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Social Integration and Assimilation Processes of the German Minority in Central Poland in the 19th Century

1. Introduction

Social integration is the process of integrating a minority social group – in this case a national minority – into the main part of society, and consequently adapting and harmonising the various elements relating to the sphere of norms and values accepted in a given social community. Such a process does not necessarily mean abandoning one's former cultural and national identity, but requires the goodwill of the integrating communities and usually implies that the assimilated minority has to renounce at least part of its former identity (cultural patterns, values, norms, customs, etc.).

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A much more far-reaching process of social assimilation (occurring both on a social level and in the psychological sphere) consists in the adoption by a minority social group of the cultural characteristics of another, usually majority, social group, which results in the phenomenon of full identification with the dominant culture. National assimilation is a psychological process of abandoning one's former national identity and merging with a new, hitherto foreign national community, as well as the related acceptance of the cultural patterns, values and norms of life represented by this community.

The study of social integration and assimilation processes is extremely complex. The formation of national identity is a continuous process, and national belonging resulting from a subjective feeling, influenced by a number of factors, including those of an emotional nature, is difficult to assess unequivocally and objectively. A significant difficulty in the analysis of nationality structures is the phenomenon of mixing nationalities – the criterion of origin may or may not determine a particular cultural affiliation. Therefore, analyses of nationality processes under the influence

of changing external conditions should be treated with great caution, focusing attention on general trends of change and not treating too rigorously the estimated data relating to the size of individual nationality groups. These data often vary significantly depending on the source and measurement method used.

Social integration and assimilation, as well as the pace and scope of these processes, depend both on the degree of attachment of the national minority to its cultural tradition and its readiness to cultivate it under certain economic, political and social conditions, and on the attitude of the indigenous population, which constitutes the majority in a given territory. Assimilation processes can be halted or even reversed under certain conditions, reflected in an increased sense of national distinctiveness, which has already been partially lost.

In Poland, one of the most numerous minorities were immigrants of German nationality. And it is the settlement of this national group in the territory of Central Poland¹ in the 19th century, analysed in the context of the processes of social integration and assimilation, that is the subject of further consideration in this study.²

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2. The sense of nationality of German settlers in the early 19th century

The strongest bond between the German Reich and its borderland agricultural colonists and craftsmen settling on Polish soil from the late 18th century onwards was the language and religion (Protestant denominations).³ At the beginning of the 19th century in Central Poland they constituted a clearly distinguishable national group, in which acculturation processes took place slowly, so only a small percentage of migrants in the first generation was Polonised. At least until the middle of the century, a strong awareness of belonging to a 'small homeland'

¹ The concept of Central Poland is essentially the same as that of the Łódzkie Region, the extent of which is determined by the boundaries of today's Łódzkie Voivodship, enlarged by the districts which belonged to this voivodship before World War II and are now part of Wielkopolskie Voivodship.

² This issue is also analysed in the study: T. Marszał, *Mniejszość niemiecka w Polsce Środkowej. Geneza, rozmieszczenie i struktura od końca XIII w. do II wojny światowej*, Łódź 2020, pp. 289–350.

³ Cf. K.P. Woźniak, *Niemieckie osadnictwo wiejskie między Prosną a Pilicą i Wisłą od lat 70. XVIII w. do 1866 roku. Proces i jego interpretacje*, Łódź 2013, p. 11.

(‘Heimat’) persisted among the German diaspora – the settlers arriving in Poland defined themselves as subjects of Prussia, Württemberg or Saxony. This was due to an entirely different understanding of German nationality from that developed later, under Bismarck.⁴ At the end of the eighteenth century and in the first half of the nineteenth century, an Aachenian, a Saxon, a Bavarian or a Prussian were completely different Germans, with an entirely different sense of national belonging.⁵ Most of the settlers coming from Württemberg, Hesse, Baden and the Palatinate were ethnic Swabians,⁶ whose otherness – also linguistic, due to their use of a specific Swabian dialect – was often an obstacle in communicating with their, also German, surroundings.⁷

In spite of a clear sense of separateness of origin connected with attachment to ‘small homelands’ and an influx from various, not only German, regions – Saxony, Prussia, Silesia, Baden, Württemberg, Pomerania, the Czech Republic or Wielkopolska – the migrants settling in Central Poland were for the most part associated with the German cultural circle.⁸ Having arrived on Polish soil, thrown into a foreign environment and living in a diaspora, they showed a quite understandable tendency to strengthen mutual contacts, unite in their attitudes, cultivate tradition, language and faith.⁹ This tendency towards separation was reflected both spatially, in the concentration within newly established colonies and settlements, and professionally.

The German colonies in Central Poland in the early 19th century were rather hermetic organisms and the scope of contacts between the settlers and the indigenous Polish population was small. It was rare for Germans to settle in villages previously inhabited by the Polish population or for immigrants to take over farms abandoned by Polish peasants.¹⁰

Also, contacts with towns of the German colonists settled in the countryside were sporadic during the first decades of the 19th century, due

⁴ It was only under the influence of the Napoleonic wars that Germans began to become aware of their nationality and to feel a supra-dynastic loyalty. See: H. Wereszycki, *Pod berłem Habsburgów*, Kraków 1986, pp. 23–24.

