

Summary of the doctoral thesis "The Forge of Strength"? The Central Industrial District 1936-1939 – Idea and Implementation

A query conducted in archival resources, printed sources, and in-depth study of literature on the social and economic history of interwar Poland led to the idea of creating a comprehensive monograph on the Central Industrial District (CID). Furthermore, the conclusions that arose during this process provided the basis for answering the question posed in the established title of the doctoral thesis in 2013, which refers to one of the first works dedicated to the central district authored by Melchior Wańkiewicz: Did CID constitute a "forge of strength"? The large amount of gathered material contributed to the possibility of conducting not only detailed research but also addressing various thematic threads, often related to different social sciences (economic, sociological, and political) investigating the largest Polish economic endeavor of the interwar period.

The subject of the study is the central district located in a specific area in the central part of Poland, where unprecedented scale of infrastructural investments began in the second half of the 1930s. The aim was to present its role against the backdrop of the development of the Second Polish Republic and to verify the hypothesis that the undertaking from 1936-1939 stood out not only in economic-industrial terms but also in terms of organization, socio-economic aspects, military matters, and partly political, propagandistic, and cultural dimensions. The research methods employed are interdisciplinary, utilizing the typology of research methods from various social sciences, including geographic and comparative methods.

The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter presents issues related to the origins and program of CID. It also highlights the evolution of the concept of the central district and the emergence, in the first decade of the interwar period, of the industrial "security triangle" in the Staropolskie Zagłębie, which served as an important precursor to the investments of the second half of the 1930s in central Poland. All important prerequisites for implementing CID were presented, including the profiles of individuals who laid the foundations for this project. The chapter also addressed issues related to the project of a new province within CID, spatial planning and policy, and the comprehensiveness of the CID idea. The analysis conducted in the first chapter demonstrated that CID was a wide-ranging and universal investment, both in terms of the prepared plans and intended results. CID, as a new

industrial district, significantly influenced the administrative changes in the center of the Second Polish Republic.

The second chapter is dedicated to aspects related to the implementation of CID: industrial, transportation, energy, raw materials, and infrastructure. It primarily emphasizes the role of state authorities, including the military. It discusses matters related to the organization of entities responsible for political and administrative aspects such as general self-government policy, labor market, private entrepreneurship, cooperatives, agriculture, and security. It is also important to present not only exemplary profiles of individuals from the world of science, technology, and industry but also the environment of workers who contributed to the implementation and creation of the central district. The expansion of the most important industrial plants and the construction of new ones, as well as the expansion of existing cities, including residential construction and communal infrastructure, were also addressed. The second chapter also covers technical and financial aspects of CID construction, such as costs, special investment incentives, and applied technologies. The protection of health and education were considered as social aspects of the investments. The analysis conducted in this chapter demonstrated the extensive scope of industrial branches covered by CID investments and projects. It also showed that the so-called "security zone" became a special object of interest for leaders and decision-makers from the state, public administration, and a wide range of scientific, private, and social entities.

The third chapter analyzes the consequences of CID projects, including the consideration of unrealized plans. The development of entrepreneurship in CID, which grew dynamically, was extensively covered. An important part of the final chapter was devoted to the results of research on employment trends, working conditions, and wage levels. The level of employment growth in CID exceeded the nationwide indicators. Regarding working conditions, their high level mainly resulted from the emergence of new higher standards due to the presence of previously unseen large industrial plants. It should be noted that during the short period of CID development before the outbreak of World War II, strong development tendencies were observed in selected, intensively industrialized centers. The level of wages followed a similar pattern, although some companies, particularly the Southern Works in Stalowa Wola, further increased wages due to the lack of adequately skilled workers available on the market. The social and economic transformations in CID were accompanied by significant development and modernization, which had not been previously experienced in specific centers. Due to the varied level of development in individual cities and counties and the uneven pace of investments, both isolated development and development within different

industries were noticeable, both in rural and urban areas. Positive perspectives for the development of the credit-deposit market were also observed, largely due to the attitudes of financial institutions toward private firms and local communities. However, these perspectives were diminished by the increasing threat of war and the subsequent withdrawal of savings. The level of socio-demographic changes in CID was relatively small and did not keep pace with nationwide changes, although the urban and industrial centers created during the formation of the "security triangle" and CID had a general influence on the level of transformations. This indicates the successful direction of investment implementation throughout the entire interwar period. The construction of CID served as a significant motivator for implementing changes in social awareness regarding the proper directions of regional modernization. CID significantly influenced administrative changes, project prospects, and regular development policies within a span of 2-3 years. Despite some politicization of CID projects, it can be observed that the investments were directed towards different social and political groups, both at the conceptual level and in terms of project outcomes. Regardless of the negative consequences of investments, which were carried out with a focus on maintaining budgetary balance, significant social support was evident, manifested, for example, in financial resources and material gifts donated to the National Defense Fund. The thesis also provides a general analysis indicating that CID was an example of a well-implemented armament policy.

The assumptions stated in the introduction of the dissertation were largely fulfilled. The thesis covers chronologically the second half of the 1930s, but certain threads extend to the post-World War II period, especially regarding unrealized investments and beyond. One of the materials included in the thesis, a photograph of advanced investments in the construction of the "Bacutil" gelatin factory in Puławy in the late 1940s, confirms the continuity of investments from the time of CID construction. Therefore, an important postulate for further research on the history of CID is to conduct a comprehensive verification of the effects of industrialization from the World War II period to the post-war era and into the present.

Keywords: Central Industrial District, Second Polish Republic, investments, industry, economic policy, socio-economic transformations, labor market, entrepreneurship, social infrastructure, public institutions, specialists and engineers, territorial administration.

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