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WARMIA AND MASURIA IN THE FACE OF THE REBIRTH OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND IN 1918

It is not easy to indicate such regions as Warmia and Masuria, which in the second half of the 19th century appeared in the consciousness of Poles as areas with a Polish past and at the same time necessary for independent Poland due to the geographical location. Such a reflection must come to light at the moment of celebrating the centenary of Poland's regaining independence. In the memorable 1918, although it was not yet possible to realise the desires of some nationally conscious Warmians and Masurians for these lands to become part of the Republic of Poland. And it was very close during that time.

1

From the fifteenth century to the later years, visitors from Mazovia and Chełmno settled on the land of pagan Prussia conquered by the Teutonic Knights with the intention of conversion to Christianity. They used Polish and brought their customs to where they settled. They re-developed these lands, which had been abandoned one after another after the destruction during the Polish-Teutonic wars, later the Swedish wars, or after the outbreak of epidemics. With time, in the southern part of East Prussia newcomers began to dominate the civilisation and absorbed the rescued Prussians. On the northern ends of this land colonists from western Germany had settled slightly earlier. They founded towns, dried the soil, cut down roads through the forest, and started trade routes. They adopted a fixed division into dioceses whose bishops, unlike Warmia, were more dependent on the Teutonic Knights. The further course of historical events, i.e. the opposition of Prussian states to the Teutonic Knights, the Polish-Teutonic wars and the incorporation of

Warmia into Poland resulted in the transformation of the Teutonic Knights into a secular Prussian principality. This was done by the last Teutonic master Albrecht Brandenburg, who in 1525 adopted the Lutheran religion, and with it, according to the medieval principle of *cuius regio eius religio* (whose realm, his religion), all subjects became evangelicals. On 10 April Albrecht, already a secular prince, paid homage to the Polish king Sigismund the Old on the Krakow Market Square. He established the Duchy of Prussia as a Polish fief. Albrecht quite rigorously introduced a new faith. He committed his subjects to support the priests. This meant that tithing in Catholic times was still in force, and he ordered his officials to strictly supervise the proclamation of the “pure Word of God,” that is, the new religion.

Albrecht felt the need to set up a university in the duchy to educate pastors and teachers of all nationalities living in Prussia. In 1541 he established a special school called the Paedagogium. Three years later it was transformed into the University of Królewiec, officially approved by King Sigismund Augustus. The aim was to prepare the clergy of Polish nationality, providing religious service to Poles and separately to Lithuanians and Prussians. He even funded seven scholarships for people who speak Polish and Lithuanian. Thanks to the Seklucjan, the city on the Pregola River became not only a place of activity for Polish scientists, but also an important publishing centre. In Ełk this role was fulfilled by Jan and Hieronim Małecki. The Polish book was of great importance for the promotion of Lutheranism. In the years 1545–1552, more Polish prints were published in the Duchy of Prussia than in the entire Republic of Poland¹.

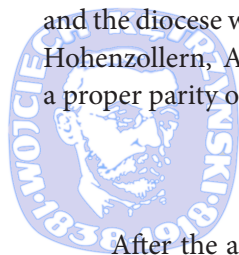
The largest inflow of Poles to the Duchy of Prussia took place in the 17th century. The Polish element, originating from Mazovia, has almost completely taken over the lands, currently comprising the following powiats: Ełcki, Giżycki, Mągowski, Nidzicki, Olecki, Ostródzki, Piki, Szczycieński, Węgorzewski and the southern part of the former Gołdapski powiat. Around the middle of the 19th century they were called Masuria. They were distinguished by the fact that they spoke Polish, kept ancestral customs and were evangelicals.

Polonization of cities also took place. For example, already in 1538 in Szczytno there were only four inhabitants who did not know Polish, and in the 17th century in Giżycko the mayors were only Poles.

Warmia was incorporated into the Crown from the conclusion of the Second Toruń Peace Treaty (1466), which ended the Thirteen Years' War. It remained Catholic. As before, the bishops of Warmia and the Cathedral Chapter held secular and spiritual power here until the first partition of Poland in 1772. Each of the bishops sat in the Senate of the Republic of Poland. However, it has never been

¹ J. Małecki, *Reformacja w Prusach Książęcych*, in: *Warmia and Mazury. Zarys Dziejów*, Olsztyn 1985, p. 204.

a fully independent country. In the first period it was under the influence of the Teutonic Knights, although it was not a part of the peace in Toruń; in the second period it was actually incorporated into Poland, but to some extent it retained its autonomy. Dependent on the Polish king as the head of state, it had more freedom in managing the economy than in the Teutonic period. The Polish kings referred with some attentiveness to this unique land, which was the Duchy of Warmia, and its separateness, tradition and endeavours (especially those expressed by the Cathedral Chapter) to respect the old regulations considered to be a harmless thing; especially since 1523, as a result of the Piotrków Agreement of 1512, they gained practically a decisive influence on the choice of bishops and provosts of the Chapter. Both bishops and canons took care of their mother tongue in pastoral ministry. This was the case for 306 years, when Warmia was a part of the Republic of Poland and the diocese was ruled by Poles. Also after 1772 the first bishops, Karol and Józef Hohenzollern, Andrzej Stanisław Hatten and Józef Ambroży Geritz maintained a proper parity of languages in the Diocese of Warmia.



INSTYTUT POLONICZNY IM. WOJCIECHA KĘTRZYŃSKIEGO

2

After the annexation of Warmia in 1772, King Frederick II took care solely of establishing German-Evangelical schools. They were one of the elements of the assimilation policy pursued by the Prussian authorities in the seized territory. This was done through homagial acts, i.e. taking the oath of allegiance of senior officials. Everyone was required to be loyal to the throne and the Prussian state. This loyalty was intended to be achieved through upbringing in school and church. Hence, attempts were made to unify language matters. First, the Polish society was to be transformed into bilingual, and later into monolingual – German. The feeling of Prussian statehood was first yielded by the higher clergy, the wealthier bourgeoisie and the emerging new intelligentsia. On the other hand, peasants, the poorer and middle class refused to be influenced by Prussian statehood. They lost too much. Their economic and legal situation deteriorated significantly: they had to pay higher taxes, and if they were unable to pay on time, they were threatened with the spectre of auctioning their farm; their old privileges from the period when Warmia belonged to Poland were questioned; forced mill and propination were introduced; they were forced to carry out by military executions.

Language matters in the education of East Prussia were dealt with by the provincial assemblies in 1829, 1932 and 1934. The subject of the meetings were attempts to introduce German as a language of instruction to schools in ethnically Polish lands. In February 1834 the Kwidzyń Regency made the relevant regulations public, and in the following months the Królewiec and Gąbin Regencies. These

documents state that all school-age children, regardless of the language they spoke at home, should study German, depending on the class, from 6 to 12 hours per week. In 1836, the charge met with opposition from the synod of the Evangelical Church in Olecko as well as parents, that's why on 25 August 1837, the Gąbin Regency issued a supplement to that decree in which it was ordered that Polish and Lithuanian children, until they reach sufficient knowledge of German, if their parents so wished, would take religion classes in Polish.

The activities of Evangelical priests gathered around a pastor from Ostróda, Gustaw Gizewiusz (1810–1848) also limited the scope of Germanisation efforts at that time. The memorial, developed together with Krzysztof Celestyn Mrongowiusz on the legal recognition of the Polish language in Masuria, was personally submitted by Gizewiusz to the King of Prussia in 1842.

However, the Prussian authorities did not resign from further Germanisation activities. In 1861, the Królewiec Regency organised a conference of teachers in Olsztynek to support German among Polish children in Masuria and Warmia. Nearly 200 teachers and clergy of both faiths took part in it. At the conference there were clear anti-Polish tendencies, e.g. in such statements as: Polish-Masurian speech is less valuable than the speech of native Poles: only lower social spheres use the Polish language in Masuria, German speech is a condition for the development of culture, the lack of knowledge of German makes real education impossible². Participants of the conference exposed practical reasons confirming that knowledge of German will lead to the spiritual unification of Masurians and Polish Warmians with Prussia and Germany.

