

РОЛЬ НІМЕЦЬКОЇ НАЦІОНАЛЬНОЇ МЕНШИНИ В СУСПІЛЬНО-ПОЛІТИЧНОМУ ЖИТТІ СУЧАСНОЇ ПОЛЬЩІ

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Проаналізовано місце та роль німецької національної меншини у суспільно-політичному житті Республіки Польща. З'ясовано, що німецька спільнота є активним суб'єктом етнополітики. Встановлено, що меншина приймає участь у виборчому процесі через власні виборчі комітети, представлена на державному рівні та на рівні місцевого самоврядування.

Ключові слова: німецька національна меншина, етнонаціональна політика Республіки Польща.

Natalija Shypka

ROLE OF GERMAN NATIONAL MINORITY IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL LIFE OF MODERN POLAND

The research paper analyzes role and place of German national minority in social and political life of the Republic of Poland. It has been defined that German community is an active subject of ethno-national policy, as well as that this minority is actively engaged in the election process through its own elective committees; it is presented at both the national and local self-governance levels.

Key words: German national minority, ethno-national policy of the Republic of Poland.

The post-socialistic Poland has successfully passed the process of democratic transformations, having developed an effective ethno-national policy that meets European requirements and fundamental human rights and freedoms generally accepted by international practices. Studying of Polish experience is crucially essential for development of the Ukrainian ethno-national policy, especially given aspiration of Ukraine for European integration. Therefore, it is important to analyze features of national and ethnic minorities of modern Poland as primary subjects of ethno-national policy which directly affect the Polish state ethnic policy.

German national minority is the most numerous and most densely dispersed minority in Poland. German national community is the only minority which is resented in political life of the country and fully uses the Polish legislation in the ethno-political sphere. That is the exact reason why through studying the process of ethno-political renaissance of German minority we can analyze how the state ethno-national policy is practically implemented. The following Polish social scholars studied the researched topic: D. Berlinska [2], Budyta–Budzynska [4], G. Halupchak [5], T. Brovarec [3], M. Yas-Kozarkevych [7] and others. The major part of Ukrainian scientists researched national minorities, and German one in particular, during the period of the Polish Republic from 1919 to 1939. At the same time, the activities of German national minority in the modern Poland has not yet become a subject matter of scientific researches in the Ukrainian Political Studies.

Purpose of this scientific research is to identify the place and role of German national minority in social and political life of the Republic of Poland.

World War II radically changed the European borders: according to the Potsdam Conference decisions, Poland received the territories of the eastern Germany along the Odra (Oder) River and the Nysa Luzhytska (Neisse) River. Numerous German inhabitants who resided those territories turned to become a minority from 1945.

The Polish Communist regime with assistance of the Polish Workers' Party (PWP) sought to create a mono-ethnic state. Even before the end of the war, in February 1945, the Secretary General of the Central Committee of PWP, Wladyslaw Gomulka declared, "Germans living at the so called Returned Lands will be thrown out, because all states should be established on a national ground, and not based on national minorities" [13, P. 265].

As a result of such policy, approximately 3.5 million German people from the western and northern lands were a subject of internment and deportation. The deportation process (eviction, evacuation) started even before the end of the war and lasted until 1948. According to the official data as of the end of 1952,

there were 35.5 thousand German people residing in Poland [1, P. 75]. Additionally, large part of Germans left the Polish territory even later based on the numerous agreements between the Polish People's Republic and the German Democratic Republic of 1950-1959 as a part of the movement on the reunion of a family. During the mentioned years, about 320 thousand people left for PDR and FRD [9, P. 138]. Most researches indicate that such migration processes, besides people with German nationality, also encompassed indigenous inhabitants of the former German lands. According to the National census 2002, 152.897 thousand Germans lived in Poland. The most recent Polish national census was conducted in 2011 and its peculiarity was that the citizens were able to state a double national and ethnic identity. Having published the official census results in 2011, the Central Statistical Office (CSO) changed the data on national and ethnic identity of Polish population several times. According to the CSO data as of February 2015, German identity was declared by 147.814 thousand people, among them German identity as a single one was mentioned by 44.549 thousand people, while 103.265 thousand people (or 69.9 percent) declared a double Polish and German identity [8].

