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**Adriana Dawid, *Niepolskie Opolskie. Władze polityczne i administracyjne oraz aparat bezpieczeństwa wobec proniemieckich postaw mieszkańców województwa opolskiego (1950–1956)* [Non-Polish Opolskie. Political and administrative authorities and the security apparatus towards pro-German attitudes of the inhabitants of the Opole Voivodeship (1950–1956)], Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2020 (Studia i Monografie, 585), pp. 630.**

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, the territories along the Oder River, from Upper Silesia to the Baltic, formerly Polish but lost to Prussia, were granted to Poland after the decision taken by the victorious Big Three in Potsdam on August 2, 1945. The Poles called them Recovered Territories in the belief that, after centuries, they had returned to their rightful owner – the Polish nation. This return came after catastrophic war damage and German crimes, and was also a compensation for the Polish Eastern Borderlands annexed by the Soviet Union and the martyrdom of Polish soldiers. In the former Regierungsbezirk Oppeln, which until 1945 was called Oberschlesien, the new name of the Regained Territories was propagandistically linked to the “regained” population, creating with this combination one of the founding myths of the Polish People’s Republic. The Upper Silesians were the largest “post-German” group, accounting for about 850 thousand people, among more than a million former citizens of the German Reich. Together with the so-called repatriates from the Polish Eastern Borderlands (in fact persons displaced as a result of Stalin’s decision) and settlers from central Poland, they were to form a new Polish society in the Western Territories. However, the Stalinisation of Poland at that time and the hasty Sovietisation of social life resulted in revealing German identity and rejection of the Polish state among

the “recovered Poles”. This process was started by Upper Silesian railwaymen already in 1949, as they did not intend to apply for a formal confirmation of their Polish nationality, whereas in 1952, when new identity papers were issued, some 70 thousand people objected and claimed to have German nationality/citizenship and to speak German in their daily lives. These sentiments were confirmed by the internal security organs, which identified the existence of German underground organisations aiming at the armed annexation of the area by Germany.

These phenomena and the explanation of their causes are the subject of Adriana Dawid’s work *Niepolskie Opolskie. Władze polityczne i administracyjne oraz aparat bezpieczeństwa wobec proniemieckich postaw mieszkańców województwa opolskiego (1950–1956)*. She gave it a very intriguing title, untranslatable into other languages.<sup>1</sup> In this way she referred to her earlier research and, in a way, built a counterpoint to the thesis of Edmund Jan Osmańczyk, a pre-war activist of the Polish minority in the German Reich, publicist and writer, who in one of his poems equated “Opole” to “Polishness” and believed in the return of the city to the motherland.

The book under review has become a basis for successful habilitation studies of the Author, who is associated with historical studies and scientific work at the University of Opole. She entered the circle of professional historians with her doctoral dissertation published in 2009, *Kośni z Chróścic. Dzieje rodu na tle przemian społeczno-politycznych Śląska w XIX i XX wieku* [The Kośnis of Chróścice. History of the family against the background of social and political changes in Silesia in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century]. She presented there the fate of a Polish family living near Opole, who struggled in the German Reich to maintain their national identity and possessions, fought against the Nazi system and after 1945 did not let the Communist machine break them down. After the publication of her dissertation, Dr. Dawid for several years engaged herself in scientific supervision of the Oral History Archive, a project implemented by the House for Polish–German Cooperation, which brings together young people who engage themselves in collecting accounts from earlier generations as witnesses to history and everyday life under the totalitarian system.

The main protagonists of the study are more closely defined by its subtitle: *Władze polityczne i administracyjne oraz aparat bezpieczeństwa wobec proniemieckich postaw mieszkańców województwa opolskiego* [Political and administrative

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<sup>1</sup> The translator of the German summary in the book expressed it descriptively as “Nichtpolnische Woiwodschaft Oppeln”, while the translator of the English summary gave it categorically and in a kind of Shakespearean manner as “Opole Voivodeship – Polish or not Polish?”.

authorities and the security apparatus towards pro-German attitudes of the inhabitants of the Opole Voivodeship]. Yet, the first part of the title seems incomplete and should also include the apparatus of propaganda, considering that the analysis of the press and other mass media occupies a prominent place in the monograph. If, for some reason, such an addition to the title was not possible, the enumeration should have been replaced by the general term “the apparatus of the Communist state”, as this is in fact the main protagonist of the monograph. The second protagonist, i.e. the inhabitants of the Opole region, are defined even more enigmatically in the title, as it announces only an account of their pro-German attitudes. In fact, if one is to believe the source material and the content of the study, we should rather talk about Upper Silesian Germans.