⁵ Cf. J. Śmiałowski, *Niemców polskich dylematy wyborów*, [in:] W. Caban (ed.), *Niemiecy osadnicy w Królestwie Polskim 1815–1915*, Kielce 1999, p. 209.

⁶ K.P. Woźniak, *Niemieckie osadnictwo wiejskie...*, p. 11.

⁷ See: idem, *Pruskie wsie liniowe w okolicach Łodzi i ich mieszkańcy w początkach XIX w.*, “Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Geographica Socio-Oeconomica” 2015, no. 21, p. 112.

⁸ K. Woźniak, *Miastotwórcza rola łódzkich ewangelików w latach 1820–1939*, [in:] B. Milerski, K. Woźniak (eds.), *Przeszłość przyszłości. Z dziejów luteranizmu w Łodzi i regionie*, Łódź 1998, p. 88.

⁹ Cf. J. Śmiałowski, *Niemców polskich dylematy...*, p. 210.

¹⁰ See: K.P. Woźniak, *Niemieckie osadnictwo wiejskie...*, p. 250.

to communication difficulties and often a considerable distance from the nearest urban centres. Moreover, rural settlers were characterised by a high degree of self-sufficiency in crafts securing their daily livelihood, which reduced the need for contact with the outside environment and perpetuated the isolation of rural German minority communities, especially in the first generation.

Among the German immigrants representing non-agricultural professions there was a clear tendency towards separation in the sphere of professional and social activities, which was manifested, among others, by their reluctance to join the already existing Polish-Catholic craft associations and guilds. Where settlers formed strong enough concentrations, they established their own German organisations.¹¹ In larger production centres this led to the creation of a kind of occupational ghettos, to some extent isolated from Polish society and characterised by cultural, linguistic and religious distinctiveness. The size of the German weavers' communities, the guild traditions of the crafts, the apprenticeship and the handing over of the workshop to the children, as well as the numerous links (also economic) with the representatives of their own national group meant that many craft colonies in Central Poland retained their distinct character for a long time. The processes of acculturation and assimilation proceeded much faster in regions where the number of settlers was smaller, environmental contacts more extensive and the occupational structure of the German newcomers more diverse.¹² Many dispersed clusters of German craftsmen, in which often already the second generation of newcomers integrated with the Polish population, were more quickly losing the characteristics typical of German factory settlements.

A gradually developing school system for the children of German settlers helped to maintain a sense of national identity. Already in the period of the Duchy of Warsaw, a network of Evangelical denominational schools with German as the language of instruction developed, often

¹¹ In Łódź in 1924 the German newcomers established the 'Łództer Bürger Schützen-Gilde' ('Łódź Rifle Society') and in 1825 the 'Meisterhaus' ('House of the Master Craftsmen') was opened, which became the centre of social life for the settlers. The guild of clothiers and the guild of cotton and linen weavers were also established. See: M. Budziarzek, *Katolicy niemieccy w Łodzi (wybrane zagadnienia)*, [in:] K.A. Kuczyński, B. Ratecka (eds.), *Niemcy w dziejach Łodzi do 1945 r.*, Łódź 2001, p. 53.

¹² S. Wiech, *Rzemieślnicy i przedsiębiorcy niemieckiego pochodzenia na prowincji Królestwa Polskiego 1815–1914*, [in:] W. Caban (ed.), *Niemieccy osadnicy w Królestwie Polskim 1815–1915*, Kielce 1999, pp. 107–108.

without Polish as a subject.¹³ Almost all children of German-speaking settlers attended Evangelical schools in the early 19th century.

The assimilation processes were counteracted by the religious separateness of the dominant part of the German settlers belonging to the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession.¹⁴ Religious affiliation, usually hereditary, became an element of tradition determining cultural rootedness. The invocation of faith was an enduring component of social and often national consciousness. This factor was particularly important in rural areas inhabited by German migrant communities living in greater dispersion, where the religious community supported the integration of co-religionists living at some distance from one another, and the parish was the centre not only of their religious life, but also of the communal, social and cultural life of settlers living in nearby villages.¹⁵

Interfaith relations and attitudes based on religious motives, which in many cases are difficult to separate from national differences, significantly influenced the formation of relations between German settlers of Evangelical confession and the Catholic Polish community.

Marriage within one's own religious and national group served to maintain national identity. In many cases, this tendency to cultivate national separation was manifested not only by Lutherans but also by the less numerous Catholic immigrants.¹⁶ In the first generation of settlers, mixed marriages were rather sporadic.

In the first half of the 19th century assimilation processes occurred to a rather limited extent – more slowly in places where the German minority formed larger concentrations. Instead, it was a period of initial adaptation of the German community to the new and rapidly changing living conditions in the new place of settlement.¹⁷

¹³ The introduction of the obligatory teaching of the Polish language was hindered by the lack of knowledge of Polish among the teachers of these schools. See: A. Winiarz, *Udział mniejszości niemieckiej w życiu kulturalno-oświatowym Księstwa Warszawskiego i Królestwa Polskiego (1807–1915)*, [in:] A. Bilewicz, S. Walasek (eds.), *Rola mniejszości narodowych w kulturze i oświacie polskiej w latach 1700–1939*, Wrocław 1998, pp. 125–126.