German national minority is the largest minority of Poland compactly residing in Opole voivodship – 78.5 thousand people (58 percent of total Polish Germans and 8 percent of the voivodship inhabitants) and in Silesian voivodship (20.8 percent of the whole German minority). German communities are also presented in Dolnośląskie, Lubuskie, Wielko-Polskie, Łódź, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Western Pomerania, Pomorskie and Warmia-Mazury voivodships. The vast number of people of German parentage resides in rural areas. Most of minority representatives (40 percent) have only a general secondary education, 34.4 percent – vocational education. Moreover, the minority is characterized by a poor command of native language [7, P. 61].

Till the beginning of 1950s, Germans, under the threat of punishment, could not use their native language, acknowledge their nationality, and cultivate their culture and language. Only since 1951, people of German nationality began to gain a permission to stay in the country, but till 1989, official authorities did not recognize the existence of the German minority in Poland.

A distinct shift in social and political life of Poland took place with the beginning of the democratic changes in 1989. The German community, trying to assert its own existence in Polish society, collected 250 thousand signatures from people of German origin. On July 24, 1989, the minority representatives attempted to register a Social and Cultural Society of German Minority in Silesia, but the attempt was declined. The court alleged the German minority that “the Society could threaten civil peace and order, and moreover, its existence and activities would not contribute to positive changes in the society”. The court also questioned the very existence of the German national minority in Silesia [2, P. 199]. The reasons for such court verdict were historical prejudices against German population and fears of recalls to return German private property located on the Polish western and northern lands.

Such court's decision has caused a wide resonance in the society that was reflected in the amendments in ethnic policy of the new government. The First Prime Minister of the Post-Communist Poland, Mr. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, during his governmental statement on September 12, 1989, highlighted, “Poland is a Motherland not only for the Poles. We are living on this land with representatives of other nationalities. We want them to feel themselves at their own home, to cultivate their own language and enrich our culture with their own one.” [11]. German minority's representatives enthusiastically embraced the Prime Minister's words starting to establish numerous civic organizations.

On January 16, 1990, first Cultural and Social Society of Germans in Silesia voivodship was registered in Katowice. Soon German minority's societies rose in all localities of compact German community, residing in Opole and Silesia regions, the city of Gdansk, Warmia and Mazury; in Kujawsko-Pomorskie and Wielkopolskie voivodships.

Signing of the Agreement on Neighborliness and Agreeable Cooperation (Bonn, June 17, 1991) between the Republic of Poland and the German Federal Republic outlining the right of German minority in Poland played an essential role in activities of German national minority. The Agreement specified the types of institutions that could be created by minorities, guaranteed the right of minorities to obtain assistance for their own needs. Moreover, the Agreement firstly separated the right of representatives of national minorities to participate in international NGOs' activities [14].

German community is the best organized one among all national and ethnic minorities in Poland. At the national level, the German national minority is represented by the Union of German Social and Cultural Societies (UGSCS), which was found in the city of Opole in 1991. In 2009, the Union encompassed 10 voivodships and 6 regional organizations. As of 2014, UGSCS included 45 thousand persons. Despite well-branched structure and size of the organization, the Union is not a single institution representing all civic organization of the minority. German minority is also represented by the row of institutions engaged in selected aspects of cultural, economic or cultural life of the minority.

Those institutions include, in particular:

- Foundation for Silesia Development and Local Initiative Support created in 1992. Key task of the organization creation for “representatives of the German government and the German minority in Poland was to create a single institution responsible for a proper distribution the German government funds intended to support German minority in Poland and allocated from the FGR budget; to improve Silesia infrastructure and to support entrepreneurship. The German government tried to stop the mass migration of German population to Germany through creating a decent living condition for the German minority in Poland.” [6]. Currently the Foundation is an independent and major economic institution using the FGR budget funds for the period of 1992–2002, as well as funds received from Polish sources.

- Trading House „Silesia” established in 1993 which unites enterprises from the Upper and Lower Silesia. The Trading House as a self-governing, economic organization is not limited only to activities in favor of the German minority, but also cooperates with all entrepreneurs (not only of the German origin), which has a positive impact on German-Polish relations.