Meanwhile, the Masurians accepted Polish as the language of church liturgy. They learned to pray, sing Polish church songs and read the Bible in Polish. They attached particular importance to this liturgical role of the language. As Grzegorz Jasiński emphasised: “Masurians perceived the Polish language not only as a means of social communication, but also as a means by which one could enter the sphere of sacrum, in which religious concentration and contact with God were possible. And it was easier for Masurians to consent to the Germanisation of the language in its sphere of communication than to allow for the elimination of separateness from religious life”³. Especially that in a conservative rural environment, the sphere of sacrum not only shifted to what was connected with religion and ecclesiastical rituals, but also included the privacy of every human being. This was the case with regard to the upbringing of children, including the obligation to educate religious-

² E. Martuszewski, *Konferencja nauczycielska w Olsztynku w 1861 roku*, Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie (KMW), 1969, no. 3 pp. 297–308.

³ G. Jasiński, *Mazurzy jako społeczność ewangelicka (XIX wiek)*, in: *Przeszłość natchnieniem dla teraźniejszości*, Elk 1996, p. 178.

ly, to familiarise oneself with the principles of faith with the help of the Church and to introduce the faithful to the congregation. This task is required from school through the teaching of reading, familiarising oneself with the principles of the belief, morality and preparation for confirmation. As a result, in their opinion, Polish was called the church language. Since the changes in the teaching of Polish, or rather its abandonment, were attempted from above, without the consent of the Masurians, it became an attack on their eternal rights and customs, after all, introduced here. They threatened to break down the existing moral norms and models. Hence the protests over the preservation of the Polish language in religious education emerged.

The publication of *O Mazurach* by Wojciech Kętrzyński, who was born in Giżycko, was of great importance for the expansion and deepening of knowledge and interest in Polish matters in East Prussia, mainly in Masuria⁴. He pointed out that “the traces of Polishness in East Prussia are disappearing more and more, and just as Polinised German citizenship became de-Polonised again, so has Masurian–Polish citizenship been Germanised [...] The Masurian people, in such a position, living in such circumstances, overshadowed by a foreign nationality and plunged into darkness itself, can be different than just a blind tool in the hands of the government or some political party? [...] The heart of every Masurian father must face pain and sorrow if he sees that children, instead of educating their spirit and heart, only learn how to chatter in a foreign language, forgetting their mother tongue, which the parents speak, because the father knows well who is despising the language of their parents, will eventually be ashamed of their parents”⁵.

This first study by Wojciech Kętrzyński should be considered as the initial programme of Polish action in Masuria. It triggered initiatives of Poles with a higher degree of national awareness for the sake of bringing the people of this land closer to the Polish nation. This outstanding Polish historian drew attention to Chełmno’s “Przyjaciel ludu” (*Friend of the People*), edited in the spirit of tolerance. He also pointed out the need for representatives of the local people to take up national work, because the outside agitation would encounter disbelief and mistrust of the Masurian people. This national activity was then undertaken in Ełk by Karol Bahrke with the help of Alfons Parczewski and Rev. Antoni Wolszlegier from Dąbrówno through the founding of “Gazeta Ludowa” and the creation of the “Mazurska Partia Ludowa” in 1896.

⁴ W. Kętrzyński, *O Mazurach*, in: Tygodnik Wielkopolski, 1872, no. 7–11.

⁵ Idem, *O Mazurach*, Foreword J. Jasiński, Olsztyn 1968, pp. 49–50.

3

South Warmia, mostly inhabited by the Polish population in the last quarter of the 19th century, was as if on the side-lines of public life. Poles mostly lived in the countryside; three towns Olsztyn, Barczewo, then called Wartembork, and Biskupiec had a significant percentage of the German population. At that time, a great development of Olsztyn took place. Thanks to creation of a railway junction, the local garrison was enlarged. The newcomers were mostly Germans, and those who moved from village to town abandoned old customs, language, and Polish culture. Olsztyn took on the character of an administrative centre. In 1905 it became the seat of the regency, and five years later it became a township. As early as the beginning of 1870s, German was introduced here as a compulsory language in courts and offices so the interpreters in the courts have been removed.

In the region of Warmia, a lack of Polish guides in national work was anticipated. Just like in Masuria, the intelligentsia, which, as Wojciech Kętrzyński noted, “gets Germanised in a school in which Polish is not spoken; only in the Braniewo seminary the Polish language is taken into account, the Germanised youth quickly forgets its Polish origins, which today can provide no career to anyone, move to a German camp, where bread is eaten, waits and promotions. Despite the fact that citizens are Germans who do not favour the Polish element for their own interest, that the majority of priests are of German descent and do not consolidate the interest of their Church with the interests of the Polish population entrusted to their care, the national feeling has not yet expired in the hearts of the peasants and townspeople of Warmia”⁶. Especially that echoes of national liberation fights, first in 1830, then in 1863, aroused interest in Poland. The Warmians provided shelter for the Poles persecuted by the tsarist authorities, acted as an intermediary in the transfer of weapons for the insurgents in the Congress Kingdom, while the peasants from the Olsztyn region enlisted in the insurgent parties. Then we should emphasise the readership of the press and Polish books reaching the south of Warmia. In Butryny, 10 copies of “Przyjaciel Ludu”, published since 1861 in Chełmno, were subscribed to, and in a local inn there was a group reading of the newspaper; in Gietrzwałd, the parish priest Józef Jordan subscribed as many as 40 copies of “Pielgrzym” (“Pilgrim”) for his parishioners. From the Wielkopolska newspapers, “Orędownik” and “Tygodnik Wielkopolski” came here, to which Andrzej Samulowski (1840–1928) from Gietrzwałd and Franciszek Szczepański (1842–1907) from Lamkowo sent correspondence. From Silesia arrived: “Zwias-tun Górnos Śląski”, “Katolik” and “Gazeta Górnos Śląska”. Janusz Jasiński wrote: “In total, in the years 1859–1885, several titles of Polish newspapers from Pomerania,

⁶ W. Kętrzyński, *Szkice*, ed. and preceded by A. Wakar, 1977, pp. 112–113.

Wielkopolska and Upper Silesia were read in Warmia. Some villages received a few journals⁷⁷. The libraries created in the countryside cannot be omitted either. Rev. Franciszek Kaupowicz in Brąswałd and Antoni Szczepański, Andrzej Samulowski's father-in-law, made an effort to do so as early as 1854, at whose request in 1863 Ignacy Łyskowski from Toruń sent a collection consisting of 29 books to Sząbruk. Then, libraries of Towarzystwo Czytelni Ludowych ("Society of Folk Reading Rooms") were established. Thanks to these magazines and books "the people in Warmia woke up from sleep, felt Polish"⁷⁸.

Also the *kulturkampf* and the events in Gietrzwałd intensified the national awareness of the inhabitants of southern Warmia. Instead of completely eliminating Catholicism from public life, it increased its political significance; instead of inflicting a fatal blow to Polishness in the Prussian state, it triggered its rebirth and made it more dynamic⁹.

The importance of the Gietrzwałd events of the summer months of 1877 consisted in the fact that the girls who spoke with "Piękna Pani" ("Beautiful Lady") came from families fervently Catholic and zealously – as it turned out – attached to Polish speech and Polish custom. It was an argument strongly influencing peasant imagination and repeated for decades, also in "Gazeta Olsztyńska": if the Patroness of St. Warmia, Our Lady, blessed Warmian children here in a language that they understood, it means that those who renounce the Polish speech – the gift of God, are sinning⁷⁹.