The main body of the author's study consists of three problem-oriented chapters, each of which might be published as an independent monograph. Chapter I, titled *Problem zagrożenia niemieckim rewizjonizmem* [The problem of threat from German revisionism], discusses selected issues resulting from this revisionism towards post-war Poland and their perception from the perspective of the Communist apparatus. In this context, the Author mentions espionage, illegal German organisations, sabotage, (pro)German propaganda and the role of foreign German-language radio stations, contacts with both German states, i.e. the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), prohibited since 1949, and the fight against the so-called “whispered propaganda”, i.e. combating the system of Polish rule by means of rumours and gossip.

In Chapter II, under the title *Nastroje i deklaracje proniemieckie* [Pro-German sentiments and declarations], the Author changes the point of view of her analysis and takes into account the perspective of the examined group, i.e. the Upper Silesian population. It presents their attitudes towards key domestic events, such as the general census (1950) and the issuing of new identity cards (1952), towards elections to the Sejm (1952) and to national councils (1954), and their attitude towards calls to serve in the Polish Army. In this section, Adriana Dawid also discusses the antagonisms, arising after 1945, between the influx group and the locals, including the growing pressure on the latter to emigrate.

In Chapter III, titled *Kampanie polonizacyjne i antyniemieckie* [Polonization and anti-German campaigns], the Author focused her narrative on political interactions between the apparatus of the Communist state and the group subjected to its oppression. She gives examples of the authorities' suppressing the use of the

German language and attempts to break the contact with German culture among the discussed group. The chapter presents also examples of long-term state operations in the cultural field, undertaken in the sphere of propaganda, mainly involving the press, but also related to education and pressure on the Catholic Church. All these measures were usually applied by the apparatus of the national state, so they seemed somewhat paradoxical in the period of copying the Stalinist system and methods. However, one should remember about the bottom-up pressure of the local Silesian group, which, by demonstrating pro-German attitudes, sought to force a state's consent for their departure from Poland.

The caesuras enclosing the narrative of this dissertation are, in a way, "natural" for the period of People's Poland. It is opened with the title "Opolskie", i.e. the voivodeship of that name, created in 1950, after the administrative reform of the State, with its own state-party apparatus. The analysis concludes with the year 1956, known for the social explosion during the Poznań June. Such an outburst in Upper Silesia had already been expected by the Communists as early as 1953, due to the revolt of the Berlin workers, but it was not until October 1956 that a nationwide political breakthrough and correction of the Communist system took place. In principle, the years 1950–1956, adopted in the dissertation as boundary years, seem a defensible concept, although from the perspective of the second protagonist of the publication, i.e. the inhabitants of the Opolskie Voivodeship, I would consider it reasonable to start the narrative from 1949, pointing to the significance of the creation of two German states. The Author, albeit not explicitly, shares this reasoning on the significance of the caesuras of 1949 and 1955, as she has divided her core discussion into 5 chapters. She called the first one "Prologue" and discusses in it the situation in the region at the turn of 1949 and 1950. The last one is called "Epilogue" and presents the breakthrough of 1956 in the Opolskie Voivodeship and the new principles of internal policy introduced towards the Upper Silesians, which finally undermined the assumptions of Polish national policy towards the titular group of inhabitants of the Opolskie Voivodeship. As it seems, the policy was based on two interconnected assertions of the Communist authorities: the first and dominating one was the conviction that the Upper Silesian population who remained after the nationality verification procedure was ethnically, or at least in their origin, Polish. Germanness, on the other hand, was said to be only a covering patina, and the existing ties to German language and culture were expected to disappear as a result of confrontation with the scale of German crimes

committed during World War II. However, it should be noted here that although in the course of the verification procedure the group in question was in an overwhelming majority ethnically Polish, the inhabitants were not asked about their links to German culture, which were manifold: in the sphere of language, customs and habits, they identified themselves culturally as “German”.

