

The Policy of the USSR and the III Reich Towards the Polish Elites during the Second World War

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Abstract

The objective of the paper is to present both the character and specificity of the policy followed by the German Nazi occupational authorities against Polish elites, and the intelligentsia in particular.

Hostility towards the intelligentsia of a nationality other than that predominant in a given nation state is by no means a unique phenomenon, as it accompanied the emergence of nation states throughout the nineteenth century. It was also visible when these states re-emerged or had their borders redrawn following World War I and II. Therefore, this particularly hostile attitude towards the elites, evident also in Poland, had a deep-rooted tradition – all the more understandable as it stemmed from the fact that the intelligentsia had always been the kernel around which nations and nation states developed, as it had the strongest sense of national identity.

During World War II, the policy followed by the Germans with respect to the Polish nation referenced this tradition, but at the same time gave it an entirely new and different meaning. Only those Polish people who could be used for unskilled labor were to survive. The planned mass extermination of Polish elites (*Sonderfahndungsbuch*) commenced already in September 1939, and was continued in subsequent years (as *Aktion AB*). The mentally ill or handicapped, considered unfit for labor, were also to be exterminated. Shortly afterwards, the immediate extermination of people of Jewish nationality or descent – some of whom were members of the intelligentsia – was added to the agenda.

In conclusion, hostility towards the Polish intelligentsia did not – as it had previously – form part of a policy aimed at assimilating an ethnically distinct group, but constituted an element of a genocidal policy based on racial criteria.

Hostility towards the intelligentsia of a national minority in a nation state or the intelligentsia of a nation working towards separation from a supra-national empire (Russia) is not a new phenomenon, but rather an element of the history of development of states in the 19th and 20th centuries. This particular attitude to the intelligentsia – visible also in the Polish territories – was not without a rational basis, since it was the nucleus around which modern nations and states formed in Central Europe.

However, the intelligentsia escapes unequivocal definition, this mainly for two reasons: firstly, the very criteria for group membership are debatable, and secondly, the intelligentsia belongs to the leadership elite, and cannot be readily distinguished from other groups constituting it. In the Polish lands the intelligentsia emerged in the late 18th century in the peculiar situation of not having a state of its own. In the Russian Partition, the development of the intelligentsia was hindered after the January Uprising, as intellectuals were barred from holding public office; this resulted in provincialization. Nevertheless, the intelligentsia continued to grow in the Russian as well as in the Prussian Partition, however the most favorable circumstances for its development existed in Austria-Hungary – the most “democratic” of the partitioning powers (Borzyszkowski, 1986; Jedlicki, 1997).

Among the criteria for membership of the intelligentsia adopted by some authors are education, the type of work performed, and the “social mission” (Zahorska, 1978, p. 188; Kłoskowska, 1997). Others put a much greater emphasis on the latter, claiming that objective criteria – such as are used to decide membership of social classes – do not apply to the intelligentsia, which is set apart solely by its ethos (Sztuka, 2013). Obviously, when we talk about “social mission” and “ethos” we take a mental short-cut, as the second part of the 19th century saw a heated debate about the Polish intelligentsia and a clash of numerous ideas about what the intelligentsia was and its role in society. Moreover, the relations between intellectuals and the rest of the society were rarely free from conflict. Let us assume, however, that “social mission” was the defining factor. “In order to be considered an intellectual, one had to work towards educating the masses, contribute to «progress», make art or plan a revolution” (Zahorska, 1978, p. 189).

The last decades of the 19th century saw not only the growth of the Polish national movement, but also a reinforcement of its ties with the intelligentsia; this was accompanied by an increased influence of the Polish patriotic tradition that thrived during the whole century of struggle for independence and relied heavily on the tradition of uprisings. It was a difficult alliance, which sparked off controversy both at the time it was formed and in later years. Stanisław Brzozowski wrote:

Sienkiewicz codified our stance and gave it its esthetic shape. He is the champion of the Polish benightedness and the ignorance of the nobles. It is because of him that the Dresden-Saxon period of our history lives to this day in a finite

artistic form. The tragedy inherent in the history of Poland, the countless sacrifices that we had to make and the endless humiliations that we had to suffer simply washed over him. We have muddled through before, we will muddle through somehow – with this slogan, he became the most prominent representative of the so-called historical classes (Chafasiński, 1946, p. 67).