The apparitions of Our Lady, which lasted from 27 June to 16 September 1877, gathered in Gietrzwałd crowds of pilgrims from various Polish lands. Poles who came here were educated, nobly born, and simple. Religious and patriotic meetings took place there. The events in Gietrzwałd were particularly popularised by Andrzej Samulowski, a founder of a Polish bookshop in 1878, in his correspondence to the newspapers of Pomerania and Wielkopolska, as well as in poems and songs. The song *Już to po zachodzie* (*Already after sunset*) and the poem *Na zebranie przedwyborcze* (*To pre-election meeting*), with its date of creation described by Janusz Jasiński as 1918, although this poem could have been written earlier by the poet, had an exceptional character. Here are four stanzas from this eleven stanzas' poem with translation:

Matka Boska widząc z nieba, (Our Lady from heaven sees,)
Czego nam Polakom trzeba, (What we Poles need,)

⁷⁷ J. Jasiński, *Świadomość narodowa na Warmii w XIX wieku. Narodziny i rozwój*, Olsztyn 1983, p. 174.

⁷⁸ „Polak” (Kraków), 1897, no. 3, p. 37.

⁷⁹ J. Obłąk, *Sprawa polska ludności katolickiej na terenie diecezji warmińskiej w latach 1870–1914*, Nasza Przyszłość, 1963, vol. 18, p. 120.

Stała w Gietrzwałdzie na klonie, (She stood on Gietrzwałd's maple,)
 Dla całej Polski w obronie. (For entire Poland in defence.)
 Ktoś znów z pytaniem się tłoczy: (Somebody speaks out a question:)
 „Czy się Polska znów zjednoczy?” (“Will Poland see resurrection?”)
 Maryja na to pytanie: (Our Lady answers this query:)
 Polska później zmartwychwstanie! (Poland will raise later!)
 Więc nadeszły już te czasy, (So those times have already come,)
 Pękły z więzień zawiasy, (Hinges cracked from prisons,)
 Polska wyjdzie cała wolna (Poland will come out all free)
 Z trzech swych podziałów wspólna. (United of its three divisions,)
 Więc teraz z polskim narodem (So now with the Polish nation)
 Pójdziem prostą drogą przodem, (Let's go straight ahead,)
 Gdy Bóg z Matką swą nam sprzyja, (When God with His Mother
 favour us,)
 Niech żyje z Polską – Warmija!” (Long live with Poland – Warmia!)¹⁰.

Under the influence of the organising national life in Wielkopolska, Pomerania, and in southern Warmia, a group of more enlightened local peasants tried to take up similar forms of struggle for Polish education and culture. Apart from Andrzej Samulowski, the efforts to awaken national consciousness here must be combined with the activity of Franciszek Szczepański from Lamkowo and Jan Liszewski (1852–1907), born in Klebark Wielki. All three grew up under the influence of local clergy. Father Jan Rysiewski, parish priest in Sząbruk, turned his attention to Samulowski; Szczepański often contacted with Rev. Franciszek Burliński in Lamkowo; and Rev. Juliusz Grzymała of Klebark donated funds for Liszewski's education. Samulowski and Liszewski spent some time outside Warmia in Polish centres: Samulowski in Poznań, and Liszewski in a manor house near Płock, where he was a home teacher. All three of them read Polish newspapers and wrote correspondence to them. All three of them were self-taught in the field of Polish education. Liszewski graduated from the gymnasium in Braniewo, but was not allowed to pass the maturity exam. Samulowski and Liszewski became known as folk writers. The latter even printed in 1882 in Gniezno a stage piece titled *Swaty Warmińskie* to be staged for amateurs.

On July 24, 1873, the head of the province of East and West Prussia, Charles Horn issued a decree on the withdrawal of Polish from folk schools. It did not completely remove Polish from school instruction. The exception was the teaching of religion and ecclesiastical singing at the first level of education. In addition, Polish

¹⁰ A. Samulowski, „Wyzwól nas z ciężkiej niewoli...”, Poems and prose (1868–1928) collected and prefaced with footnotes by J. Jasiński, Olsztyn 1997, p. 153.

and Lithuanian could only be used to help in the first and second degree of learning, if it is necessary for students to understand the subject of learning¹¹. Meanwhile, local school inspectors were not interested in Polish science, and many teachers considered it unnecessary to use the utraquist or bilingual primers. As a result, children learned only in German and religion was taught in German, while at home they spoke only Polish. For this reason, religious development was impeded in the child's soul¹². This situation aroused parents' dissatisfaction. However, in Warmia there was no protest against this injurious decree. Poles from other lands of the Prussian partition protested. Franciszek Szczepański, a wealthier peasant from Lamkowo, joined these protests. He supported the Górzyńska petition undertaken by the citizens of Wielkopolska and at the beginning of 1885, he sent to the initiator of this action, MP Ignacy Zakrzewski, petitions with 730 signatures gathered in Warmia. Zakrzewski praised the work of the Warmian from Lamkowo, but encouraged him to gain the support of the Brodnicka petition, which also included southern Warmia. At the same time, Piotr Spohn, a member of the Centrum party, claimed the Polish-Catholic population in the Prussian Parliament, and since the Minister of Education, Gustaw Gossler, in his reply, said that Warmians do not suffer any harm, Franciszek Szczepański decided to organise rallies with a petition for the annulment of that order. Together with Andrzej Samulowski, Jan Liszewski and five other Warmians, on Corpus Christi of 4 June 1885 visited the editor of "Gazeta Toruńska" – Ignacy Danielewski (1829–1907)¹³. The meeting was also attended by MP Zakrzewski. Warmians made a great impression on the editor Danielewski, he noted with admiration: "When the messengers of the peasantry presented their claim in their own dialect, demanding help and rescue of children and future generation from moral fall and savagery resulting from the teaching of religion in a foreign language at school and in the church, they were watched as if they were people from some submerged world, listened with intensity to understand and with astonishing amazement, as if the voice of people coming back from outside the tomb"¹⁴. It was therefore decided to convene two rallies in Olsztyn and Barczewo with the participation of Ignacy Danielewski, who was also supposed to draft the petition in Polish and German. Invitations to the rallies on 15 August 1885 in Olsztyn and the next day in Barczewo were sent by Szczepański. The information about them has been printed in the local press. At the first rally in Olsztyn alone, 20–25 people, including five teachers, came to Rogalli Hotel at 10 pm. The course of the rally was quite turbulent, as the German

¹¹ J. Jasiński, *Wiece i petycja warmińska z 1885 roku*, KMW, 1987, no. 2, p. 195.

¹² Cf. J. Obłąk, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

¹³ It should be considered that among them were Jakub Mazuch from Rasząg, Piotr Sznarbach and Antoni Sikorski from Gietrzwałd, Andrzej Kaber from Woryty and Józef Thiel from Czerwonka.

¹⁴ I. Danielewski, *Kraina chłopskości*, Słowo (Warszawa), 1886, no 105 of 12 V.

teachers who participated in it wanted to trivialise the demands of Poles to restore Polish at school. In his speech, editor Danielewski criticised the ordinance of 1873 and considered it immoral. In the read out to the Chamber of Deputies draft petition contained in simple words, the justification of the need to abolish the regulation of the Supreme Praesidium for Prussia of 24 August 1873 was presented. At the end of the text were demands of the fathers of families: "1. So that Polish children are taught holy religion in all departments in Polish; 2. So that children in all departments are taught of Polish reading and writing, so that when they leave school they know the maths well, while they were taught in such a way that they could count equally well in Polish and German; 3. So that teachers at schools with Polish children know Polish well." In the end, there was a phrase: "We are convinced that we would sin hard against God if we were to become something else than how He created us, that is, Poles and Catholics"¹⁵.

About 150 people came to the rally in Barczewo. German teachers also tried to oppose the adoption of the petition here, but the parents gathered expressed their full support for the content of the petition. The organisers of the meetings were a little disappointed that no one from the clergy came. Later on, in the villages near Olsztyn and Barczewo, 3435 signatures of family fathers were collected for petition, including 86 signatures from Masuria in Szczytno and Mragowo districts. The discussion regarding the text of the petition at the meetings of the School Committee and the plenary of the Landtag did not lead to any change in the anti-Polish ordinance. A negative answer was sent to Franciszek Szczepański to Lamkowo with the argument that "the Warmian population is mostly German and [...] there is no need for special care of Polish in folk schools"¹⁶. This was followed by a return to this topic: "We knew in advance that our petition would not be taken into account, but we gave at least a sign of life, and that would suffice for the beginning"¹⁷. The rallies and petition from 1885 should be regarded as the first public appearance of the Warmians' confession to Polishness. They brought Poles from southern Warmia together to take further national action. It was started by the Warmians themselves with help of Ignacy Danielewski, an experienced activist from Toruń. Now it was possible to start preparations for the creation of a Polish magazine in Olsztyn, which had been a topic of Warmians' requests more than once in the letters to Wielkopolska newspapers in order to broaden the circle of people interested in Polish education and culture significantly.