¹⁴ E. Bursche, *Wstęp informacyjny o istniejących w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej Kościołach Ewangelickich*, "Rocznik Ewangelicki" 1925, p. 23.

¹⁵ Cf. T. Stegner, *Więź wyznaniowa a narodowa*, [in:] idem (ed.), *Naród i religia*, Gdańsk 1994, pp. 6–7.

¹⁶ See: E. Kaczyńska, *Tkacze w Zduńskiej Woli i Turku w końcu XIX w.*, [in:] W. Kula (ed.), *Spółczesność Królestwa Polskiego. Studia o uwarstwieniu i ruchliwości społecznej*, t. 3, Warszawa 1968, pp. 337–394.

¹⁷ S. Pytlaś, *Problemy asymilacji i polonizacji społeczności niemieckiej w Łodzi do 1914 r.*, [in:] M. Wilk (ed.), *Niemcy w Łodzi do 1939 r.*, Łódź 1996, p. 14.

3. Nationality relations in the post-insurrection period

The assimilation of the German-speaking population, which progressed gradually during the inter-insurrectionary period, was clearly halted in the mid 1860s. The situation that emerged after the fall of the January Uprising brought with it many elements favouring the emergence of tensions in national relations. Of great importance was the enfranchisement of peasants in the Kingdom of Poland, which resulted in a strong increase in competition on the agricultural land market. Agricultural land, much of which lay fallow at the beginning of the 19th century and required foreign colonists to be brought in to cultivate it, became a scarce commodity sought by peasants of Polish nationality who had been freed from serfdom. As a consequence, the enfranchisement of the peasants radically changed not only the hitherto favourable economic situation of the German colonists, but also had a negative impact on the hitherto positive attitude of the local population towards the foreign settlers.

In the 1870s and 1880s national tensions also arose in the industrial centres as a result of growing unemployment among the workers and the increasing emigration of the Polish population to Western Europe in search of work. Antagonisms gradually grew between some of the German factory owners, who employed workers imported from Germany, and the impoverished Polish population. The polarisation of national attitudes was reflected in the fact that people of German nationality were favoured in the selection of personnel for the more attractive factory positions.¹⁸ On the other hand, Polish workers were ill-disposed even when the filling of a technical position by a person of German nationality was entirely justified by the need for professional qualifications. The increasing influx of immigrants into industry at the turn of the 1870s and 1880s clearly weakened the ongoing assimilation processes of the German minority. The newcomers, unlike the earlier settlers, were not inclined to learn Polish, nor did they feel the need to integrate with the Polish community.

In principle, the importance of German industrialists in the economic development of the country was appreciated, but the problem of the participation of this national group in the economic life of the Kingdom of Poland at the end of the 19th century was increasingly viewed through the

¹⁸ In 1889 there were only 10% Poles among the foremen in Łódź. See: G. Missalowa, *Studia nad powstaniem łódzkiego okręgu przemysłowego (1815–1870)*, vol. 1: *Przemysł*, Łódź 1964, pp. 81–88 and eadem, *Studia nad powstaniem łódzkiego okręgu przemysłowego (1815–1870)*, vol. 2: *Klasa robotnicza*, Łódź 1967, p. 83.

prism of Polish national interests. The situation was further exacerbated by the nationality policy pursued by Otto von Bismarck and the difficult position of Poles in the Prussian partition. The defeat of the January Uprising, economic conditions, especially the situation on the labour market in the post-insurrection period, and German nationalism, which was increasingly weakened by the Prussian government, led in the last decades of the 19th century to a tendency of isolation from Polish society among the German minority.

4. Polonisation processes

In spite of the often complex conditions, as time passed, the processes of naturalisation and denationalisation of the German population settled in Central Poland became more and more visible, and the successive generations of immigrants were gradually Polonised. The acceleration of the assimilation of German settlers was facilitated by the policy pursued by the administrative authorities of the Kingdom of Poland even before the outbreak of the November Uprising.¹⁹ The assimilation processes of the earliest arriving settlers and their children, many of whom grew into the local society and, having a sense of common destiny, began to feel Polish, were already marked in the period between the uprisings. Sometimes this was a re-Polonisation of people who had previously lost their sense of ancestral nationality, sometimes the result of mixed German-Polish marriages. An important factor contributing to Polonisation was the practical isolation of 19th century emigrants from their country of origin, with which they maintained only sporadic contact (this situation gradually changed with the facilitation of communications and the development of trade relations).

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It was significant that Germans settling in Central Poland encountered not only plebeian and peasant folk culture, but also an elite intelligentsia and nobility culture attractive to newcomers from German lands. Despite being deprived of the support and protection of its own state during the Partitions, the attraction of Polish culture was considerable, especially in cities with a more educated population. In the upper strata of nineteenth-century Polish society there were in principle no national or religious prejudices impeding the processes of integration and assimilation. The

¹⁹ T. Stegner, *Pastorzy ewangeliccy w Królestwie Polskim w latach 1815–1914*, [in:] R. Czepulis-Rastenis (ed.), *Inteligencja polska XIX i XX w.*, Warszawa 1991, p. 140.

adoption of Polish culture, usually in the second and subsequent generations, was associated with social ennoblement. Among Germans – who as a rule came from the lower social strata, for whom the culture of the Polish owning classes and Polish opinion-forming circles was a higher culture – promotion in the social hierarchy was a characteristic and not infrequent phenomenon accompanying Polonisation.²⁰