In 1946, a group of about 60 thousand in the whole of Upper Silesia, mainly mothers and wives, despite being verified, wanted to leave for the occupation zones of Germany because their husbands or children were staying there. The Polish authorities did not allow these men to leave for their families, and it was clear that as former Wehrmacht soldiers, they would not be able to move to the other side of the Oder River. Therefore, those in Poland, in the hope to be punitively displaced, ostentatiously used the German language in and distanced themselves from the newcomers.

Furthermore, it turned out that knowledge of the Polish language was not widespread and rather associated with the older generation. In Warsaw, on the other hand, the prevailing belief was that with time, within a generation or two, pro-German attitudes would become marginalised and disappear. They pointed to Arka Bożek, a pre-war Polish minority politician, who together with the then activists of the Union of Poles in Germany backed the new regime in 1945. They considered that Germany, as the state that had caused the war and on account of the scale of the crimes it had committed, would not be as a recognised political factor in the foreseeable future, and therefore would not have an influence on the situation in Upper Silesia. In 1949, however, there was a marked change in local attitudes, caused by the entry of the FRG into the bloc of Western states. Although the GDR had also been created at the initiative of the Soviet Union, the Polish authorities became aware of the effects of the presence on the western border of a large and politically unstable group of people, who might turn against Poland if the “cold war” of that time turned into a “hot” one. This provoked a telling reaction from the Polish United Worker’s Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza – PZPR) Central Committee, which on 7 July 1950 passed the famous resolution on “intensifying work among the native population”, recommending that the wrongs be righted and that representatives of this group be included in the governing bodies. However, in the public perception it turned out that these recommendations of the Party authorities were boycotted by the local Party apparatus.

A much more hostile reaction came from the internal security apparatus, which accused the Upper Silesians of so-called West German revisionism, i.e. of aiming to separate Poland's western territories and incorporate them into Germany. It was therefore ordered to fight these attitudes and circles with methods and means characteristic of the political police. The Party authorities contented themselves with control, but their fear of the West German state and society increased, because the Iron Curtain, as A. Dawid bluntly demonstrates, was quite cracked – letter contacts lasted, parcels were received from there, and German-language radio was listened to. In the Opole region, however, the continued lack of direct contact with West Germany led to a mythologisation of its everyday life and to the creation of a “promised land” out of the “Reich”. The inefficient system of the Polish socialist economy could do little to counteract this vision.

In December 1954, a new political perspective unexpectedly appeared for the inhabitants of the Silesian region, as the Polish authorities, through the International Red Cross, decided to launch a family reunion project in cooperation with the FRG. The role of this caesura must be acknowledged, because for the Upper Silesian community it was the beginning of a time of uncertainty and asking themselves: Do we go there to build a new future – or should stay and try to find our happiness here? Further significant changes occurred only after an agreement was signed during Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's visit to Moscow in September 1955. Diplomatic relations were then established, and the last German prisoners of war were released from the Soviet Union. Warsaw realised that the Communists had a specific currency, in the form of humanitarian gestures, so it was used in the negotiations with the FRG. At first the aim was to achieve any form of recognition of the Yalta–Potsdam political reality, and ultimately recognition of the border on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse. However, the negotiations lasted a long time – until December 6, 1970, when Willy Brandt and Władysław Gomułka signed an official agreement allowing tens of thousands of people to emigrate. Only then was it officially admitted in the Government Information of the Polish People's Republic that the people discussed in Author's book were Germans. In the years of Edward Gierek's leadership (1970–1980), their departures were directly linked to financial transfers.