The resources for the first issue of "Gazeta Olsztyńska", published on 16 April 1886 by Jan Liszewski, apart from the subsidies of the Komitet Niesienia Pomocy

¹⁵ J. Jasiński, op. cit. pp. 201–202.

¹⁶ Gazeta Olsztyńska, 1886, no. 6 of 6 V.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

Mazurom (Committee to Aid Masuria) in Poznań and Poles from St. Petersburg, were also provided by Warmians themselves. Those who visited Ignacy Danielewski in Toruń on 4 June 1885 were among them.

Liszewski created a folk magazine, simple and communicative for unexperienced readers, which defended the Catholic religion and the speech of the fathers, as well as Polish customs. From the very beginning it tried to combine the actions of Poles from southern Warmia with the national aspirations of the compatriots of Wielkopolska and Pomerania. Time and again Liszewski repeated the call in the magazine: "May every father and every mother ensure that their children at home have a Polish primer and catechism!" In the first issue of "Gazeta Olsztyńska" he wrote: "Because of our willingness to work in folk education, and trusting in God's help and counting on the support of people of good will, we dared to publish this paper. Not our fault, that we were late with the first issue, and from now on "Gazeta Olsztyńska" will leave regularly on Friday. We calculated the quarterly prepayment only at 75 pfennigs so that the less well-off people could subscribe to themselves and read our paper without any damage to their property. The German newspapers: Braniewo's "Ermländische Zeitung" and Lidzbark's "Warmia" treated the Polish magazine from Olsztyn as undesirable, referred to it in a hostile manner and did not augur well long life for the "Gazeta"¹⁸. "Warmia" even posed a question, for whom the paper is published as everyone speaks German on these lands. (sic!) "Ermländische Zeitung" often unjustifiably accused the Polish magazine of not being Catholic because it kept being critical towards the Warmian clergy, without giving reasons that the editor demanded religious ministry in Polish.

Poles in Pomerania and Wielkopolska welcomed with great kindness the birth of the Polish magazine in Olsztyn. In the correspondence from East Prussia, the author of which was probably Ignacy Danielewski himself, we read: "Here in West Prussia we were glad to hear that Warmia has finally found its own newspaper. We congratulate Warmia for this progress with the whole heart. So she will no longer have to seek light and entertainment from afar with the daily concerns of life and mind, and consolation for the aches and pains of the heart; she will henceforth have her own, close and familiar educational campfire, which the fire of love of her mother tongue and native customs in the hearts of the readers will ignite and maintain. I hope that as the natural fire enlightens and warms up better when near, so this newspaper, published in Warmia, laid out by a native, will have more demand and influence than others in Warmia"¹⁹.

Contrary to the announcements, "Gazeta Olsztyńska", with the help of Poles from other Polish lands, managed to survive until the outbreak of the World War II

¹⁸ Ibidem, *Do Czytelników*, 1886, no. 1 of 16 IV. The specimen number from 25 March 1886 states that the first issue of "Gazeta" will be published on 1 April, while it was not printed until 16 April 1886.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

in 1939. Its last editor and publisher Seweryn Pięniężny was murdered in a German camp by the Curonian Spit. It was released in a circulation of up to a thousand copies. In the period preceding the plebiscite in 1920 – three thousand copies. “Gazeta” was not an exclusively informational newspaper. The editors tried to shape the national attitudes of local Poles, united them around various national initiatives such as: voting for a candidate of the Polish movement in the elections to the German parliament, creating educational and youth societies, appealed for Polish

in school and church, readership of Polish books. The German authorities harassed the editorial staff with many legal proceedings for providing allegedly false information, as could always be proven in a German court.

For the first five years, it was a weekly magazine, and from October 1 1890, it was published twice a week, from 1901 to the end of 1920 – three times a week, from 1921 it became a daily newspaper.

After the liquidation in 1902⁴ of “Gazeta Ludowa”, which was moved from Elk to Szczytno, in 1906 the publishing of “Mazur” began. As Kazimierz Jaroszyk (1878–1941) took over the magazine in February 1908, he started to create a Polish bank, agricultural circles, libraries and activate Masurians in this region of East Prussia in the period before the parliamentary elections in Germany.

The impulse to open the Mazurski Bank Ludowy (Masurian People’s Bank) was given to the editor of “Mazur” by the visit of three priests from Wielkopolska in 1910; Piotr Wawrzyniak, Stanisław Adamski and Kazimierz Zimmermann²⁰. The aim was to ensure the economic independence of the Masurian peasants. And this could only be achieved with own bank. Officially, the Mazurski Bank Ludowy was entered into court books on 28 September 1910. In “Mazur” it was written that it was created at the request of local peasants²¹. The very establishment of this institution took place with the participation of Zenon Lewandowski from Gniezno and Teofil Rzepnikowski from Lubawa. Bank in Szczytno was a savings and loan bank of Bank Ludowy in Lubawa, which provided share capital and supervised all accounting operations. It was based on the statute of similar institutions operating in Wielkopolska and Pomerania. However, thanks to Jaroszyk’s diligence and systematic approach, the institution developed without losses. In the reports on the bank’s activity published in “Mazur” it was stated that the number of bank members was growing: in 1910 there were 65 members, in 1911 – 73, in 1912 – 138, in 1913 – 166,

²⁰ H. Barke, K. Jaroszyk, *Walka o Mazowsze Pruskie*, Poznań [b.r.w.], p.73.

²¹ Mazurski bank, *Gazeta Olsztyńska* 1910, no. 84 of 2 X.

in 1914 already 170 members. It was not much, but even this number of Masurians could have become economically independent from German banks and maintain links with the Polish movement. The bank's financial turnover also increased: in 1912 it amounted to 60 065 mk²² and in 1913 – 69 813 mk. When the war broke out, Jaroszyk handed over the documentation and competences to the Bank Ludowy in Olsztyn, ran by Pelagia Pieniężna.

The Masurian People's Party was associated with "Mazuria", just as before with "Gazeta Ludowa". The letter was not an organ of the party, but in the period before the elections to the Parliament of Prussia it disseminated its programme assumptions. In 1911 two candidates for the parliament were presented in a newspaper: Zenon Lewandowski, a pharmacist from Wielkopolska and Bogumił Labusz, a farmer from Hozembark (today Labuszewo).

Another form of public presence of Poles, developed by the editor of "Mazur", was the activity of agricultural circles. The first circle with the seat in Szczytno was established on 9 April 1912. On that day, an organisational meeting was held in the editorial office, chaired by the owner of the estate in Augustów, Dr. Stanisław Gąsowski (1881–1949) and the editor Jaroszyk as the financial manager of the future circle. They should be credited with the efforts to develop this organisation of Masurian peasants. Those who were present adopted the acts of circles operating in Poznań region. Bogumiła Linka from Wawrochy was elected Secretary of the Masurian Agricultural Circle. The basic aim of the circle was to raise the state of the peasants' economy. It was written in "Mazur": "We encourage the Masurians to join the agricultural circle in the largest number. The benefit of such circles is very great. The farmers can instruct each other, and the advices and tips for importing fertilisers, sowing (it should be seeds), agricultural machinery, etc., are completely free"²³.