Citing these words in 1946, Józef Chafasiński toned down Brzozowski's criticism, bearing in mind the experience of Stalin's rule.

Despite the above-mentioned controversies, national identity was paramount for the Polish intelligentsia, and intellectuals played a key part in the independence movement. These processes gained momentum in the 1880s and 1890s, with several issues having particular importance, namely the revival occasioned in the Russian Partition by the Revolution of 1905–1907, the modernization of the intelligentsia, and the fact that it faced social problems and became more socially and politically involved (cf. Iwańska, 2015). The results of these developments are best illustrated by the fact that many intellectuals joined the ranks of Piłsudski's Legions, including over 170 painters, sculptors, graphic designers, and numerous architects (Milewska & Zientara, 1999, pp. 94, 108–109). They were members of a generation that shaped Polish social and political life at the turn of the century and later rebuilt the Polish state.

Along with the establishment of nation states, the increase in significance of national ideologies and nationalisms, and the rise of Communism in Russia, the 20th century brought a radicalization of policy towards the leadership elite, including the intelligentsia. In nation states, it was singled out for special treatment because of its nationality, which set it apart from the majority of citizens, while in the Soviet model intellectuals were targeted as members of a social group (class) that was considered hostile.

The workings of this mechanism could be observed after the First World War, when the supranational empires of Europe crumbled and were eventually replaced by nation states. When the Polish state was being rebuilt, it was believed that the elites – political, cultural and economic – formerly involved in the functioning of the institutions of the partitioning powers posed a threat to the new state. Usually, it was the former political and clerical elites that were most easily convinced to emigrate to their countries of origin, as they had no ties with the emerging states and at the same time were not held back by owned property, as was the case with elites engaged in industry or farming. Those who did not want to leave Poland voluntarily were pressured to do so in the hope that they would reconsider. These measures were aimed primarily against teachers and the clergy, as religion was an important element of national identity. The technical intelligentsia was affected to a considerably lesser degree (cf. Madajczyk, 2010a, pp. 54–64). It was believed that national minorities would be more susceptible to assimilation if their elites were

disempowered. To “disempower”, however, did not mean to murder, but to persuade by various means to resettle to one’s country of origin.

The rebuilding of the Polish state after 1918 was a long-term process of shaping society and its elites which entailed dispensing with the grim heritage of the century of partitions and of the First World War, as well as dealing with the material and human losses incurred in the latter. The intelligentsia of the restored state underwent extensive redevelopment. The growing number of students at universities and in secondary schools accelerated the process of social integration which, however, did not encompass national minorities (cf. Drozdowski, 1972, pp. 9–11). In keeping with the global trend, the number of white-collar workers increased rapidly, especially in public administration. There were more and more clerks in offices, shops and businesses, though of course in highly developed countries such as the USA or Germany their number was thrice greater. Nevertheless, their social position was very high, and they also played a crucial role in the administrative and political structure. As Janusz Żarnowski (1997) wrote:

As regards the development of society, the emergence and growth of a social elite composed mainly of members of the intelligentsia was of particular importance. What we are referring to here is not so much a mildly interesting political elite of the time – which, incidentally, was also made up chiefly of intellectuals – but professionally and culturally active groups that functioned as intermediaries between the developing Western civilization and Polish society (p. 165).

Nevertheless, attempts were made to limit the access of persons of other nationalities to positions typically filled by the intelligentsia. This is best illustrated by the restrictions imposed on people of Jewish origin, which were introduced over the course of time (*numerus clausus*, *numerus nullus*), and also by the fact that intellectuals from the Ukrainian minority had uniformly limited prospects for professional promotion and advancement (Natkowska, 1999).

