

Abstract

German occupation of the Starogard Poviast in 1939-1945

World War II, launched on September 1, 1939 by German troops attacking Poland shores, changed the lives of the pre-war inhabitants of Gdańsk Pomerania forever. The Germanization policy introduced by the Germans was to cause an imminent “de-polonization” of these areas. The elements planned to be used in order to achieve implementation of this practice were universal terror, crimes and discrimination, covering almost all areas of daily lives life of Poles and Jews. By this manner, constant attempts were made to introduce a new order, assuring the dominant role of the Germans. Elements of the Nazi social, economic and cultural policy applied to the Starogard poviast located in Gdańsk Pomerania as well. From the very beginning of the conflict until 1945, the inhabitants of those lands were subjected to total Germanization policy, facing daily and absolute ruthlessness of the oppressors. The abovementioned process is further discussed in this Monograph, in the form of a case study.

The dissertation consists of eleven chapters arranged in a problem-chronological order. The first chapter is focused on issues related to the general assumptions of the Germanization policy as well as the implementation of the German civil administration apparatus. Then, the issues of Polish-German relations in Gdańsk Pomerania, undoubtedly influenced by the foreign policy of both countries, are discussed. What is worth particular distinction, are the elements of the daily coexistence of Polish and German residents of the Starogard poviast, with an special emphasis on social relations. The following part of this Doctoral Dissertation was created in order to deal with the issues of German administration introduced in the Starogard Poviast after September 1, 1939. This territory (as well as the entire Gdańsk Pomerania) was initially covered by the military administration means, which ended with the October of 1939. From that moment on, all decisions were made by officials making up the civil administration. This includes the office of the occupational District Starost (ger. *Landrat*), Mayors (*Bürgermeister*) as the heads of cities, Official Districts Commissaries (*Amtskommissar*) and the lowest elements of the occupation administration - Village Leaders (*Ortsvorsteher, Schultheiß*). The first Chapter focuses also on the establishment and operation of other offices, which were appointed to contribute in strengthening of the Germanization process as well as to control the population.

In the second Chapter the structures of the police, gendarmerie and the occupation “justice system” are described. It starts with a general overview of the German police, which should be considered an introduction. Then, matters related to the functioning of the security police (ger. *Sicherheitspolizei*, or *Sipo* for short) in the Starogard Poviast are discussed. Thanks

to the preserved archival materials, it was possible to establish the history of two *Sipo* posts on the studied area (in Starogard and in Skórcz), as well as their operation throughout almost the entire war. Their main means of operation were maintaining terror among the civilian population as well as executing broadly understood intelligence actions. Another type of German law enforcement services described in the second Chapter were the structures of the German law enforcement police (ger. *Ordnungspolizei*, or *Orpo* for short). In the Starogard Poviát, the abovementioned body consisted of two divisions - the protective police stationing in the Poviát town and gendarmerie posts located in smaller towns and villages. Additionally, the structure of the occupational “justice system” was presented. Officers of individual services, along with people employed in the local prosecutor's office and courts, formed one of the elements of the repression apparatus against the civilian population in the Poviát.

The third chapter deals with issues related to German crimes against Poles and Jews in the Starogard Poviát. It can be divided into three main parts. The first presents cases related to the creation of proscription lists, on which the Germans placed all persons considered to be hostile, as well as other crime preparations. The cases related to the murders committed by Poles on *Volksdeutsche* in the first days of World War II constitute complementary issues. The next part focuses on the course of two great German extermination actions. The first was codenamed “Intelligence” (ger. *Intelligenzaktion*) during which mainly Poles and Jews, or rather those classified by the occupant into these groups, were exterminated. The second was called “T-4” and it involved murdering people with mental disorders. The crimes committed by Germans from September 1939 to January 1940 were included in the series of events today known as Bloody Pomeranian Autumn of 1939. The third part of the Chapter discusses the crimes committed by the Germans against Poles in 1940-1945 as well as the action of covering up the traces of the crime carried out in the Starogard Poviát in autumn 1944. (so called *Sonderaktion 1005*).

Chapter four deals with matters related to the compulsory enrollment of Poles on the German Nationality List (DVL). Its first part discusses the national groups creation executed by the Germans as well as the evolution of the Germanisation concept among the Poviát population. In the years 1939-1942 the latter underwent a thorough transformation, from extremely stringent criteria postulated by Heinrich Himmler, to the introduction of the compulsory enrollment process presented by the Governor in the Reich District Gdańsk-West Prussia, Albert Forster. On the pages of Chapter four cases of the admission of DVL by the inhabitants of the Starogard Poviát are described as well.