Szczytno circle had a leading character in relation to the others, which were created in today's Labuszewo, Lesiny Wielkie, Lipowiec, Łatana, Białuty. Each circle held a meeting once a month, often with the participation of Dr. Gąsowski, who gave the most lectures. He talked about potato cultivation, farm accounting, animal husbandry and new taxes. Sometimes the lectures were illustrated with slides. He also replied to the letters. Apart from him, Władysław Pieniężny from Olsztyn, Michalski from Popowa Wola and Tuszewski from Wilimowo gave lectures. The Masurian peasants Linka, Przygoda and Kokorniak shared their experience of rye cultivation. The circles also facilitated the purchase of fertilisers at wholesale prices, seeds such as sugar beet. Mutual visits to homesteads were also useful. They had a mobilising effect on the members. In July 1913, Gąsowski arranged a several-day

²² Polish marka or mark – the currency in Kingdom of Poland and Republic of Poland between 1917 and 1924.

²³ *Mazurskie kółko rolnicze*, *Gazeta Olsztyńska*, 1912, no. 30 of 14 IV.

trip to Wielkopolska for the peasants of Masuria, so that they could get acquainted with other forms of farming there.

Gąsowski, like a few of the landowners settled in Masuria in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, understood his duty to raise the farming culture of local farmers. Thus, in the Szczytno region, he became an authentic guide in better land management and husbandry. He was prepared for this role and willing to share his knowledge at meetings with farmers. It is a pity that his organic activities were interrupted by the plebiscite. Like almost all Polish landowners he had to leave his estate under Dźwierzuty after July 11 1920.

There was a library in the editorial office of "Mazur". It was not until March 1914 that this was officially announced in "Mazur"²⁴. Jaroszyk took care of book reading rooms in Wawrochy, run by Linka and in Hozembark by Labusz. In March 1914 a new library was established in Jerutki at the home of Jan Ollesch.

The last issue of "Mazur" was published on 2 August 1914. Kazimierz Jaroszyk, like the editor of "Gazeta Olsztyńska" Władysław Pieniężny (1880–1940) and the son of the owner of the magazine Seweryn Pieniężny – junior, were appointed to the army. In the previous issue, the editor of "Mazur" gave short information about the murder of the Austrian heir to the throne and his wife. Then he had to put on his uniform and go to war. The magazine resumed in a completely different situation on the last day of January 1919.

5

During the war, as in the first months of 1918, the presence of Poles in East Prussia was expressed by "Gazeta Olsztyńska". The magazine was secretly edited by Stanisław Nowakowski (1889–1942), a proofreader of anti-Polish "Pruski Przyjaciel Ludu" (Prussian Friend of the People) and an assistant of the military censor. During the war, only two issues of "Gazeta" did not reach the readers. The financial basis of the magazine was very fragile. The owner of "Gazeta", Joanna Pieniężna, was supported by small loans from Rev. Walenty Barczewski from Brąswałd. The Rada Narodowa (National Council) of Poznań also provided specific assistance²⁵. In the budget of the Department of Culture and Education of the same Council for 1918 the annual grant for "Gazeta" in the amount of 1400 mk was assigned. In addition, a remuneration for the educational secretary in Warmia and at the same time the editor of the magazine in the amount of 3000 mk, as well as the purchase of the book by Rev. Barczewski *Geografia polskiej Warmii (Geography of Polish Warmia)* – 200 marks. Marceli Zdrojewski was to become Secretary of the National Council

²⁴ Gazeta Olsztyńska, 1914, No 22 of 18 III.

²⁵ Wojewódzkie Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu [hereinafter referred to as WAPP], Rada Narodowa, sign. 163 Letter from J. Pieniężna and S. Nowakowski to the National Council in Poznań of 9 July 1918.

in Warmia. Since Joanna Pieniężna was not able to protect Zdrojewski from being conscripted into the army, he did not start working in Olsztyn. "Gazeta Olsztyńska" was officially edited by Stanisław Nowakowski. At that time, the magazine rarely took up topics directly related to the location of Poles in the Prussian partition. The exception was an article from 28 January 1918, in which it was written: "Probably there wouldn't be God in heaven anymore, if the desires of all Germans were to come true. Believing in the assurances of various statesmen about peace without annexation, i.e. without taking someone's land and imperial manifestations about the resurrection of the Kingdom of Poland from the lands taken away from Russia, we advise readers to keep their blood cold and when receiving similar news, although they appear again and again, not to worry"²⁶.

In the last days of the war, activists gathered around "Gazeta Olsztyńska" founded civic committees, separate for Warmia and Masuria. The Warmian Civic Committee was headed by Rev. Walenty Baczewski and Stanisław Nowakowski, and Masurian. founded in Nidzica – Stanisław Gałowski (1881–1949), Bogumił Labusz (1860–1919), Zenon Lewandowski (1859–1927), and Kazimierz Jaroszyk. On 18 November 1918 the Civic Committees were transformed into separate Warmian and Masurian Rada Ludowa (People's Council). The councils took up the management of the activities of Poles in these areas.

The Warmian People's Council consisted of 26 members who represented social groups in Olsztyn and its surroundings. Rev. Barczewski became the President, Andrzej Czczeka from Łańsk – the Vice-President, Stanisław Nowakowski, editor of "Gazeta Olsztyńska" – the secretary, and merchant Wiktor Szulc from Olsztyn became the treasurer²⁷. Initially, the seat of the Council was the premises near the editorial office of "Gazeta Olsztyńska" at number 12 Dolnokościelna Street. It is almost certain that the adopted position of waiting for the decisions of the peace conference was forced by the attitude of the representatives of the Olsztyn's Rada Robotniczo-Żołnierska (Workers' and Soldiers' Council) present at the rally in Olsztyn. One of them in his speech warned Poles against "political machinations, especially against the separation of Prussian lands, because then we would have to invade with all firmness"²⁸. The Polish People's Councils were not to be granted the same political powers as the structures of the old German administration and the workers' and soldiers' councils. The same position was expressed by Germany towards the established People's Councils in Masuria and Powiśle. In this situation, the basic task of the People's Councils was to organise local structures and to elect

²⁶ *Apetyt hakatystów na Polskę*, Gazeta Olsztyńska, 1918, no. 14 of 28 I.

²⁷ W. Wrzesiński, *Polska – Prusy Wschodnie. Plebiscyty na Warmii i Mazurach oraz na Powiślu*, ed. II, Olsztyn 2010, p. 56.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 56.

delegates for the District Parliament in Poznań, which was being prepared between 3rd and 5th December 1918. According to the instructions, they should have been carried out, regardless of the degree of organisation of the Poles. After all, it was a matter of selecting the representation of all concentrations of Poles. It was assumed that one mandate was for 2500 people. On the basis of such criteria, 22 delegates from Warmia went to Poznań, 25 from Masuria and 21 from Powiśle²⁹. The ordinance assumed the election of 47 delegates from the area of Warmia and Masuria (according to the principle of one delegate per 2500 Polish inhabitants). Thus, the authorities assumed that there were 55,000 Poles living in Warmia and 62,500 conscious Poles living in Masuria. According to the recommendations, the elections were to take place regardless of the degree of organisation and preparation of the Polish population in order to bring the representatives of all groups of Poles from the former Prussian partition to the deliberations.

The delegates who came to Poznań met on the streets of the city with expressions of sympathy and solidarity. The contribution of the Warmians to the works of the Sejmik was significant. Rev. Barczewski, elected as one of the Vice-Marsbals, sought to include the delegates from Masuria, described as an expression of political continuity of Duchy of Prussia and Warmia to work in committees. The following members were assigned to the Political Committee: Rev. Barczewski and Zenon Lewandowski; to Organisational Committee: Stanisław Żurawski and Emilia Labuszówna from Hozembark (currently Labuszewo), to Mandate Committee: Dr Stanisław Gąsowski from Augustów near Dźwierzuty and Stanisław Nowakowski; to Commission for Urgent Social and Workers' Affairs: Wiktor Szulc and Ignacy Bałachowski from Szczytno; to Commission for Education and Training: Wanda Krysiewiczówna from Nidzica and Sylwester Antoni Sznarbach from Rzek; to Administrative Affairs Commission: Jan Hanowski from Barczew and Stanisław Fiutak in Gietrzwałd; to Public Security Commission: Kazimierz Jaroszyk from Szczytno, Andrzej Czczeka from Łańsk, Tadeusz Wojnowski from Kiersztanowo and Michał Wantowy from Szczytno. The Naczelna Rada Ludowa (Chief People's Council) of Warmia consisted of eighty members: Rev. Barczewski; from Mazury – Dr. Stanisław Gąsowski, Bogumił Labusz and Kazimierz Jaroszyk³⁰.