The Fate of the Polish Intelligentsia during the Second World War

Bearing in mind these general characteristics, let us now consider what were the defining features of the policy of National-Socialist Germany in the Polish territories, while also attempting to outline the fundamental similarities and differences between German and Soviet policy. Generally speaking, both in the Soviet Union and National-Socialist Germany rational considerations were inextricably linked with an irrational, ideologically-motivated hatred towards condemned national groups. What is more, in both totalitarian systems this extreme enmity served as the driving force. And although a detestation of

traditional social structures (the church, the intelligentsia) was visible in both, it reached far greater proportions in the Soviet Union.

These structural similarities did not, however, determine policy. Before we proceed to the model of totalitarian social engineering implemented in the occupied Polish territories, it is worth looking at a somewhat different model, which was applied in the Czech lands annexed by Germany – the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. It was based on the pragmatic exploitation of Czech industrial potential, and equally on the conviction that the Germanization of a large part of Czech society would be both possible and desirable. That it differed from the policy followed in the Polish territories could be seen in Hitler's declarations about granting autonomy and not removing the Czechoslovak administration, though in actual fact it was made subordinate to the German authorities. Hitler thus adopted a long-term policy of assimilation and decided to refrain from any antagonizing actions, such as dividing the Protectorate. In accordance with these plans, about one half of Czechoslovaks were deemed suitable for Germanization; the rest were to be deported to Siberia, while the most dangerous intellectuals were to be forced to resettle, although Detlef Brandes (2012) assumes that this was a disguise for planned extermination. The intelligentsia was described as “a class hostile towards the Reich” (*reichsfeindliche Intelligenzschicht*) that was to be expelled or subjected to *Sonderbehandlung* (p. 237).

The policy of the German and Soviet authorities in the occupied Polish territories in no way resembled the one described above, as it was marked by unparalleled intrusion into the private lives of individuals. What is more, the policies pursued by these two countries share many similarities as regards the scale of repression and terror, but they also display considerable differences. The policy of National-Socialist Germany was oriented towards creating “living space”, and – just like that pursued by the Soviets – it was implemented with the use of genocidal tools. It differed from what we understand by occupation policy, as it was based on the concept of attrition, the extermination of political leaders, potential opponents and all other unwanted persons, the imposition of German authority at all levels of government, terror, utter discrimination (*Untermenschen*), the selection and Germanization of a part of the populace, the destruction of Polish culture and national identity, and the reduction of the Polish territories to an agricultural base and source of cheap labor (see Lehnstaedt, 2017; Łuczak, 1979, 1993; Madajczyk, 1970, 1988). The German imperial policy was not aimed at the subjugation of the Polish nation, but at its extermination and genocide (cf. Mańkowski, 1988, pp. 108–109).

The aim of the imperial Soviet policy was different: to conquer, to impose the Soviet political system and to assimilate the local population into a supranational, totalitarian Soviet nation. Although in the Soviet approach the annihilation of elites also had a national aspect, it was carried out first and foremost to facilitate the atomization of subjugated societies, to deprive individuals of social footing and thus turn them into compliant cogs in the

totalitarian machine. Moscow did not strive to exterminate the defeated nations, but to subdue them, and considered that some members of the elite could actually be used to achieve this goal. Nevertheless, this policy still entailed the physical destruction of a large part of the elite of subjugated countries (especially in the Baltic states and annexed Polish territories). The following groups (their families included) were in the most precarious position: officers and non-commissioned officers, functionaries of the police and the prison service, pre-war public servants, the intelligentsia and the middle class, all persons critical of Soviet rule, activists of all pre-war socio-political organizations and political parties (including communist activists who were considered dubious), landowners and industrialists, active members of the resistance, esteemed local and national figures, and people who illegally crossed the border.

After some initial hesitation, the policy of subjugation was extended to include people of Polish nationality, which entailed both putting a stop to discrimination in various areas of life (education, culture) and relying on collaboration as a means of exercising power to a much greater degree than under the German occupation. The ultimate aim was to assimilate Poles into a multinational Soviet empire – as was originally planned – or to turn Poland into a satellite state within the Soviet sphere of influence, as was decided in Moscow at the beginning of 1940.