In the fifth Chapter the process of displacement and resettlement of people as well as the related consolidation procedure in agriculture carried out by the Germans are discussed. The Poles displacement started in September 1939; historiography called this illegal practice “wild displacements”. In later years, the Germans initiated the long-planned process of changes implementation in the national structure in Gdańsk Pomerania, including the Starogard Poviát. After depriving their properties, people were transported mainly to the General Government using resettlement camps. Said properties were partially taken over by their pre-war neighbors, namely *volksdeutsche*, or people from outside the Poviát, who were then referred to as receivership administrators (ger. *Treuhänder*). From 1941, various “internal displacements” (ger. *Interne Umsiedlung*) were also carried out in the Poviát. Those consisted in shifting large groups of people within the territorial administration units making up the Poviát. In place of all the displaced folk, the Germans brought so-called “colonizers” - people who had lived outside the territory of the “old Reich” before September 1, 1939. They were responsible for taking over Polish and Jewish estates. The occupant, through a number of legal actions and the commenced consolidation procedure, tried to make them full-fledged citizens of the Third Reich, who - through better living conditions - had an impact on increasing the possibilities of the war economy of Germany.

The sixth Chapter deals with matters related to the introduction of a new “Nazi” social order in the Starogard Poviát. It was concluded in changing the existing structure as well as the implementation of the primacy of the German minority over the Polish majority. Under this order, all political parties were to be banned, and only one party - namely NSDAP - was left. However, only German people were allowed to belong to it. Various other Nazi organizations were set up as well to deepen the sense of unification in the *Volksdeutsche* and give them real benefits in the form of much better treatment. Another element characteristic for its times was the control of the daily life in the Poviát. By using the extensive network of German organizations, it was easier for the oppressor to impose its will on Polish residents.

The seventh Chapter describes the industry, crafts and services present in the Starogard Poviát. In the first-mentioned field, Germany very quickly gained a dominant role. It was possible mainly through the support of the state, which - via confiscating pre-war Polish property - made it possible for *Volksdeutsche* to take it over. In the case of crafts, similar attempts were also persecuted, but due to staff shortages, the process of taking over Polish property by the Germans turned out to be partially ineffective. The service industry was treated differently, however. The occupier took over only those of the most profitable enterprises or

those who ensured the prestige while having them. Those with low profitability were left in the hands of the Poles. Accessibility issues were another reason for this. Again, staff shortages were main reason for such an occurrence; it made it impossible to replace the Polish owners by German ones.

The eighth Chapter deals with issues related to agriculture, forestry and fisheries. As part of a profound reconstruction of the system, the German occupier began interfering with the agricultural economy. It mainly involved the creation of commercial farms, consolidated from the acquired Polish assets. This was due to their taking over by German institutions created for this sole purpose. Then the stolen businesses were handed over to the *Volksdeutsche* and the “colonizers” brought to the Poviats. In the case of forest management during the war, the Germans continued the tendencies implemented by the Polish government before 1939, which consisted in afforestation of the Poviats. The new plantings made it possible to exploit the forests in a sustainable manner. Similar trends touched matters related to fisheries as well. The Germans also undertook stocking up on individual reservoirs. In the case of these two areas, the changes at the beginning of the war concerned the exclusion of some Poles from economic life. Later, especially with the introduction of the general entry on the DVL, these restrictions were partially lifted.

In the ninth chapter, this dissertation deals with matters related to the procedure of the forced use of labour. In the first part the general terms and conditions of employment and the legislation defining the role of a forced labourer in German society were discussed. Then the system of forced labour in the Starogard Poviats is described. The last subsection deals with the topic of using prisoners of war in the German economy. The said prisoners came from various countries with which the Third Reich came into conflict (Poland, France, England and the USSR) or from those breaking the alliance that had previously linked them with Germany (namely, Italy). The use of prisoners of war in the occupation economy was extremely profitable as it was one of the cheapest types of forced labour.

The tenth Chapter deals with matters related to the de-polonization of the public and private spheres. It consisted in erasing the Polish language from common circulation and breaking with Polish tradition and culture. In this way, almost all areas of everyday life of the inhabitants of the Starogard Poviats were interfered with. It concerned mainly the attitude towards the Catholic Church. Polish clergy were first killed or imprisoned in German concentration camps, and attempts were made to replace those who survived the terror with German priests. The same was done with the school system, modified according to the formula

from the Third Reich. German was introduced as a teaching language while Polish teachers were eliminated. The changes also concerned interference in matters related to the common circulation of the Polish language. The Germans tried to erase it completely. The occupier also interfered in the everyday life of the Polish inhabitants of the Poviát. Poles fell victim to discrimination manifested by impeding access to almost everything (including food, health care or participation in cultural events). This situation changed only after 1942, when the general DVL record was introduced.

The last, eleventh Chapter discusses matters related to the activities of the resistance movement against the German occupier in the Starogard Poviát. Throughout the war, various groups were active there, performing tasks within active and passive resistance. The sabotage-like activities particularly intensified after 1942, when it was known that the position of Germany was gradually weakening. As part of retaliation, the occupier brought to the Starogard poviát special “pursuit commandos” - *Jagdkommandos*, which collaborated with the local police and gendarmerie stations. Their main task was to counteract the resistance movement and pacification actions of the civilian population. The next subsection deals with the issues related to the evacuation of the Germans to the west in the winter of 1945 as well as the occupation of the Starogard Poviát by the Red Army in March 1945.