Towards the Polish Nation-State. National Minorities in Poland Between 1945 and 1989[1]

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to analyze the effects of communist policies upon ethnic relations within a multinational state. I use the case of Poland in order to identify the general shifts and dynamics in nationalities polices in this country between 1945 and 1989. The study's main focus is the processes by which Polish society was ethnically homogenized. I subsequently discuss the successive ways of building the Polish nation-state, from one phase of the communist regime to another, and the national mythologisation of historical memory, especially in relation to World War II. The paper also draws attention to a phenomenon, often ignored by scholarly literature, which took place in postwar communist societies within minority ethnic groups. I am referring to the preservation of minorities' identities in the form of "a hidden ethnicity" in the context of group exclusion from the public sphere and of the disenfranchisement of specific ethnic historical memories within the wider societal narratives.

Keywords: Poland, 1945-1989, national minorities, nation-building, ethnic exclusion

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the effects of the communist system in the field of ethnic relations. Specifically, the analysis covers relations between the state and the Polish majority and national minorities in Poland between 1945 and 1989. Most of these effects are still present, reflecting the long-term social impact of World War II (Nazism) and the communist system. This especially concerns the ethnic homogenisation of Polish society, the way the Polish

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[1] In this paper I have quoted the extracts from my interviews with leaders of minority organizations and minority experts which I conducted in the years 2001-2005. Parts of them I used in my book *Równość i różnica. Mniejszości narodowe w porządku demokratycznym w Polsce po 1989 roku* [Equality and difference. The national minorities in the democratic order in Poland after 1989], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2005.

nation-state should be built (especially the criteria used for affiliation to the Polish nation) and mythologisation of historical memory, especially in relation to the events of World War II. The above mentioned effects have been widely documented in literature published on the subject in the last decade in Poland[2]. In the paper, I will draw attention to less reported phenomena that occurred concerning minority ethnic groups during this period of time. These phenomena are related to methods of preserving the ethnic identity of minorities in the form of a 'hidden ethnicity', a sense of exclusion from the public sphere and non-existence of their specific historical memory in the wider social consciousness.

Before I proceed to the analysis proper, I would like to make three concept observations. The first one concerns the specificity of the analysed period in the history of Poland. Here I do not discuss the importance of nomenclature of the state political system under analysis between 1945 and 1989, whether it was 'communist', 'Soviet', 'socialist', 'real socialism', 'authoritarian' or 'totalitarian', etc. The representatives of minority ethnic groups had the following perspective: the Polish state was, first of all, the state where Polish culture and language were dominant, Polish customs were in force, and where there was practically no room to demonstrate non-Polish nationality. One of my interlocutors stated that, for ethnic minorities, communist Poland was not the People's Republic of Poland (PRL), but the *Polish nation-state, implementing the Polish (national) reason of the State* [Jewish minority member 1].

The second observation concerns understanding the terms used for, and attitudes towards, the issues of nationality in the analysed period in Poland. In the post-war period (and especially in the early years after the war), such concepts as 'nation', 'the Polish state,' 'national minority', were given a different meaning than today. The concepts were primarily objective and collective in nature, with no room for a subjective sense of ethnic identity, or the recognition of historically complex and complicated ethnic, regional and religious identifications[3]. The attitude towards the concept of 'national minority' and policies on protecting its rights was also distinct from that of today. The protection model in force was based on the principles of political recognition of minority ethnic groups and focused on their assimilation into the dominant national society. This perception was related to the difficult experience of the last war[4].

[2] Piotr MADAJCZYK, Danuta BERLIŃSKA, *Polska jako państwo narodowe. Historia i pamięć* [Poland as the national state. History and remembrance], Warszawa-Opole: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN – PIN Instytut Śląski w Opolu, 2008; Leszek OLEJNIK, *Polityka narodowościowa Polski w latach 1944 –1960* [The national policy in Poland in 1944-1960], Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2003; Eugeniusz MIRONOWICZ, *Polityka narodowościowa PRL* [The national policy of People's Republic of Poland], Białystok: Wydanie Białoruskiego Towarzystwa Historycznego, 2000.

[3] Piotr MADAJCZYK, Danuta BERLIŃSKA, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

[4] Tove H. MALLOY, *National Minority Rights in Europe*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 28-35; Will KYMLICKA, *Multicultural Odysseys. Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 27-55.

The third observation refers to the concept in this paper on setting up a modern nation state and its policy towards ethnic 'otherness' on its territory. Contemporary Polish literature emphasises in particular that the post-war period was the time of the Polish nation-state construction and the social dominance of narrowed (objective) criteria on affiliation to the Polish nation. In my analysis, I refer to works by Andreas Wimmer dedicated to the nation-state and its nationalization policy towards minorities in Europe. His works proved that in the era of modernity, a nation-state became and still remains the main area within which inclusion and exclusion of certain ethnic groups take place. As he wrote 'the main promises of modernity – political participation, equal treatment before the law and protection from the arbitrariness of state power, dignity for the weak and poor, and social justice and security – were fully realised only for those who came to be regarded as true members of the nation. The modern principles of inclusion are intimately tied to ethnic and national forms of exclusion.'[5]

This researcher viewed the construction of a nation-state as a form of 'ethnic closure' of a given society. Historically, a variety of ways to build nation-states spawned, in his opinion, a diversity of exclusion and inclusion methods of ethnic minorities. The basic state institutions, such as participation in public life, access to labour market, social and health care, etc. have been systematically related to forms of ethnic exclusion. The citizenship status (or appropriate legal status) based on the criteria of an individual's membership in the dominant national (ethnic) group of the country and person's roots in a specific territorial homeland have regulated access to the above-mentioned institutions[6].