On the one hand, this policy meant that Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński could continue his lectures, that attempts were made to enlist the help of some Polish POWs, and that former Prime Minister Kazimierz Bartel was probed – in a manner which remains unclear to this day – for potential collaboration, but on the other it consisted in the murder of some members of the elite in order to assimilate the rest. Before the spring of 1940 – in the period when Stalin must have assumed that the Polish state would not be restored – a decision was made to liquidate officers and other people connected with Poland who were incarcerated in Soviet POW camps. This meant that the Polish intelligentsia suffered a huge loss, for officers of the reserve were its members. In the camp in Kozielsk there were 21 professors, associate professors and lecturers from various institutions of higher learning, about 300 civilian and military doctors, several hundred lawyers, several hundred elementary and secondary school teachers, and also journalists, writers and industrialists. In Starobielsk, in turn, there were a dozen or so professors and associate professors from various institutions of higher learning, about 400 civilian and military doctors, several hundred lawyers, several hundred engineers, elementary and secondary school teachers, as well as a group of poets, writers, journalists, and social and political activists (*Zbrodnia katyńska*, 1962, pp. 15–17; Dzienkiewicz, Gur'ânov, Račinskij, 2015; Fałdowska, 2013). Although these data are not fully accurate, they still show the scale of losses suffered by the Polish elites.

Polish intellectuals were deported to Soviet camps, where they had to fight for survival:

We toiled at logging. The temperatures fell to minus 60 degrees, and we worked in shoes made of old car tires. Our padded clothes doubled as linen; we slept on wooden pallets. People sentenced for all sorts of crimes were thrown together, and intellectuals had to work arm in arm with repeat murderers. As theft was rife, we couldn't take off our clothes even when we went to bed, and as a result we had to suffer filth and vermin (*Relacja*, n.d.).

At the same time, Moscow continued its efforts to gain the support of some members of the Polish cultural elite, which – as it was hoped – would be easier to secure in an atmosphere of despondency and conviction that there were no viable alternatives. In 1940, ostensibly in order to celebrate the 85th anniversary of the death of Adam Mickiewicz, the Russians organized the Year of Mickiewicz; even though this was one immense political manipulation, it stands in stark contrast to German policy, which excluded any possibility of referencing the Polish cultural heritage. In the same year, 1940, German occupation authorities tore down statues of Mickiewicz in Rzeszów and at the Main Square in Kraków (Sierotwiński, 1988, pp. 41, 45). In Polish historical memory, this disparity is obscured by the memory of the Katyń massacre, which serves as a symbol of the extermination of the Polish nation.¹

The Germans based their policy in the occupied Polish territories on the division into *Übermenschen* and *Untermenschen*. These racial criteria, however, were not as clear-cut as their names suggest. This resulted from a radical change in German policy towards Poland before 1939, when it turned out that Poland would not accept a military alliance and subordination to Hitler's policy. An appropriate racial interpretation was prepared by the Office of Racial Policy (*Rassenpolitische Amt*). The basic premise was that due to racial reasons, the nucleus of the Polish nation was in principle different from the German nation and spiritually arid. However, this interpretation relied on vague definitions, which were not fully consistent with racial ideology: a German had not only to be of proper racial origin, but also to live in German tradition and culture, so any person of German origin who felt connected with the Polish nation should be considered as a Pole.² Only those

1 The exhibition *Zagłada polskich elit. Akcja AB - Katyń* organized by the Institute of National Remembrance in 2006 and an album (*Zagłada*, 2009) are based on this association. Such an analogy, however, holds true with regard to the extermination of only a part of the Polish elites.

2 German is "wer in Volkstum, Brauchtum und Familiengemeinschaft als Deutscher lebt, sofern er deutschen oder artverwandten Blutes ist". A Pole is "wer, gleichgültig welcher völkischen Herkunft (also auch deutschstämmig), sich in der polnischen Zeit zum polnischen Volk bekannte und seine völkischen und politischen Ideologien übernahm und vertrat" (Thom, 1997, p. 421).