On the other hand, in certain situations – especially when dealing with the surrounding communities of Polish peasants and workers, who stood at a lower level of civilisation and were largely illiterate – assimilation and Polonisation could be associated with social degradation. The factors slowing down the process of Polonisation were barriers of a socio-economic nature, and above all, differences resulting from professed faith.²¹ Not without significance was the increased interest in the affairs of the homeland after German unification in 1871 and a certain revival of contacts with the country of origin, as well as the growing distancing of some immigrant communities from the Russian authorities and policy.²²

The processes of integration into the Polish community and the evolution of the sense of nationality of the German minority were particularly rapid in the cities, especially the large urban centres, where international contacts were easier and livelier. Quite specific in this respect was Łódź with a community dominated by immigrant population, without any significant cultural traditions and historical heritage that could foster integration and assimilation of the numerous foreign arrivals. The prevalence of German inhabitants and the lack of Polish intelligentsia in the city continued for decades, at least until the middle of the 19th century, and encouraged people to withdraw into their own nationality.

It was not until the last forty years of the 19th century that the percentage of German inhabitants in the rapidly expanding Łódź decreased significantly. The multinational character of the city with an increasing number of inhabitants of Polish nationality, however, accelerated the Polonisation processes only to a certain extent, as the Łódź bourgeoisie, in large part of German nationality, showed little connection with Polish culture. Until the outbreak of World War I, Łódź remained on the margins of Polish culture, which did not create an atmosphere conducive to

²⁰ Cf. T. Stegner, *Polonizacja Niemców-ewangelików w Królestwie Polskim 1815–1914*, "Przegląd Historyczny" 1989, vol. 80/2, pp. 307–308.

²¹ T. Fałęcki, *Niemcy w Łodzi i Niemcy w województwie śląskim w okresie międzywojennym. Wzajemne powiązania oraz podobieństwa i różnice pod względem społeczno-ekonomicznym i świadomościowym*, [in:] M. Wilk (ed.), *Niemcy w Łodzi do 1939 r.*, Łódź 1996, p. 78.

²² S. Wiech, *Spółczesność Królestwa Polskiego w oczach carskiej policji politycznej (1866–1896)*, Kielce 2010, pp. 192–193.

assimilation processes.²³ In a situation where the German community was dominant, the culture, language and customs of this ethnic group became increasingly attractive. An expression of the activity of the Łódź bourgeoisie of German nationality in this field was the creation of theatre groups of social organisations, and cultural and educational associations.²⁴ From the point of view of the preservation of German culture and language, important support came from the press, whose first German-language titles appeared in Central Poland in the last decades of the 19th century.²⁵

These measures aimed at preserving the native language and culture of the German minority, although undoubtedly delayed them, could not stop the increasingly marked processes of assimilation and Polonisation, especially among the earlier settlers who had arrived in the cities and towns and had grown accustomed to the country of settlement. Changes in the sphere of national affinity were marked not only in cities, but also in rural areas. These processes were highly dependent on the degree of spatial concentration of the German minority. Neighbouring colonies forming tight concentrations²⁶ lived their own lives, cultivating their language and customs, which helped to maintain a sense of national identity.²⁷

²³ Cf. M. Nietyksza, *Rozwój miast i aglomeracji miejsko-przemysłowych w Królestwie Polskim 1865–1914*, Warszawa 1986, pp. 306–308.

²⁴ See i.a.: A. Kuligowska-Korzeniewska, *Scena obiecana. Teatr polski w Łodzi 1844–1918*, Łódź 1995, pp. 254–255; eadem, *Łódź teatralna polska, niemiecka i żydowska. Współpraca i rywalizacja*, [in:] P. Samuś (ed.), *Polacy, Niemcy, Żydzi w Łodzi w XIX–XX w.; sąsiedzi dalecy i bliscy*, Łódź 1997, p. 242; D. Sztobryn, *Działalność kulturalno-oświatowa diaspory niemieckiej w Łodzi do 1939 r.*, Łódź 1999; K. Radziszewska, K. Woźniak (eds.), *Pod jednym dachem. Niemcy oraz ich polscy i żydowscy sąsiedzi w Łodzi w XIX i XX wieku*, Łódź 2000, pp. 46–70; S. Pytlaś, *Wkład burżuazji niemieckiej w rozwój życia kulturalnego Łodzi czasu zaborów*, [in:] K.A. Kuczyński, B. Ratecka (eds.), *Niemcy w dziejach Łodzi do 1945 r.*, Łódź 2001, pp. 31–40; D. Sztobryn, *Niemieckie organizacje społeczne i kulturalno-oświatowe*, [in:] K.A. Kuczyński, B. Ratecka (eds.), *Niemcy w dziejach Łodzi do 1945 r.*, Łódź 2001, pp. 167–207.