- House of Polish–German Cooperation established in 1998. Its main task is to improve Polish and German collaboration, spread the ideas of tolerance and interaction, and to destroy negative stereotypes.

- Silesian Self-governing Society established in 2001 unites mayors of cities and gminas with prevailing German population. Main task of the society is to raise interest of German businessmen in investing in Poland. The Society is also involved in social and cultural activities implementing development projects and improving life of gminas.

The main goals of almost all German minorities’ organizations in Poland are to promote German culture, traditions, and customs; to preserve and develop German language; to develop German language school system; to prevent assimilation; to represent interests of German community in Poland, as well as to strengthen neighborly Polish–German relations.

Societies of German minorities are active in 11 of 16 Polish voivodships. As of 2011, there were 78 organizations of the German national minority in Poland with 235 thousand members. They accounted 43 percent of all operating organizations of national minorities in the country [15, P. 177].

German societies carry out various socio-cultural and educational activities, as follows:

- Supporting artistic and folk amateur performance;
- Taking care of German military graves;
- Supporting and developing cooperation with German sister cities and gminas;
- Conducting numerous festivals, contests, and German language courses; engaging in publishing activities, organizing conferences, exhibitions etc.

The German government, Polish budget, and membership fees are the main sources of funding for the German minority organizations. Additionally to the governmental agencies, German minority is supported by the various German foundations, organizations, and individuals. The German party directly provides funding not only to Polish minority institutions, but also supports social assistance, education, publishing, infrastructure enhancement in the regions of compact residence of the German minority (construction of roads, public utility networks, water treatment facilities, etc.).

Over past 10 years, financial support of Germany for the German minority in Poland significantly reduced, so they should seek for funding from various EU foundations and programs. The German government attempted to encourage the minority institutions for greater independence and activity. Despite the endeavor, improvements of living standards in the region of compact residence of the minority were felt not only by inhabitants of the German origin, but also by all the citizens dwelling nearby. Such German party’s activities certainly have contributed to the process of improvement of the pattern of German minority in Poland.

Positive changes in relations of Polish society towards German national minority are evidenced by the polling conducted by the Polish Public Opinion Research Center, which, in February 2013, published findings of the social survey “Attitude of Poles to Other Nations”. Thus, in 1993, negative opinion about Germans was declared by 53 percent of respondents; and in 2013 – only by 28 percent [12]. Activities of German institutions in Poland are focused on strengthening good Polish–German neighborly relations, and economic and political stability of the very Germany has essentially improved the Poles attitude to people of the German nationality.

The German national minority is the only minority in Poland activities of which have not only socio-cultural features, but also encompass political and economic life at the regional and national levels.

Due to its numerousness and compact residence, German minority is actively involved in socio-political life of its region and the country. Under the Polish legislation, national and ethnic minorities are exempt from the requirement to overcome 5 percent threshold of votes in the parliamentary elections. This

has contributed to the German minority representation in the Sejm. Moreover, in the territory of the German minority compact residence, a single mandate district was created. Its boundaries coincide with the territory of German community's residence. To participate in the election process, the German community establishes two election committees:

1. *German Minority Election Committee* acting on the basis of the Socio-Cultural Society of Germans of Opole; it participates in the elections both to local authorities and to the Sejm. Particularly, the Committee participated in the elections of 1991, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2006, 2010, and 2014;

2. *Silesia Autonomy Movement* which participates in local elections.

The real challenge for the German minority was the popularization of Silesian ethnic identity in Upper Silesia and active endeavors of organizations to promote Silesia and Silesians. Movement for Silesian autonomy has become popular not only in Upper Silesia, but also in Opole voivodship densely populated by the German minority. Silesian culture, language dialect are allied to many members of the German community who were brought up in Silesia. The German identity is only an ancestral tradition for them, the German language is unfamiliar for them, and the German culture is not well-known. The German identity of Silesians is "weaker" than the Silesian one. Number of people recognizing their Silesian identity (according to the census findings) is increased from 150 thousand people in 2002 to 800 thousand in 2011 [8]. Actually, regional Silesian identity is more related to the Silesian inhabitants.

