy; migracja; prawo małżeńskie
- Preußen; Polen; Migration; Eherecht
- Prussia; Poles; migration; marriage law

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*Zirkular an die sämtlichen Königl. Ober=Präsidenten und den Königl. Ober=Staatsanwalt in Köln vom 16. Februar 1892, betr. die Eheschließungen zwischen russischen Untertanen und deutschen Frauen*, in: *Ministerial-Blatt für die gesamte innere Verwaltung in den Königlich Preussischen Staaten*, 5. 1892, p. 166.

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