²⁵ In 1863 the “*Lodzer Anzeiger*” (later transformed into the “*Lodzer Zeitung*”) was published, followed by the “*Lodzer Tageblatt*” and at the beginning of the 20th century the “*Handel – und Industrieblatt – Neue Lodzer Zeitung*”. See: J. Jaworska, *Prasa*, [in:] R. Rosin (ed.), *Łódź. Dzieje miasta*, vol. 1, Warszawa–Łódź 1988, p. 553. For more on German press in Łódź see: M. Kucner, *Prasa niemiecka w Łodzi 1863–1939*, [in:] K.A. Kuczyński, B. Ratecka (eds.), *Niemcy w dziejach Łodzi do 1945 r.*, Łódź 2001, pp. 209–234.

²⁶ At the beginning of the 20th century, half of the German population of the Kingdom of Poland lived in 101 municipalities where they constituted more than 1/5 of the population. There were 19 such communes in the Kalisz Governorate, 30 in the Piotrków Governorate and 17 in the Warsaw Governorate. See: F. Bujak, *Historia osadnictwa ziem polskich w krótkim zarysie*, Warszawa 1920, p. 60.

²⁷ Cf. *Die Deutschen in Russisch-Polen*, “*Deutsche Erde. Zeitschrift für Deutschkunde*” 1907, Heft 3, p. 83. See also: E.H. Busch, *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Statistik des Kirchen- und*

Where German settlers did not form dense clusters and maintained lively contacts with the Polish surroundings, changes in the sphere of national affinity were more pronounced. The inhabitants of isolated colonies, as well as individual families of colonists living in villages settled by the Polish population, were denationalised more quickly. As a rule, mixed local communities were more strongly divided by matters of religion than by differences in nationality. The number of mixed marriages gradually increased. More and more colonists spoke Polish on a daily basis, which with time became the language used by some of them not only to communicate with their Polish neighbours, but also at home.

Among the German agricultural settlers, Polonisation processes took place most rapidly in:²⁸

- 1) mixed, Polish-German colonies and in a situation of German dispersed settlement, which resulted in more frequent contacts with the Polish population and, consequently, in a better knowledge of the Polish language;
- 2) Catholic colonist communities;
- 3) colonies close to towns.

Over the years, not only did the intensity of contacts between the German agricultural settlers and the Polish rural community increase, but also the links between villages and urban centres became stronger. The intensification of the Polonisation processes of the German minority in rural areas was fostered by the movement of successive generations of the agricultural population to cities in search of employment in the developing industry.

5. The role of religious ministry in integration and assimilation processes

A significant influence on the processes of integration and assimilation of the German population was exerted by the Evangelical ministry, which, especially in the first period of the influx of settlers, favoured the preservation of the national identity of the German minority. Protestant churches were often the only places of community life for expatriates, and the social attitudes of the community largely emanated from the attitudes

Schulwesens der Evangelisch-Augsburgischen Gemeinden in Königsreich Polen, St. Petersburg-Leipzig 1867, pp. 63–64.

²⁸ S. Śladkowski, *Koloniści niemieccy a środowisko. Wzajemne wpływy i oddziaływanie*, "Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio F" 1965, vol. 20, pp. 161–177.

of pastors. The priests who arrived at the beginning of the 19th century with the settlers were of German nationality and although they spoke German on a daily basis, like the other immigrants they did not have a developed sense of an all-German national identity. In the second half of the 19th century, the pastors of the Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession were mostly descendants of German emigrants.

Over time, the Lutheran clergy also became assimilated, as did the secular German intelligentsia, which was susceptible to Polonisation. This was due to the requirement for pastors to know Polish, which related to their function as civil registrars and their obligation to keep files and correspondence with the authorities in Polish (until the January Uprising). The Evangelical Church's openness to 'Polishness' was also supported by the need to bring the message of Protestant doctrine to successive generations of settlers of German origin subject to Polonisation processes. From the point of view of the process of Polonisation, extensive contacts between Lutheran pastors and the Polish intelligentsia were of considerable importance, given the limited opportunities for the realisation of cultural and social aspirations among the German minority, which in large part came from the lower social strata.

At the end of the 19th century in many, mainly urban, Evangelical parishes pastors not only admitted to feeling Polish, but also promoted it.²⁹ This opening of a significant part of the Lutheran Church to Polish influence was dictated by a desire to unite and strengthen Protestantism in the Kingdom of Poland and also by an attempt to attract Roman Catholic believers to this denomination. Of great importance for the development of Polishness among Lutherans was the fact that some pastors, even if they did not feel Polish, had an understanding for the needs of the growing number of Polish-speaking evangelicals and the national aspirations of Poles. Polish was gradually introduced into the services and the number of Polish speakers in many parishes grew.³⁰ This pro-Polish attitude of some Evangelical clergymen is worth emphasising especially in the

²⁹ The pastors K.G. Manitius, R. Gundlach, P. Hadrian and W.P. Angerstein, who were active in Łódź in the second half of the 19th century, among others, showed pro-Polish sympathies. See: E. Kneifel, *Die Pastoren der Evangelisch-Augsburgischen Kirche in Polen*, Eging 1967. Rev Julius Burche, who had been superintendent since 1904, strongly supported the assimilationist tendencies. See: E. Kneifel, *Bischof Dr. Julius Bursche. Sein Leben und seine Tätigkeit. 1862–1942*, Vierkirchen über München 1980.