Poles were to survive whom the German authorities could use for unskilled labor.

People of Polish nationality were subsequently targeted with a comprehensive policy of genocide, which – in contrast to the policy aimed against the Jews – was to be carried out over a longer period of time. In accordance with the definition proposed by Rafał Lemkin, genocide consisted in acts such as the liquidation of leaders and elites, the destruction of social unity (German People's List; *Goralenvolk*; preferential treatment of chosen nationalities; separation of the Jews, their stigmatization, ghettoization and subsequent extermination), the abduction and Germanization of children deemed racially valuable, the deportation of Poles and introduction of German settlement, the physical destruction (executions, camps) and biological destruction (arduous labor, insufficient nourishment, lack of organized medical assistance, at best limited to the prevention of epidemics, lack of or limited access to medicaments, while in 1943 – abortion on demand, hindering marriages and curbing population growth by all possible means), economic exploitation, destruction of material and spiritual culture (education, religion).

This policy was implemented immediately after the invasion of Poland in September 1939, and it was then that the Polish intelligentsia sustained its first losses. Some intellectuals broke under the strain of the experience of German, or both German and Soviet aggression: “Jewish writer Szymon Horończyk left Warsaw to escape from the Germans and took his life along the way”, “Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, a writer, literary critic, philosopher and painter committed suicide in the village of Jeziory in the Polesie region”. Those who took part in armed struggle were either taken captive, like Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński, or killed. Others perished as collateral victims, sometimes taking the fruit of a lifetime of hard work with them: “Józef Gołąbek, a historian of literature, died of wounds sustained during a night air raid on Warsaw; his invaluable collection of Polish and Slavic books, comprising 8,000 volumes, burned down in his flat” (Sierotwiński, 1988, pp. 5, 7, 8).

Immediately after the outbreak of the War, the German authorities commenced the extermination of the clergy, political and social activists, scholars, artists, officers and policemen. The first actions were aimed against Polish activists in the Reich and the Free City of Danzig. Already in September 1939, German *Einsatzgruppen* and *Selbstschutz* – the latter set up by the German minority in Poland – started the planned annihilation of Polish elites using the so-called *Sonderfahndungsliste*, which eventually grew into a “tracking and arrest” book (*Sonderfahndungsbuch*) and encompassed approximately 61,000 Polish citizens who were members of a broadly understood “leadership elite”: they were either to be arrested or exterminated forthwith under the *Tannenberg* action. The term “leadership elite” applied to all people who were suspected of being “carriers of national resistance”. The intelligentsia was only a part – though a vital one – of this elite. This action began in Pomerania

(*Intelligenzaktion*) – about 20,000 people were murdered there by the end of October, including craftsmen, merchants and farmers, regardless of sex and age. It was also implemented in Greater Poland and Upper Silesia, albeit on a smaller scale. Polish intellectuals from Kashubia, Warmia, Masuria, and Silesia were brutally persecuted: writer Maria Zientara-Malewska was deported to Ravensbrück, Kashubian activists were murdered, while in October 1939 writer Gustaw Morcinek began his long journey through the camps, which ended with liberation at Dachau. The *Intelligenzaktion* targeted approximately 100,000 people, of whom 50,000 were murdered immediately, while the rest were incarcerated at various camps.³

In November, professors of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków – including such eminent figures as Stanisław Estreicher, Tadeusz Lehr-Spławiński and Stanisław Pigoń – were arrested in a famous action that was in all probability carried out on a local initiative. Secondary school teachers were also arrested at the time. Before the Germans began to release the detainees, under pressure from the international community, 15 of them died, including Prof. Stanisław Estreicher, philosopher and poet Tadeusz Grabowski, and professor of zoology Michał Siedlecki (cf. Madajczyk, 2010b, p. 80). In the spring of 1940, an action against the Polish elites was carried out in Regierungsbezirk Zichenau and in the Suwałki region – the people arrested there were either sent to concentration camps or executed by firing squad – and also in the Łódź region and Upper Silesia. Under the *AB Aktion* (*Außerordentliche Befriedungsaktion*), which commenced in the General Government in May 1940, 6,500 people – among them 3,500 members of the elite – were murdered between May and July 1940 (cf. Madajczyk, 1970, vol. 2, pp. 237–238). The group earmarked for extermination was defined vaguely as including the intelligentsia, the clergy and other persons active in the Polish national movement (Mańkowski, 1992, p. 9).