The government's internal practice since December 1955 no longer gave priority to the earlier policy of incorporating the Upper Silesian group into the Polish nation. The abandonment of this policy after 1949 was often in opposition to the expectations of regional circles, especially those associated with former members of the Union of

Poles in Germany. They argued that people who emigrated to Germany were Poles, and that Poland was losing an important part of its population. An example of this was the above-mentioned J. Osmańczyk, who had previously been one of the most faithful acolytes of the people's government, but after the Brandt–Gomułka agreement, began to contest the system. This gave him a senatorial seat from the Solidarity list in 1989. However, ignoring of these protests by the communist leaders, apart from the diplomatic game, should be attributed to the demographic changes of the Polish People's Republic and the growing number of inhabitants. Moreover, the conviction that it were ultimately Germans, i.e. groups hostile to Poland, who were leaving, became established, which can be seen as evidence that the security apparatus managed to impose its point of view on other institutions of the Communist state.

As far as research techniques of Adriana Dawid are concerned, it should be noted that her work is characterised by a traditional historical method of collecting available sources and their critical analysis, combined with an attempt to present them against the background of historical events and to explain their causes and effects. Supporters of various methodological “turns” in historiography and of a deeper adoption of impulses from social sciences, not so long ago from sociology or now from psychology, will therefore be disappointed. Undoubtedly, one has to acknowledge the consistency of the Author's method, adopted already in the introduction, to present her own research categories after analysing the state of research and then to be faithful to them in the historical narrative. She includes conclusions from her analytical work of the famous *lingua sovietica*, or Communist newspeak. Thus, under the titular pro-German attitudes or the central notion of West German revisionism, the Author revealed trivial issues, such as listening to German radio or receiving food parcels from Germany.

The author's traditional approach can also be seen in the bibliography that extends for 25 pages. This is a proof that the Author conducted extensive searches in eight central and regional archives (including several collections of files in the State Archive in Opole) and in several journals, and that she became familiar with many works of other authors. This second remark is somewhat misleading, since Bogdan Cimała and Stanisław Senft<sup>2</sup> wrote about the issue of pro-German attitudes among the Upper Silesian population in the first half of the 1950s, but in this case the emphasis is on the language of sources and the narration of the time, which

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<sup>2</sup> See, e.g. Bogdan Cimała, Stanisław Senft, *Ludność rodzima na Śląsku Opolskim w polityce władz wojewódzkich w latach 1950–1956*, “Studia Śląskie”, 53 (1994), pp. 89–117.



gives the impression of criticism from within. These phenomena from a national perspective were analysed with more detachment in subsequent years by Czesław Osękowski,<sup>3</sup> Zbigniew Romanow<sup>4</sup> and, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, by Piotr Madajczyk<sup>5</sup>; however all these studies were prepared before the source breakthrough caused by the Institute of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej – IPN) making available the files of the security apparatus, which – as I have already indicated – in this case was the main executor of the Communists’ will.

If we look at this discussion from this perspective, Dawid in many respects has a pioneering role. Although a few texts on pro-German attitudes in the Stalinist period were created by the IPN in Katowice, as Adam Dziurok and Adam Dziuba<sup>6</sup> and, above all, Sebastian Rosenbaum<sup>7</sup> wrote about this phenomenon, they focused on the Katowice/Stalinogród Voivodeship. A similar point of reference prevails in the studies of the undersigned,<sup>8</sup> and Zbigniew Bereszyński,<sup>9</sup> who explored the entire post-war history of Opole Silesia from the perspective of the secret police files, focusing on German issues in the 1980s. None of them, however, has made such a deep and diversified search for sources as the Author of the reviewed study did. By means of it, Dawid sets herself the task of showing the dynamics of pro-German attitudes among the population of the Opolskie Voivodeship, their determinants and the reaction of the Polish state to them (pp. 14–15). Apart from the formulation of research objectives, the extended introduction characterises and defines the area and group under study, as well as discusses the status of the research, the available sources and the construction of the study.

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<sup>3</sup> Czesław Osękowski, *Spółczesność Polski Zachodniej i Północnej w latach 1945–1956. Procesy integracji i dezintegracji*, Zielona Góra 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Zenon Romanow, *Polityka władz polskich wobec ludności rodzimej ziem zachodnich i północnych w latach 1945–1960*, Słupsk 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Piotr Madajczyk, *Niemcy polscy 1944–1989*, Warszawa 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Adam Dziuba, Adam Dziurok, *Die Aufdeckung und Bekämpfung des “revisionistischen Element” in der Woiwoschaft Kattowitz in den fünfziger und sechziger Jahren*, “Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas”, 5 (2003), 2, pp. 254–280.