³⁰ In Central Poland the percentage of Polish-speaking Protestants varied and was definitely higher in cities (especially larger ones) than in rural areas. The proportion of German-speaking Evangelicals in Lodz (the largest concentration of this population) was significant, reaching 95%. See: *Ilu jest Polaków ewangelików w Królestwie, na Litwie i na Rusi, "Zwiastun Ewangeliczny"*, 15.05.1906, no. 9, pp. 146–151.

context of the policy of Russification carried out in the post-Uprising period and the desire to make the Protestant circles more subordinate to the policy of the state authorities.

In 1905 the synod of Lutheran clergy decided to introduce services in Polish at least several times a year in all Lutheran churches in the Kingdom of Poland, both urban and rural.³¹ However, until the First World War, the extent of the entry of the Polish language into the Lutheran Church was quite limited. Most believers belonging to the Lutheran Church – irrespective of their degree of Polonisation and the language they used daily – treated German as a liturgical language (similarly to Latin in the Catholic Church). The Evangelical religion was mainly taught in German and most confirmations took place in this language. In some regions, Lutheran parishes were divided into urban, mainly Polish, and rural German-speaking parishes. Such duality was not present in the churches of the Łódź district, which consisted of towns and colonies inhabited by strong concentrations of German population and where the Polonisation processes were slower and more limited in scale.³²

The role of the Evangelical denomination in the process of Polonisation of German settlers is difficult to define unambiguously. In 1897, the community of Evangelicals admitting to Polishness in the Kingdom of Poland already amounted to 31.5 thousand people³³ and this group was growing in numbers, especially in German communities living in dispersion.³⁴ In 1912, 50,000 Evangelicals living in Łódź (i.e. over 11% of the city's population), the vast majority of whom were of German origin, admitted to being Polish.³⁵

Undoubtedly, religion to some extent consolidated the German minority, especially in rural areas where there were larger and more isolated

³¹ In some city churches the parish colleges decided to hold most services in Polish. See: T. Stegner, *Pastorzy w społecznościach wiejskich Królestwa Polskiego w XIX w.*, [in:] M. Piątkowska (ed.), *Dwór – wieś – plebania na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, Kielce 2003, p. 186.

³² T. Stegner, *Polonizacja...*, pp. 301–315 and idem, *Rola kościoła ewangelickiego w życiu kolonistów niemieckich w Królestwie Polskim*, [in:] W. Caban (ed.), *Niemiecy osadnicy w Królestwie Polskim 1815–1915*, Kielce 1999, p. 183.

³³ See: *Pierwaja wsieobszczaja pieriepis. Obszczij swod po Impierii rezultatow razrabotki danyh pierwoj wsieobszczej pieriepisi nasielenija proizwiediennoj 28.I.1897 goda*, S. Petersburg 1905, vol. LI, LII, LVI, LVIII.

³⁴ In 1907 among the Protestants living in the Kingdom of Poland there were about 57 thousand Poles, which accounted for 9.9% of the total number of believers in Evangelical churches. See: H. Wierciński, *Protestanci i Niemcy w Królestwie Polskim*, „*Ekonomista*” 1908, vol. 2, no. 3, p. 27.

³⁵ W.L. Karwacki, *Związki zawodowe i stowarzyszenia pracodawców w Łodzi (do 1914 r.)*, Łódź 1972, p. 8.

communities of agricultural colonists. The Protestant faith and the German language in the liturgy fostered the cultivation of national distinctiveness and delayed assimilation processes. The culture and national identity of the German minority was supported by a growing system of German-language religious education. An important component of the Lutheran educational system was the network of parish cantorates. Much clearer was the important role of the Church in the Polonisation of the German Catholic faithful, who were assimilated much more quickly.

A certain indication of the naturalisation processes of the German settlers is the process of conversion to the Catholic faith, which grew stronger in the second half of the 19th century. This phenomenon was important, as in the environment of immigrants of Catholic faith the process of Polonisation was much faster and the similarity of religion was a key factor in favour of assimilation.³⁶ The conversion of Protestants was usually motivated by a desire to document their belonging to the Polish (indigenously Catholic) community.³⁷ Conversion to the Catholic faith was often the consequence of interfaith marriages.

In the first half of the nineteenth century there were few mixed religious marriages, both because of the isolation of the German colonists scattered in the countryside and the strong opposition of the Roman Catholic Church to such relationships.³⁸ With time, mixed marriages became more frequent, especially in the second and subsequent generations of settlers – in such cases the offspring almost always adopted the Catholic faith.³⁹ In Protestant parishes there was generally little resistance to marrying believers of different faiths. And although the Catholic Church had a negative attitude towards interfaith unions, the pressure exerted on this issue is unlikely to have had a major impact on reducing the number of heterogeneous marriages.

³⁶ Cf. S. Śladkowski, *Kolonizacja niemiecka w południowo-wschodniej części Królestwa Polskiego w latach 1815–1915*, Lublin 1969, pp. 228–231.

³⁷ See e.g.: J.St.F., *Język w kościele*, "Zwiastun Ewangeliczny" 1905, vol. 2(15), no. 6, p. 168.

³⁸ See: O. Heike, *150 Jahre Schwabensiedlungen in Polen 1795–1945*, Leverkusen 1979, p. 29; H. Steiberg, *Die Brüder in Polen. Eine Geschichte der Herrnhuter Gemeinschaftsarbeit in Kongresspolen*, Gnadau 1924, p. 57.