Places such as Szpęgawski Forest, Piaśnickie Woods, Lućmierskie Woods and Palmiry became symbolic sites. Patients of psychiatric hospitals were murdered, too, as they could not be used even for unskilled labor.

The terror associated with the Wehrmacht in connection with its military operations was replaced by that of the police. Pursuant to the German policy, terror not only reflected the hatred of Poles, but also served as a method of governance and a tool for extermination. The balance between these elements was constantly shifting, and thus, when used as a method of governance, at times preventive, and at times retaliatory terror dominated (cf. Madajczyk, 1970, Vol. 2, pp. 235–236; Mańkowski, 1992, p. 12). In the longer term, though, the genocidal aim was overriding,

3 Jastrzębski (2017) estimates the number of victims in the Gdańsk–West Prussia province of the Reich at about 30,000. The *“Sonderfahndungsbuch”* was regularly supplemented, and its 2nd edition was published in Kraków in 1940 (pp. 65–75; cf. Wardzyńska, 2009).

but the occupation authorities did not push it to the forefront in order not to invite fiercer resistance.

From the very beginning, Polish citizens of Jewish origin – whom the Germans treated as “Jews” – were persecuted and murdered. As far as the Polish intelligentsia is concerned, however, it is impossible to apply the Nazi criteria. People imprisoned in the ghetto included not only those who identified themselves as Jews, but also those who were classified as Jews under the Nuremberg Laws. Thus, assimilated and christened individuals whose ties with Jewishness were limited to their ethnicity or who functioned in both communities also ended up in the ghetto. The Polish intelligentsia – not in the ethnic meaning of the term, but in a broader, cultural interpretation, in which there is room for such disparate groups as Judaists and Polish Tatars – included Ludwik Hirszfeld (a Polish microbiologist and immunologist, the co-founder of the National Institute of Hygiene, and a Professor at the University of Warsaw), who had a strong sense of his ethnic and religious identity but was nevertheless regarded as a “Jew” by the German authorities; very fortunately, Hirszfeld managed to survive the War.⁴ Among those condemned to the ghettos were Janusz Korczak – a Polish pedagogue, doctor and social activist (see Olczak-Ronikier, 2011) from an assimilated Jewish family, driven by a strong sense of mission, and Władysław Szlengel – a celebrated poet, cabaret author and songwriter of interwar Poland, who notably created his works in Polish. Yet another member of the Polish intelligentsia was Emanuel Ringelblum, who represented the assimilated Jewry (sadly, he had been unable to pursue an academic career in interwar Poland due to his descent) (Sakowska, 1986, pp. 21–24). The Germans murdered such people as Jews, but even though they never discarded their ethnicity, Poland lost in them members of its intelligentsia. Let us add that after the first wave of terror, when a large part of the Polish elite had been murdered, the focus of German policy shifted to the extermination of people of Jewish nationality and origin – the Holocaust.

Harsh living conditions led to an increase in the mortality rate throughout the occupied territory of Poland. This affected the intelligentsia, too, especially as in the territories incorporated into the Reich it not only lost its social status, but also suffered pauperization – even though it had adopted strategies for survival (cf. Kochanowski, 2015). Today it is difficult to determine specific causes of death – malnutrition, lack of medical aid, tribulations, or the experience of losing one’s nearest and dearest. In order to scrape a living, many had to sell their last remaining assets.

4 Hirszfeld (2011) wrote of himself: “I was brought up in the tradition of the Polish underground struggle, in which the family of my father – and especially my uncle – took an active part” (p. 7). His further remarks are poignant, but also balanced: “I discussed these matters with many people: with landowners, farmers, and the police. Practically all were anti-Semites, however none of them was in favor of solving the problem the way it was being solved” (p. 444).