After the end of the session of the District Parliament, the activities of the Warmian People's Council focused on three issues: 1. organisation of folk councils in the area, 2. establishing forms of contacts with Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, 3. organisation of folk guards, which was practically limited to appointing semi-military heads of powiats. Rev. Barczewski recommended creating folk societies and

²⁹ Idem, *Odrodzenie państwa polskiego a problem Prus Wschodnich*, KMW, 1969, no. 3 p. 360.

³⁰ T. Grygier, *Warmińska Rada Ludowa w dniach rewolucji w Olsztynie w 1918 roku*, KMW, 1969, no. 4, p. 562.

establishing contacts with local workers' and soldiers' councils. He made his recommendations in a letter dated 7 December 1918 to the head of the area: "It should be officially emphasised that we do not want to discover ourselves by force and rape from Germany before the peace congress; we do not want to fight against that part of the German incumbent population which has always lived in harmony with Poles and which in the future will also live together with us in harmony with each other. We are enemies of only a few clerical classes and Hakata³¹ agitators who have brought charges of hatred and injustice into our neighbourhoods; We demand that we should not be disturbed anywhere, wherever Poles live and the freedom of organising rallies and gatherings should not be curtailed, that Poles should be able to watch over German officials through their controllers, that hakatists should leave their positions, that schools should be Polish, that we should not be forced to have Heimatschutz units made up of foreign soldiers, because in order to ensure our safety, our soldiers organised in the Straże Ludowe (People's Guards) will suffice"³².

The People's Society established in Olsztyn consisted of 110 people. Rev. Barczewski became an honorary member of this society³³. More Societies were later created in Pluski, Gryźliny, where Jan Barczewski (1890–1958) became President, and then in Purda, Butryny, Gietrzwałd.

An important issue was also the creation of a permanent material basis for the Warmian Council in Olsztyn. The national tax was supposed to secure these matters. All Poles and national associations were obliged to pay the national tax. Thus, Rev. Barczewski would somehow free himself from the obligation to finance the created Polish movement and, as he wrote to Rev. Stanisław Adamski on December 12, 1918, this could protect him from accusations that by financing national activities he was pursuing his own political goals.

The ordinance of elections to the Legislative Parliament, announced by the government of Jędrzej Moraczewski on 28 November 1918, cannot be omitted either. It was to cover also the Prussian Quarter, including Warmia, Masuria, and Powiśle³⁴. This speech resulted in a rather harsh reaction of the German authorities, which, under the threat of treason, forbade Poles to participate in these elections. The Olsztyn's Workers' and Soldiers' Council organised rallies during which resolutions on the German character of the province were passed. In addition, the Council, together with the President of the Olsztyn regency, announced: "The participation of Poles in the elections to the Polish Constituent Assembly in Warsaw

³¹ German Eastern Marches Society.

³² Ibidem, p. 563.

³³ *Towarzystwo Ludowe w Olsztynie*, *Gazeta Olsztyńska*, 1919, no. 12 of 19 I.

³⁴ J. Gilas, *Położenie prawnomiędzynarodowe Powiśla, Warmii i Mazur w latach 1918–1920*, KMW, 1970, no. 2, pp. 223–243.

is considered treason and will be severely punished”³⁵. Therefore, Poles had to give up these actions.

As far as the organisation of the People’s Guard is concerned, Rev. Barczewski, in a letter dated 22 December 1918, informed Dr Teofil Rzepnikowski in Lubawa: “neither Warmia nor Masuria was prepared for any armed explosion. In case of any infringements, it is necessary to help the military organisation of Pomerania from Lubawszczyzna or from the 5th District of the Polish Military Organisation to the powiat of Kwidzyń. The German forces are very strong in East Prussia and we can expect a strong German attack from this side”³⁶.

In this situation, Rev. Barczewski focused on the organisation of learning of Polish. At the meeting of the Warmian People’s Council on 14 January, a School Commission was appointed under the leadership of a teacher from Wielkopolska, Aleksander Sosna (1865 – died after 1939) with the participation of priests: Barczewski and Bilitewski as well as Eleonora Kentzerowa, wife of the owner of a small estate in Tęguty and a national activist, Jadwiga Wojnowska, wife of the owner of an estate in Kiersztanów and founder of agricultural circles and running a Polish kindergarten in Olsztyn Stefania Zakrzewska, sister of Stanisław, a close collaborator of “Straż Mazurska”. On the pages of “Gazeta Olsztyńska” an action was taken calling on parents to speak publically in order to obtain permission from the German state authorities to teach reading, writing and religion in Polish in the Olsztyn province in German schools, as it was already implemented in the regencies of Gdańsk, Kwidzyń, and Opole since 31 December 1918³⁷. The authorities of the Olsztyn regency delayed their response. Therefore, the People’s Council addressed the matter to the Ministry of Education in Berlin. Of course, in order to make it more difficult to obtain permits, the authorities demanded special applications from parents and then narrowed down the scope of the recommendations only to the teaching of religion in Polish. Each parent had to apply for permission in writing. More than 4,000 applications were collected in two weeks³⁸. At the same time the Germans undertook countermeasures. Under pressure from Ostdeutscher Heimatdienst, teachers refused to teach Polish, rumours were spread that those who demanded this teaching would be punished with fines, parents would lose their pensions, and religious education would have to be paid for.

At the same time, the School Commission started to organise semi-annual courses for auxiliary teaching forces. Three such courses took place. Polish schools

³⁵ T. Grygier, op. cit. p. 567.

³⁶ ibidem.

³⁷ A. Sosna, *Wychowanie narodowo-społeczne dzieci naszych*, *Gazeta Olsztyńska*, 1919, no. 7 of 16 I; W. Barczewski, *Obojętność ludu warmińskiego*, *Gazeta Olsztyńska*, 1919, no. 36 of 25 II; idem, *Nauka języka polskiego*, *Gazeta Olsztyńska*, 1919 no. 65 of 3 VI.

³⁸ Cf. J. Chłosta, *Szkolnictwo polskie na Warmii w latach 1919–1920*, KMW, 1977, no. 3–4, p. 380.

with Polish as the language of instruction were established only after the arrival of the representatives of the Komisja Międzysojusznicza (Allied Commission) in the plebiscite area. At that time 17 schools with 976 students were established. They existed very briefly. After the vote on 11 July 1920, they were abolished.

On the other hand, the local government elections on May 4, 1919, to the county Council ended with the success of Poles. The Olsztyn County was divided into three districts. In the district Baczewski was responsible for, Poles obtained six seats for ten mandates. In Gryźliny 281 votes were cast for the Polish list and only 49 for the German list. It happened mainly thanks to the propaganda work, many meetings held, often enriched with theatrical performances of an amateur group from Gryźliny and the selection of suitable candidates. Rev. Waclaw Osiński from Butryn was in second place on the Gryźliny list, and Piotr Prass from Pluski was in third place. Admittedly, Bishop Augustyn Bludau, the Ordinary of the Diocese of Warmia, was to ask Rev. Osiński to resign from the list of candidates for the sejmik, which included the name of the alleged member of the Spartacus Union, i.e. Baczewski, which, of course, was untrue. For this reason, Rev. Osiński did not react to the letter. Eventually, Poles won eleven seats in local government elections and Germans twenty. 4185 voted for the Polish list and 7258 for the German list³⁹. The Assembly was composed of: Jan Baczewski, Father Waclaw Osiński, Stanisław Żurawski, J. Lingnau, Tadeusz Radomski, J. Rikowski, Jakub Barczewski, Piotr Prass, J. Hellriegel, Karol Langwald – senior, Tadeusz Wojnowski, Father Osiński and a farmer from Kajny Stanisław Żurawski were elected to the Powiat Board itself. Father Osiński also became the deputy landrat. Already at the first meeting of the elected local government, Germany wanted, among other things, to push through a resolution of this kind: “The people of the Olsztyn powiat appeal to the Reich government to reject the conditions of the peace treaty that impose a plebiscite. The powiat is German and wants to stay German!” On behalf of Polish councillors, Baczewski supported the first sentence of the resolution all the way to the plebiscite and proposed that the next sentence should read as follows: “there is a conviction that the peace treaty in the name of justice will compensate Poland for the harm done to it by its occupants by criminal partitions and will grant the same borders as it had before the partitions in 1772⁴⁰. After Baczewski’s speech, a tumult arose in the hall. The session of the sejmik was closed without a resolution. All these actions could not escape the attention of the Germans. From that time on, they were looking for an opportunity to neutralise “Długi Jan” (“Long John”), as Baczewski was patronised. Soon Jan Baczewski was nominated as the head of propaganda of the Warmia Plebiscite Committee for the Olsztyn and Reszel powiats.