<sup>7</sup> Most comprehensively in: Sebastian Rosenbaum, *Partia i aparat bezpieczeństwa województwa katowickiego wobec proniemieckich postaw ludności rodzimej od lat pięćdziesiątych do siedemdziesiątych XX w.*, [in:] *Aparat bezpieczeństwa Polski Ludowej wobec mniejszości narodowych*, ed. Jarosław Syrnyk, Warszawa 2009, pp. 57–102.

<sup>8</sup> For a selection of several texts on this subject see: Bernard Linek, *Kwestia niemiecka na powojennym Górnym Śląsku (1945–1960)*, Opole 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Among the first texts dedicated to this period see: Zbigniew Bereszyński, *Aparat bezpieczeństwa Polski Ludowej wobec Kościoła katolickiego, na przykładzie województwa opolskiego w latach 1950–1956*, “Studia Śląskie”, 84 (2019), pp. 151–178.



The main part of the work consists of three problem-oriented chapters, each of which could be published as an independent monograph. Chapter I, under the title *Problem zagrożenia niemieckim rewizjonizmem* [The problem of threat from German revisionism], discusses selected issues of German revisionism from the perspective of their perception by the Communist apparatus. From this perspective the following issues are discussed in sequence: espionage, illegal German organisations, sabotage, (pro)German propaganda, the role of German-language radio stations, contacts with both German states and so-called ‘whispered propaganda’, i.e. combating the system through the power of rumour. In Chapter II, called *Nastroje i deklaracje proniemieckie* [Pro-German sentiments and declarations], the Author changes the reference point of the analysis and it is carried out from the perspective of the examined group, the Upper Silesian population. Here she discusses the attitudes of this group towards the census (1950) and the issue of identity cards (1952), elections to the Sejm (1952) and to national councils (1954), and conscription to the Polish Army. In this section she also discusses the growing pressure to emigrate and the antagonisms that arose between the local and influx groups. Chapter III, presenting *Kampanie polonizacyjne i antyniemieckie* [Polonisation and anti-German campaigns], the Author focuses on interactions between the apparatus of the Communist state and the group subjected to its oppression. She presents examples of suppression in the cultural field, at school and through pressure on the Catholic Church. Such operations were usually carried out by the apparatus of nation states, which sounds somewhat paradoxical for the period of copying Stalinist methods, although, on the one hand, the issue of the “nationalisation” of the Communist state is not the subject of this research and, furthermore, it is necessary to remember about the grassroots pressure of the Silesian group, which, by displaying pro-German attitudes, wanted to force the authorities to allow them to leave.

In a short “Conclusion”, the Author reiterates her main theses and describes the processes that took place. As I have already mentioned, with regard to the adopted assumptions and objectives, the book by A. Dawid should be considered a successful project. On the basis of extensive research, it presents a comprehensive set of pro-German attitudes among the inhabitants of the Opolskie Voivodeship and the actions taken by the Communist apparatus to suppress them. It also identifies the social mechanisms of these phenomena and their coupling with other political processes in Polish People’s Republic and with Polish–German relations.

Some readers will probably perceive as lacking setting these reflections in the context of processes taking place among other “post-German” groups in post-war Poland (especially the Masurians). Sometimes it would be important to situate these actions in the background of the policy towards national minorities in the entire Soviet bloc. However, these were not the aims of this elaborate work; rather, there was a need to distinguish more clearly the third actor in this play, namely the German state and society, although I also understand the caution of A. Dawid. She did not conduct searches in German archives, nor did she analyse the German press in this respect. In view of the gradually opening German archives, this is a topic worthy of at least a doctoral dissertation, although not necessarily written in Poland.

The Author’s attention to detail at the local level translates into a permanent presence of her book in the literature on the subject, while addressing issues concerning small communities will also ensure appreciation of the book and a wide readership among those interested in their own past from smaller towns in the Opolskie Voivodeship. It is therefore a great surprise that such a little number of copies was printed, as 150 of them seem to be enough just for family and close friends. Let us hope that soon there will be a new edition of this book.