³⁹ K. Woźniak, *Parafia ewangelicka w środowisku wielkomięjskim*, [in:] B. Kopczyńska-Jaworska, K. Woźniak (eds.), *Łódzcy luteranie. Społeczność i jej organizacja*, Łódź 2002, pp. 16–17. In the years 1840–1848, nearly 10% of marriages in Evangelical parishes in the Kingdom of Poland were interfaith marriages (in Łódź this percentage was even higher). See: S. Kowalska-Gikman, *Matżeństwa mieszane w Królestwie Polskim. Problemy asymilacji i integracji społecznej*, "Kwartalnik Historyczny" 1977, vol. 84, no. 2, p. 327.

The processes of integration and assimilation of Protestants coming from Germany were undoubtedly counteracted by the widespread opinion in Polish circles identifying Polishness with Catholicism and Protestantism with Germanness, as well as by the attitude of part of the Polish population inspired by the views expressed by many Catholic clergymen supporting the stereotype of the German as a heretic. Therefore, the Polish Catholic population cut themselves off from the dissenters and avoided contact with them, which favoured the isolation of the German colonies and the persistence of German national and cultural traditions.⁴⁰

6. Knowledge of the Polish language

Despite the care taken by a large part of the German minority to preserve the language of their fathers – which was supported by the Lutherans' treatment of German as a sacred language and the national education system – the knowledge of Polish grew rapidly among the settlers. However, this did not mean treating Polish as the mother tongue and using it in everyday life. In the 19th century, the degree of knowledge of the Polish language varied greatly among the German minority, depending on many factors.

Already in 1820, R. Rembieliński, president of the Mazovian Voivodship Commission, while visiting elementary schools in the settlements of Central Poland during his visit to the craft settlements in Ozorków and Aleksandrów, noticed that German children attending school read and pronounced Polish well, which he associated with the hope of Polonising the subsequent generations of immigrants.⁴¹ In most families of second-generation German immigrants, the knowledge of Polish clearly increased and among the settlers in the following generations the ability to speak Polish was quite common.⁴² The settlers, while retaining a sense of Germanness, through contact with the Polish population became very fluent in Polish and often used it among themselves.⁴³ At the same time,

⁴⁰ Cf. E. Kaczyńska, *Tkacze w Zduńskiej Woli...*, p. 365; *Czem jesteśmy i czem być powinniśmy*, "Zwiastun Ewangeliczny", 3.02.1899, no. 2, p. 38.

⁴¹ Z. Lorentz (ed.), *Trzy raporty Rajmunda Rembielińskiego prezesa Komisji Województwa Mazowieckiego z objazdu obwodu łęczyckiego w 1820 r.*, "Rocznik Oddziału Łódzkiego Polskiego Towarzystwa Historycznego" 1928, vol. 1, p. 58.

⁴² See e.g.: S. Pytlaś, *Problemy asymilacji...*, p. 17. In 1883, a report from the German ambassador in St. Petersburg stated that there were many former German colonies in the western governorates of the Kingdom, where the inhabitants spoke only Polish.

⁴³ See e.g.: A. Brożek, *Niemcy zagraniczni w polityce kolonizacji pruskich prowincji wschodnich 1886–1918*, Poznań 1989, pp. 24–25; J.St.F., *Język...*, p. 170.

there were groups of immigrants (especially in large and dense centres of the German population) in which even in the third or fourth generation the knowledge of the Polish language was negligible.⁴⁴

The diffusion of the Polish language and culture in the immigrant community in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was greatly hindered by Poland's lack of independence, Polish administration, education and army. The official language was Russian. From the point of view of the Polonisation processes, the spatial segregation of the German minority in many urban and rural centres, where this national minority constituted a significant, and sometimes dominant, proportion of the population, was unfavourable (in Łódź it was only at the end of the 19th century that the population of the indigenous Polish community began to clearly dominate).

Even though it was an important determinant of ethnicity, language was not the only factor influencing national affinity. Among the large group of bilingual descendants of German settlers some classified themselves as Poles, others as Germans and still others were nationally indifferent.⁴⁵ Some of the migrants felt a strong connection to Poland, although they did not consider Polish as their language of everyday communication. According to 1912 data, out of 123.3 thousand Evangelicals in Łódź speaking German at home, as many as 50 thousand defined their nationality as Polish.⁴⁶

7. National consciousness of the German minority at the turn of the 19th century

The Russian authorities tried to counteract the Polonisation of the population of German origin.⁴⁷ After the fall of the January Uprising, the policy of the tsarist authorities was to treat the German minority in a privileged manner, so that it could serve as a kind of counterbalance

⁴⁴ S. Górski, *Niemcy w Królestwie Polskiem*, Warszawa 1908, p. 5. For example, in Zduńska Wola, with a population of over 20,000, among ethnic Germans, who made up almost half of the city's population in 1892, about 60% did not speak Polish. See: E. Kaczyńska, *Tkacze w Zduńskiej Woli...*, p. 385.

⁴⁵ J.St.F., *Język...*, p. 169.