³⁹ W. Wrzesiński, op. cit. p. 36

⁴⁰ J. Baczewski, *Wspomnienia Warmiaka*, Warszawa 1961, p. 38.

The development of the Polish movement triggered an increase in German nationalist propaganda. German organisations revived their activities in those environments where there were the largest concentrations of Poles. They reached, first of all, circles with an undeveloped sense of national identity. Despite many efforts, the impact of propaganda was much weaker. The number of German magazines per capita was much higher. "Gazeta Olsztyńska", with German supplements, as the main organ of Polish propaganda, was published three times a week in a circulation of 5000 copies before the very vote. At the end of January 1919, "Mazur" was resumed in Szczytno. In addition to this, printed in Grudziądz in German "Der Weckruf in Osten".

The pages of "Gazeta Olsztyńska" presented the Polish past of Warmia and Masuria, the relationship between these lands and the Republic of Poland, and the achievements of Polish culture and economy. "Gazeta" appealed to parents to send their children to Polish schools, called for participation in the activities of folk societies. It informed about the initiatives taken by the leadership of the Polish movement, exposing also acts of terror used against the Polish population: unjustified arrest of a merchant from Biskupiec, August Bikowski⁴¹, ban on issuing "Mazur"⁴², beating of the son of the editor of "Mazur"⁴³, attack on the actors of Tomasz Działosz's theatre in Biskupiec⁴⁴, the deadly beating of Bogumił Linka⁴⁵, the beatings of religious preachers at the Faryny⁴⁶, the pogrom in Giżycko⁴⁷.

In Warmia and Masuria, the first news about the plebiscite to be held was received with dissatisfaction. "Gazeta Olsztyńska" wrote: "The Polish society must demand Warmia and Masuria without a plebiscite. And if the plebiscite remains, its realisation needs to be postponed for a longer period of time⁴⁸. Two attacks on the Polish House in Olsztyn before the vote were described⁴⁹.

Rev. Barczewski also joined the national activities undertaken before the plebiscite. He was elected a Marshal of the sejmik of the Warmian people, which took place on 20 February 1920 with the participation of 117 delegates from forty folk societies, representing more than 5,000 members. In his welcome speech, he said that "freedom has been brought to us by the Komisja Międzysojusznicza. We are allowed to gather again. The chains of captivity crack. Poland has to be estab-

⁴¹ *Aresztowaniu Bikowskiego*, *Gazeta Olsztyńska*, 1919, no. 2 of 4 I.

⁴² *Zakaz wydawania „Mazura”*, *Gazeta Olsztyńska*, 1919, no. 57 of 15 V.

⁴³ *Pobito syna K. Jaroszyka*, *Gazeta Olsztyńska*, 1919, no. 110 of 18 September.

⁴⁴ *Napad na polskich aktorów*, *Gazeta Olsztyńska*, 1920, no. 45 of 15 IV.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem* 1920, no. 47 of 17 IV.

⁴⁶ *Napad niemiecki na polskich kaznodziei religijnych*, *Gazeta Olsztyńska*, 1920, no. 51 of 27 IV.

⁴⁷ *Pogrom w Lecu*, *Gazeta Olsztyńska*, 1920, no. 52 of 29 IV.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, 1919, No 42 of 28 III.

⁴⁹ *Napad bandy niemieckiej na Dom Polski*, *Gazeta Olsztyńska*, no. 79 of July 3; *Krwawy napad niemiecki*, *Gazeta Olsztyńska*, 1920, no. 80 of June 4.

lished according to its borders in 1772. The people near Olsztyn, Wartembork and Biskupiec have been Polish for centuries. As a proof, Father Barczewski showed the church book 340 years ago with Polish names and surnames. The Polish language bloomed here and it will bloom. The Polish spirit lives and will live in our Warmia. Two obstacles have to be overcome: 1. children speak out of their mother tongue at school and are taught a foreign language. It is forbidden for children to speak Polish with each other and it deters them from enrolling in Polish studies with various tricks. 2. meetings of Polish societies are interrupted, and Polish people are threaten with refusing pensions, etc.

However, the Lord God watches over Poland and will save His people from oppression. Divine Providence was so keen that the reunification of the Polish lands would not happen at once, but everything would take place in an orderly manner⁵⁰.

Another time he gave an extensive speech during the educational rally of the Towarzystwo Czytelni Ludowych (Society of Folk Reading Rooms) in Olsztyn: "He talked extensively about the world's deeds and the beginnings of readership in the Polish Warmia. Our ancestors already had their own canticles, books to pray and to read in Polish. The favourite books of our grandfathers and grandfathers were a Mass lecture and a Scripture lecture with explanations. Around 1860 and 1870 modest parish libraries were established in Warmia. Later, despite the increasing persecution of Prussian authorities, libraries of the Society of Folk Reading Rooms from Poznań were created more and more often. Particularly Warmian women, be praised for that, encouraged husbands to read. In the times of Franciszek Szczepański from Lamkowo, there were fifty something Polish folk libraries in the Polish Warmia. Now that we have equal rights and we should not be afraid the persecution of Prussians, we should renew it. Today, even in Olsztyn's "Kreisblat", the first Polish print appeared, but unfortunately in Schwabacher. They want to make our freedom unpleasant even with strange sounds. Schwabacher print is used in Masuria, but not in here: we only know Latin sounds here⁵¹. In the following part Rev. Barczewski spoke about the purity of the Polish language in Warmia. He said that our enemies do not proclaim the truth, that we use some incomprehensible dialect. We have to repel always and everywhere, to show our Polishness and language community with the brothers from Warsaw and Poznań. On that day, a Polish library in Olsztyn was opened in a non-existent building at 1 Dworcowa Street (now Partyzantów).

It did not go without false accusations of Germans. Rev. Barczewski himself, just like others, calmly straightened out and rejected insignificant accusations of

⁵⁰ *Sejmik ludu warmińskiego*, Gazeta Olsztyńska, 1920, no. 26 of 24 II.

⁵¹ *Wielki wiec oświatowy TCL*, Gazeta Olsztyńska, 1920, no. 28 of 2 III.

financial benefits that actions for Poles were supposed to bring, on the contrary; it was Rev. Barczewski who financially supported the Polish movement. He also published a statement in which we read: "During the public rally in Bronswald on 27 June, I announced that the accusations that I had received high remuneration for the agitation were completely untrue. Nevertheless, three days later, at a meeting of the Związek Utrzymania Warmii (Warmia Retain Association) (founded by traitors such as Jabłoński and Żabka), a speaker publicly proclaimed that I collected 6000 marks a month for agitation and that it was seen how Mr. Barczewski paid me this sum. I deny this lie vigorously and agree to give half of this sum to the one who proves that I am taking it. As for the vote, I can answer various questions from Warmia and Masuria, that I will vote only for Poland"⁵².

