

R. Lesiakowska, Poles by choice. The Polonization of Germans in Kingdom of Poland in the second half of the 19th century based on the press.

The dissertation concerns the phenomenon of Polonization of the German minority living in the Kingdom of Poland in the second half of the 19th century.

The meaning of the term "Germany" in the discussed period was slightly different from today's; the dissertation concerns people from German countries/states that in 1871 became part of the German Empire.

In the second half of the 19th century, according to estimates, the German minority constituted from about 4.5% to about 5.5% of the population of the Kingdom of Poland. The vast majority of the migrants were Lutherans and belonged to different social strata.

The largest group were rural settlers (75%). Craftsmen, factory owners, intelligentsia and workers settled in cities. A negligible part of the families of German origin belonged to the landed gentry (they had nobility in their country of origin or received Polish nobility). Reflecting on the way of understanding the phenomenon of Polonization, a definition was sought, which was based on a theory describing a group in a similar situation to the Germans coming to the Russian partition. The determinants of this situation were: economic reasons for migration, relatively short history of settlement, relative ease of return, voluntary assimilation. It was also important that the chosen concept took into account that assimilation is differentiated in particular social strata. For this reason, one of the contemporary sociological theories (Milton Gordon) was chosen. Based on its findings in this dissertation, Polonization is understood as a process of assimilation. This assimilation takes place during everyday life. It is a process between the dominant society and the minority group, covering the economic, structural (e.g. common place of study, work), cultural and identity stages. Voluntariness means the lack of state coercion, but it does not preclude the creation of programs conducive to assimilation. The main research question is why people from German families, living in the lands of a *nation without a state*, became Poles by choice. This goal explains the choice of the source base, which is Polish press journalism and the press of the German minority (it has already been noted that diaries were rarely written in families of German descent). At the same time, it somehow "forces" to refer to the methodological background used by historians creating the school - or movement - *Annales*.

The dissertation consists of five chapters. The first chapter is devoted to presenting the specifics of the press published in the Kingdom of Poland. The main purpose of the second chapter is to answer the question of what stereotypes about the neighboring society dominated Polish and German public opinion. The most important question of the third chapter is the question of what benefits could be gained by the various social strata of the German minority from joining the life of Polish society. The task of chapters four and five is to take a closer

look at the environments in which the Polonization processes took place the fastest and from which many more or less famous Poles by choice came.

The phenomenon of the Polonization of Germans in the Kingdom of Poland - although it was dealt with by historians dealing with the history of Protestantism, regionalists, biographers - has not yet become a main subject of research.

Five years of my own research lead me to share the observations of the witness of the era, the famous physician and social worker Ignacy Baranowski (1833-1919):

*In general, the nation does not lose, but gains, by assimilating and assimilating foreign elements. Polish feeling sown on the soil of Germanic nature often gives a very noble harvest.*

Rubliń, 12.12.2022r. Renata Lesiakowska