⁴⁶ W.L. Karwacki, *Związki zawodowe...*, p. 8. According to other sources, this number was significantly lower (over 20 thousand). Cf. J. Janczak, *Ludność Łodzi przemysłowej 1820–1914*, "Acta Universitatis Lodzensis. Folia Historica" 1982, no. 11, pp. 108–109.

⁴⁷ The abolition of the union between the Evangelical-Augsburg Church and the Evangelical-Reformed Church in 1849 was intended to stop the assimilation of Protestants of German nationality.

to the Poles' independence aspirations and as a tool in the Russification process. The Russian authorities emphasised the German character of the Lutheran denomination and appointed persons mainly from Baltic German families to leadership positions in the Evangelical-Augsburg Church.⁴⁸ The occupant's policy aimed at maintaining the national consciousness of the German minority to weaken the Polish element in the occupied territories was more effective in larger and more dense concentrations of the German population, isolated in spatial and social terms, where naturalisation processes were much slower. The activities of the tsarist authorities carried out among the German minority also had some results in the large cities, where in the post-insurrection period the growing pro-Russian attitude of the representatives of this ethnic group became evident.

Assessing the extent to which the assimilation and Polonisation processes of the German minority advanced at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries is very difficult, and any attempt to formulate generalisations in this respect seems to be risky. These processes differed in scale, nature and speed of assimilation of elements of Polish culture. They depended on a broad set of determinants, such as territorial origin, migration period, occupational and material position, family situation or environment of the new place of settlement. No less important was the impact of the settlers' life experiences in the context of the nationality policy implemented towards them.

The processes of loosening of the national ties of the German population with their country of origin – facilitated by the development of the capitalist economy and the associated transformation of social structures – continued until the events of 1905, when they clearly weakened in the pre-revolutionary period and the last years before the outbreak of the Great War.⁴⁹ The result of the 1905/1907 revolution was the expansion of political and social rights. A tsarist decree issued in March 1906 allowed the establishment of associations, trade unions and political and social organisations, including those of a national nature. The increasingly strong Polish nationalism resulted in the national identity of the national minorities living in Central Poland being more and more clearly emphasised. Numerous associations, societies and unions were formed in the German minority community with the aim of strengthening the sense of belonging

⁴⁸ T. Stegner, *Pastorzy Królestwa Polskiego na studiach teologicznych w Dorpacie w XIX wieku*, Warszawa 1993, p. 5.

⁴⁹ Cf. M. Koter, M. Kulesza, W. Puś, S. Pytlaś, *Wpływ wielonarodowego dziedzictwa kulturowego Łodzi na współczesne oblicze miasta*, Łódź 2005, p. 29.

to the German nation.⁵⁰ Poorly assimilated people settled in Łódź and the surrounding factory towns in the last quarter of the 19th century were particularly engaged in this type of activity. The integration of the Polish and German communities around national slogans clearly weakened the previously rapid assimilation processes.

It is indisputable, however, that in general the national awareness of a significant part of the German population in Central Poland (as well as in the whole Kingdom of Poland) at the turn of the 19th century was weak. Among the multi-ethnic community of Central Polish cities, especially Łódź, ethnic diversity and the sense of national belonging were usually not a source of major dilemmas. They were all citizens of the Russian Empire, for whom Russian was the official language (from 1865 onwards), and regardless of their origins and the language they used at home, they had a rather limited sense of connection with their own national culture, feeling themselves above all to be members of local communities. The German population living in dense clusters did not so much feel a connection to an ideological homeland, but above all identified with the environment of their place of residence, settlement, town or region. For the most part, these were people who could hardly be considered assimilated, but who, while not completely renouncing their national identity, at the same time tried to be loyal to Polish society.

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At the end of the nineteenth century quite a numerous group of non-Polonised people of German nationality emerged, mainly from the metropolitan business community, with a loyalist attitude to every authority. For this group, a sense of nationality was of secondary importance, and the key issue was the possibility of doing business.⁵¹ This phenomenon at the beginning of the twentieth century was particularly evident in Łódź, which “even though it is neither a country nor a state, has its own nationality – these are called *Lodzermensche* in German”.⁵² These were the descendants of German settlers, who lost their sense of German nationality, but also did not feel Polish, and were connected with the place of settlement, with which they tied their lives.

Before the outbreak of World War I, the German community settled in Central Poland was very diverse in terms of nationality. Alongside a certain part of it, especially older immigrants in subsequent generations,

⁵⁰ E.g. ‘Deutscher Schul und Bildungsverein’, ‘Lodzer Deutscher-Gewerbe Verein’, ‘Verein deutschesprechender Meister und Arbeiter’ and many other. See: S. Pytlaś, *Problemy asymilacji...*, p. 18.

⁵¹ This group was referred to as ‘Rubelpatrioten’. Cf. A. Eichler, *Das Deutschtum in Kongresspolen*, Stuttgart 1921, p. 119.

⁵² S. Górski, *Łódź społeczna: obrazki i szkice publicystyczne*, Łódź 1904, pp. 21–24.

who had already been Polonised, there were also 'wavering layers', Prussians full of Germanising ideas, Germanised Poles and Germanising Jews.⁵³ And although it is difficult in the period before Poland regained its independence to speak of advanced processes of Polonisation among the entire community of ethnic Germans, most of them were well assimilated into the social environment of Central Poland.

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⁵³ Ibidem, pp. 22, 24.

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