A group of lawyers was deported to KL Auschwitz: "Of fifty lawyers, only twelve or thirteen managed to survive. The rest perished. Barrister Bielawski Junior was the first to die; this was on the fourth or fifth day after our arrival at the camp" (*Zeznanie*, 1947). The intelligentsia in smaller towns – teachers, the clergy, doctors – were also targeted. Polish scientific institutions were systematically plundered. Following the invasion of the USSR, the Germans murdered what was left of the Polish elites in the Eastern Borderlands, among others in Lwów and a few smaller cities. In Lwów, 45 Polish scholars were executed, probably in cooperation with the local Ukrainians, though it is debatable whether the murder was instigated by the latter or carried out as a *sui generis* continuation of the AB Aktion (cf. Łysakowski, 2012).

The harshest policy was followed in the so-called Wartheland province, where two groups were first earmarked for deportation: Jews and the Polish elite. The German authorities applied a broad definition of the intelligentsia, which also encompassed landowners and the clergy; deported to a new location, the hapless refugees had to rebuild their lives from scratch. Public cultural life in the Wartheland province – both Polish and Jewish – was suppressed, and the property of Polish theaters, museums, libraries, book shops, etc. was seized and destroyed (cf. Epstein, 2010; Łuczak, 1996, pp. 261–283; Rutowska, 2009; Schenk, 2000).

Many Polish intellectuals who engaged in the resistance died both in combat and as a result of arrests and brutal interrogations, in some cases committing suicide to avoid further questioning. Others took an active part in clandestine teaching and underground publishing efforts. Among the former was Władysław Jasiński, a secondary school teacher specializing in law and history and the founder and commander of the "Jędrusie" combat and sabotage group, who was killed in action in 1943. Generally speaking, the list of those killed, tortured to death, murdered at the camps, shot, beheaded, or exterminated in gas chambers is depressingly long, with the fate of many victims remaining unknown. Stanisław Sierotwiński (1988), who attempted to reconstruct the life stories of some of the victims, preceded an almost two-page long list of those who died or were killed in 1942 alone with a terse statement: "perished (exact dates unknown)" (p. 125) – and there are many such lists in his book.

The intelligentsia suffered considerable losses in the Warsaw Uprising, also as a result of German retaliatory measures. As evidenced in many of the testimonies gathered by the Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes – even though numerous witnesses did not have full knowledge of the events they observed – the Germans were particularly focused on murdering intellectuals. Those who managed to survive were arrested and deported to the camps.

The camps, viewed as an important tool for bringing about the wholesale extermination of Poles, were in many ways geared to the destruction of the intelligentsia. The German authorities established a whole network of camps

and prisons – for example Fort VII in Poznań and the facilities in Działdowo, Szczeglin and Sosnowiec – on Polish territory. The camp in Hohenbruch, West Prussia, where many Polish activists from that region were incarcerated, gained particular notoriety. Its inmates would subsequently be deported to Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, Dachau or Stutthof in the Third Reich.

Nearly one half of the 1,780 Polish priests who were incarcerated in Dachau perished, while Lithuanian clergymen suffered similar persecution at this location. Among those who died there was Jerzy Probosz, a Polish folk writer. The inmates of Sachsenhausen included, among others, professors from Kraków, although a great many Polish scholars, politicians and people of culture were incarcerated at Auschwitz (cf. Madajczyk, 1970, Vol. 2, p. 278; Sierotwiński, 1988, p. 20). Stanisław Grzesiuk, for example, managed to survive Dachau, Mauthausen and Gusen – but maybe because he was not a typical representative of the intelligentsia. Other survivors included Stanisław Nogaj, a Polish activist who had fought in the Greater Poland and Silesian uprisings and defended Warsaw in 1939 – his plight, though, may have been just slightly more bearable because he was employed at camp office. Many others, however, perished at the camps, as they were often targeted for persecution by the overseers. Their fate, oftentimes shared by entire families, was exceptionally tragic: “In Buchenwald, Jan Bielok died; he was an activist from the Olesno district in the Opole region of Silesia, a guardian and promoter of Polish schools, readership, amateur undertakings and cultural life in general. He was arrested on 11 September 1939. His son was enlisted by force into the Wehrmacht, his property was seized, while his wife and five children were deported to the Reich for forced labor” (Sierotwiński, 1988, p. 96). It is worth noting the use of this specific tool – conscription into the Wehrmacht – to combat local Polish activists.