German minority is actively supporting its representatives in the localities of the community's compact residence. Number of votes given to support the candidates to become Members of Parliament from the German minority is actually similar to percentage ration with number of German population residing in appropriate elective districts.

Already the first democratic election to the Senate (1990) was participated by Henrik Krul – a representative of the German minority from Opole voivodship. Although he did not win a deputy's mandate, 125 thousand votes received by him proved the high potential of German minority in the region [5, P. 92]. This potential was evidenced in the first post-war self-government elections, where German minority representatives obtained a lot of votes ensuring their representation in the Local Sejm of Opole voivodship, and in a gmina and a city councils.

A wave of ethnic renaissance has enabled the victory of the German minority representatives already at the first parliamentary elections on October 27, 1991, when seven Members of Parliament delivered a presentation on the German national minority in the Sejm. Five Members of Parliament of the total number of German ethnic representatives were elected from Opole voivodship; moreover, one of them obtained a place in the Senate. It was the best result of German national minority for the whole period of the Polish Republic existence. Starting from 1997, German minority already did not have its representative in the Senate. As for today, German community is represented only by one Member of Parliament, Richard Gill, in the Polish Sejm.

Results of the Election of Representatives of the German Minority to the Sejm of the Republic of Poland [4, P. 123].

Year	Votes	Percentage in ratio with all the country voters	Mandates
1991	132.059	1.18%	7
1993	60.770	0.77%	4
1997		0.39%	2
2001	42.340	0.33%	2
2005	34.469	0.29%	2
2007	32.462	0.20%	1
2011	28.014	0.19%	1

Decline of voters' support for the German minority is obvious. The same situation is also observed at the local elections despite the fact that the minority is still presented in the Local Sejm of Opole voivodship and in many gminas and raions of Opole region. The reason for such decrease was conditioned due to the improvement in the minority position, resifting of self-identity from German to Silesian one, massive (0 percent of the voivodship inhabitants) labor migration to Germany; especially it is relevant to the young generation. Political role of Germans beyond their compact residence area (Opole region) is minimal.

In the last election of November 2014, the German Minority Voters Committee represented 46 candidates for deputies to the Local Sejm of Opole voivodship. Victory with 42 thousand votes assured passing of seven representatives of German minority to the Local Sejm. As during the previous terms, German representatives in the Local Sejm of Opole voivodship established the Club of deputies of the German minority and formed a Coalition with the Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska – PO) and the

Polish Villager's Party (Polskim Stronnictwem Ludowym – PSL). The Coalition includes 25 local deputies who is 30; actually the result allows the minority to play the direct role in addressing the most critical issues of the voivodship. Additionally, during the elections, 45 raion deputies, more than 250 city and gmina deputies and 18 raion and city mayors were elected from the German minority representatives [10]. German minority representatives are actively participating in socio-political life in places of compact residence of the minorities; their contribution to political life at the national level has a representative role.

After the years of ethnic awakening, the period from 2000 is characterized by reduced activities of the German organizations. Following are the most relevant problems of the German minority:

- Low level of German language command especially among young people;
- A small number of intellectual and people with higher education;
- Massive emmigration of young generation abroad, in particular to Germany;
- Reduce of German identity of people of the German origin, especially in Silesia.

Thus, German minority is the most numerous and active one of its kind in socio-political life of Poland. With the beginning of democratic changes of 1990s, the minority managed to create a well-branched network of their own organizations on various specialization that covered all localities of compact residence of German community in the state. Compactness and large number of population with German origin in Opole voivodship and Silesia enables the victory of a representative of the German community to the Sejm, assuring the minority representation at the national level. Moreover, at the regional level, the minority is actively supporting people of the German origin during the election to local authorities. Therefore, number of German representatives in local authorities meets the percentage of German population among all inhabitants. The minority is actively participating in the elective processes through it is their elective committees, so it is presented at the national level (in the Parliament) and at the level of local self-governance. The activities of German community as an active player of ethno policy of Poland indicate its sufficient democracy and ability to meet the needs of the ethnic community. In terms of the choice of the Ukrainian European Integration, it is important to organize and conduct the further research of the successful Polish experience and best practices of building a democratic state and. It is essential to clarify the role of national and ethnic minorities in the process.

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