The plebiscite in southern Warmia on 11 July 1920 was lost by Poland. Father Barczewski was one of those activists who believed that the very decision about the plebiscite had already meant the defeat of Poles. And other reasons? The 158 years of German administration clearly left its mark here; especially the end of the nineteenth century influenced the retreat of Polishness, the crushing of attachment to Polish culture, to the customs of ancestors. There was also an extraordinary national mobilisation of the Germans. As a result of losing the war they lost Wielkopolska, part of Pomerania and Silesia. And Germans were able to mobilise. In fact, all the groups have created a common front line of defence against the loss of a threatened territory. Germans also had the opportunity to prepare adequately for the vote. They took them already in the middle of 1919, and the Polish side could do anything in the area covered by the plebiscite after the arrival of the representatives of the Allied Commission with its own army, i.e. after 15 February 1920. The established German Masuren und Ermlandbund in a short time managed to take over 205,000 members and oblige everyone to vote in favour of East Prussia.

The atmosphere here was particularly influenced by German terror against all actions of Poles (Szczytno, Olsztyn – Dziadosz Theatre not allowed to perform, ostracism towards Poles, perfidious actions towards Poles as for example from "Ortelsburger Zeitung", with the names of Polish agitators who later denied, probably under the pressure of others, that they had nothing to do with Poles, or someone else did it for them as with the Szarkowski brothers from Lipowiec.

There was little help from the government of the Republic of Poland, which was busy sorting out the borders in the east. On top of that, Poland was at war with Bolshevik Russia. Only a few days before the vote, the Polish government announced that there would not be a call-up from the voting area. It was also unfortunate that the Polish side agreed to take part in the vote of all those who were born

⁵² *Oświadczenie*, Gazeta Olsztyńska, 1920, no. 82 of 8 VII.

before 1900 in the plebiscite area. Based on this, about 128 thousand emigrants came to their families; they were provided with a free ticket to their families and food. They voted for East Prussia, because otherwise they could also lose their jobs. After all, the vote was open. Approximately 12 percent of those entitled to vote did not participate in the plebiscite. One should think that among them there were Poles who simply did not go to the polling stations in fear of persecution from their German neighbours.

*

Polish cultural and educational activities undertaken in the period preceding the plebiscites in Warmia and Masuria influenced the formation of a group of local national activists. The most important thing was that these younger activists were born on this land. They were local. They came from Warmian and Masurian families, whose Polish customs were kept and Polish was used, they were not sent here to work from Wielkopolska or Pomerania. This is how one could write about Jan Baczewski from Gryźlin, who was elected on 22 December 1918 as the President of the local People's Society, later organising elections to the powiat's sejmik, then the head of the Warmian Plebiscite Committee in Olsztyn and the rest of the powiats; Seweryn Pieniężny, who expanded the publishing house of "Gazeta Olsztyńska"; Rev. Waclaw Osiński (1868–1945) from Butryn, patron of almost all Polish organisations from the interwar period in East Prussia; Gustaw Leyding (1899–1974), editor of the "Mazurski Przyjaciel Ludu", organiser of the Zjednoczenie Mazurskie; Franciszek Barcz (1892–1939), who sought to establish Polish schools; Jan Schreiber (1901–1950), organiser of the Union of Youth Societies in East Prussia; Maria Zientarówna (1894–1984), editor of "Gazeta Olsztyńska", poet and teacher; Juliusz Malewski (1899–1981), head of the People's Bank in Olsztyn; Paweł Sowa (1897–1985), editor of "Ziemia Wschodnio-Pruska" and youth activist; Walenty Habandt (1898–1940), organising young people in Masuria; Frederick Leyk (1885–1968), organiser of the Masurian People's Union; Andrzej Czeczka (1895 – approx. 1942) plebiscite activist; Augustyn Klimek (1898–1982) teacher of Polish schools in Gietrzwałd and Nałady; Alojzy Barczewski (1898–1972) organiser of "Sokół" clubs; Józef Czodrowski (1895–1940) member of the Warmian Plebiscite Committee. They, together with the slightly older, known for their national work priests Walenty Barczewski, Robert Bilitewski, Władysław Pieniężny (1880–1940), Michał Lengowski, Kazimierz Jaroszyk, Franciszek Kwas, and Stanisław Żurawski, led to the foundation of the Union of Poles in East Prussia on November 30, 1920, later transformed into the Fourth District of the Union of Poles in Germany as well

as other Polish organisations such as the Polish–Catholic School Association for Warmia, the Polish Women’s Association, the Youth Union in East Prussia, contributed to the opening of Polish schools, economic organisations such as the People’s Bank and the Agricultural–Trade Cooperative “Rolnik”. They tried to keep Poles active in these lands during the interwar period.

Jan Chłosta, *Warmiacy i Mazurzy wobec odrodzenia Rzeczypospolitej w 1918 roku*

Streszczenie

W niniejszym artykule ujęte zostały starania Polaków z Prus Wschodnich o włączenie tych ziem do odrodzonej Rzeczypospolitej w 1918 roku. Na początku omówiono aktywizację narodową, podjętą z pomocą działaczy z innych części zaboru pruskiego, zwłaszcza na Mazurach. Sprowadzały się one do utworzenia polskich gazet („Gazeta Ludowa”, „Mazur”, „Mazurski Przyjaciel Ludu), banków, towarzystw kulturalno-oświatowych. Z kolei Polacy z południowej Warmii byli pewni, że po zakończeniu I wojny światowej ta ziemia, znajdzie się w Rzeczypospolitej. Rozważano tylko jak daleko na północ od Olsztyna sięgać będzie granica z Niemcami. Utworzone Polskie Rady Ludowe przygotowywały się do przyjęcia władzy, ich delegaci brali udział w Sejmie Dzielnicowym Rad Ludowych w Poznaniu (3–5 XII 1918 r), przygotowywali się do wyborów polskiego Sejmu Ustawodawczego. Tymczasem na Konferencji Pokojowej w Paryżu postanowiono, że o przynależności państwowej jedenastu powiatów południowych Prus Wschodnich zdecydować mają plebiscyty. Polska te głosowania 11 lipca 1920 r. przegrała, ale podjęte przed plebiscytami działania kulturalno-oświatowe wpłynęły na ukształtowanie się zastępu działaczy, którzy podejmą w okresie międzywojennym pracę narodową w takich organizacjach jak: Związek Polaków w Niemczech, Związku Towarzystw Młodzieży w Prusach Wschodnich, Związku Polskich Towarzystw Szkolnych w Niemczech.

Jan Chłosta, *Ermländer und Masuren gegen die Wiedergeburt der polnisch-litauischen Republik im Jahr 1918*

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel handelt von den Bemühungen der Polen in Ostpreußen, diese Länder 1918 in das wiedergeborene Commonwealth aufzunehmen. Zu Beginn wurde der Nationalismus akut, der mit Hilfe von Aktivisten aus anderen Teilen der preußischen Teilung diskutiert wurde, insbesondere im Gebiet der Masuren. Es ging darum, ein polnisches Zeitschriftentum zu kreieren (Gazeta Ludowa, Mazur, Mazurski Przyjaciel Ludu) sowie um die Gründung von Banken und Kultur- und Bildungsgesellschaften. Auf der anderen Seite waren sich die Polen aus dem südlichen Ermland sicher, dass sich dieses Land nach dem Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges im Commonwealth befinden würde. Man berücksichtigte lediglich die Frage, wie weit nördlich von Olsztyn die Grenze zu Deutschland reichen würde. Die neu geschaffenen Polnischen Volksräte bereiteten sich auf die Machtübernahme vor. Ihre Delegierten nahmen am Volksrat des Volksrates in Posen (3.–5. Dezember 1918) teil, sie bereiteten sich auf die Wahlen des polnischen Legislativsejm vor. Auf der Friedenskonferenz in Paris wurde beschlossen, dass die Mitgliedschaft von elf Poviaten im südlichen Ostpreußen mithilfe von Volksabstimmungen beschlossen werden kann. Am 11. Juli 1920 verlor Polen die Volksabstimmung, aber die vor der Volksabstimmung durchgeführten kulturellen und pädagogischen Aktivitäten beeinflussten die Bildung einer Gruppe von Aktivisten, die innerhalb der Zwischenkriegszeit aktiv war, wie z. B. die Union der Polen in Deutschland, der Verband der Jugendgesellschaften in Ostpreußen. Aus der Union entwickelten sich die Polnischen Schulgesellschaften in Deutschland.

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