The camp at Mauthausen-Gusen was of particular significance. Its branches included three sub-camps: in Gusen I (established following the invasion of Poland) prisoners toiled in stone quarries, while in Gusen II (Bergkristall) they worked at airplane construction. Formally, the camps in Gusen were sub-camps of Mauthausen and were subordinate to its commandant, but in actual fact they soon surpassed the parent camp as regards the number of both prisoners and victims. The Gusen I camp fell into the worst, third category, and served the purpose of exterminating Polish intellectuals by working them to death (*Vernichtungslager für die polnische Intelligenz*); however, prisoners were also murdered directly. A total of 77,500 prisoners were incarcerated at Gusen, of whom approximately 34,000 were Poles; on a side note we should add that there are doubts as to the exact number of prisoners and individual national groups. The mortality rate was about 65 percent (Aldo, 2008; Banaszak, 2011; Cholewa, 2000; Dobosiewicz, 1977, 1980, 1983, 2000; Gostner, 1945; Haunschmied & Mills, 2007; Madoń-Mitzner, 2011; Nogaj, 1945/1946).

After the Second World War

The Polish intelligentsia suffered its greatest losses at the hands of the German occupier: almost 57 percent of lawyers, 38.7 percent of doctors, 27 percent of Catholic clergymen, and 28.5 percent of university professors perished. A list of casualties from amongst writers, journalists, reporters and editors, which was compiled by Maria Rutowska and Edward Serwański, includes 576 surnames (cf. Madajczyk, 2010b).

The extermination of the elite created a critical situation at the end of the War. Specialists in the broadest meaning of the term – political and social activists, experienced administrators, clerks, teachers, clergymen, etc. – were severely lacking. An employer would be lucky to hire a candidate who had a secondary education, while many of those who took up senior positions in the economic, administrative and educational spheres were graduates of elementary schools. This deficit of skilled personnel was overcome only by the end of the 1950s. It was more difficult still to make up for the losses in culture, especially if we take into consideration their intangible character: “Those unfulfilled artistic lives, many of which had just started to bloom – full of hopes and dreams, vast possibilities, and virtually unlimited prospects for growth, are the most painful representation of the devastating blow suffered by Polish culture...” (Rutowska & Serwański, 1980, p. 37).

In the years immediately following the War, the attitude towards the elites of national minorities was the same as it had been after the First World War. The intention was to bring about their removal, however not by means of extermination, but by voluntary or forced resettlement. The German upper classes, for example, were earmarked for immediate expulsion, while German teachers and the clergy soon became the focus of specific administrative measures (Madajczyk, 1996, p. 224). The Polish communist authorities concluded population exchange agreements with the Soviet Republics of Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania; the authorities of these republics strove to resettle Polish elites and retain the rural communities, as their assimilation was considerably easier. The intelligentsia made up about 30 percent of Poles resettled after 1944 from Lithuania and Ukraine, and about 25 percent of Poles repatriated from Belarus (J. Czerniakiewicz & M. Czerniakiewicz, 2005, p. 65). But this experience was not unique to the Polish intelligentsia: over the years, the Romanian and Hungarian authorities took turns expelling thousands of intellectuals from the disputed territory of Transylvania, while by June 1945 the Czechs had displaced over 30,000 Hungarians from Southern Slovakia, in the main clerks, teachers and clergymen who had arrived there after 1938 (Kocsis, 1998, p. 76; Tóth, 2001, p. 182). In Czechoslovak instructions regarding the expulsion of Germans, people who had been active in the Nazi movement were listed alongside the elite: teachers, professors, social activists, businessmen, clergymen, clerks, etc. (Stanek, 2002, p. 38).

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