The main query of this paper relates to how the Polish experience of dealing with 'ethnic otherness' in 1945-89 has been a part of a general scheme of other states' transformation of policy towards ethnic minorities in Europe. I will try to discuss it through a description of successive changes in the ethnic structure and geography of Poland after 1945, the state policy towards minorities, adopted law regulations and cultural impact associated with the striving of minority ethnic groups to preserve their ethnic identity and historical memory.

2. Modification the ethnic geography and structure of the Polish population after 1945

After 1945, Poland in its territorial shape became almost one nationally uniform country. Changes in the ethnic structure and population status of ethnic groups resulted from many factors. These included territorial changes, extermination of entire groups of population (mostly Jews and Gypsy/Roma)

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[5] Andreas WIMMER, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict. Shadows of Modernity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 1.

[6] Andreas WIMMER, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-81.

by the Nazis[7], relocations of the population and migration processes during the war and after its end (including the repatriation of around 4,5 millions Poles from the territory of the USRR in 1945-1958, the displacement of Germans, which lasted until the end of 1949 and affected over 3 million people, as well as the deportation of around 0,5 millions Ukrainians to the USRR. 160,000 Ukrainians remaining in Poland were deported from its south-eastern part to the north-western areas (the Western Territories) during the so-called 'Vistula Action' in 1947. With regard to persons belonging to other minorities, the principle of their voluntary decision was respected and their emigration (displacement) to their mother countries did not occur as often[8].

These events transformed Poland from an ethnically diverse country during the interwar period into a nearly one-nation state in the early 1950s[9]. According to estimates of the time, ethnic minorities accounted for no more than 2% of the population (see Table 1).

Table 1. The ethnic structure of the Polish state in 1939 and 1950

No.	Nationality	1939		1950	
		Thousands	%	Thousands	%
1.	Poles	22 236,3	65,7	24 448,0	97,8
2.	Ukrainians	5 554,1	15,7	150,0	0,6
3.	Jews	3 250,0	9,3	50,0	0,2
4.	Byelorussians	2 144,6	6,1	160,0	0,6
5.	Germans	822,5	2,3	170,0	0,7
6.	Others	331,5	0,9	30,0	0,1
	Overall	35 339,0	100,0	25 008,0	100,0

Source: Piotr Eberhardt, *Przemiany struktury etnicznej ludności Polski w XX wieku* [Transformations in the Ethnic Structure of Polish Population in the 20th century], in 'Sprawy Narodowościowe. Seria Nowa' 2006, no 28, p. 67.

[7] The war resulted in the death of one-fifth of the Polish population, including 3 million Polish Jews killed (90% of the community), along with approximately 3 million Polish non-Jews. Between 40,000 and 100,000 Polish Jews survived the Holocaust in Poland, another 50,000–170,000 were repatriated from the Soviet Union and 20,000–40,000 from Germany and other countries; in 1946 there were between 80,000 and 240,000 Jews in Poland – Piotr EBERHARDT, *Migracje polityczne na ziemiach polskich (1939-1950)* [Political migration in Polish Territories], Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2010, pp. 192-201.

[8] Krystyna KERSTEN, *Przemiany struktury narodowościowej Polski po II wojnie światowej. Geneza i wyniki* [Changes of national structure of Poland after the Word War II. Genesis and results], In *Kwartalnik Historyczny*', May-June 1969, no 2.

[9] Piotr EBERHARDT, *Między Rosją a Niemcami. Przemiany narodowościowe w Europie Środkowowschodniej* [Between Russia and Germany. Ethnic transformations in Central–Eastern Europe in the XX century], Warszawa: Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1996, pp. 101-113 (the English version: Piotr EBERHARDT, *Ethnic Groups and Population Changes in Twentieth-Century Central-Eastern Europe: History, Data, and Analysis*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2003).

In the late 1940s, the following saying regarding ethnicity became popular: *Poland is clean as a glass of water.* Not only had the Polish population become less numerous than before the war, but it was also subject to displacements in the northern and western territories of Poland. In a short space of time, new, culturally and ethnically diverse population concentrations that came into being on these territories formed barely cohesive social structures ('the post-migration society')[10].

A further ethnic homogeneity of Poland was determined by an end to immigration processes, greatly changing the ethnic and cultural structure of European societies starting in the 1960s. Except for the first few post-war years, Poland at that time was not a significant immigration territory[11]. It was primarily a country of emigration, not immigration. Only in rare situations did the Polish authorities decide to accept refugees and immigrants of non-Polish nationality, usually settled based on political or ideological considerations[12].

National homogeneity in Polish society after 1945 meant that it became an exception amongst other countries in Central and Eastern Europe in this respect. As one of the experts in the field said:

> *In Poland, the specific situation of ethnic minority communities depends on their size – there are actually no numerically large ethnic minorities. This has its positive and negative meanings. The positive meaning is that Polish people do not see minorities as a threat. The negative is that, because of their small size, the problems of ethnic minorities were not perceived. This is evident in the relations between Poles from central Poland and Poles from Przemyśl, and Białystok. This problem was not perceived* [Expert 1].

In addition to radical changes in Poland's ethnic structure, changes in the geographical location of minority ethnic communities in regard to their post-war forced displacements to the western and northern regions of the country were also of importance. This was especially true of Ukrainians displaced to these areas in 1947. Forced displacement and the reluctant attitude of Poles caused by the memory of bloody Polish-Ukrainian conflicts in 1943-1947 had an impact on this community's standing in the post-war years. The scattering contributed to the progressive weakening of traditional cultural patterns, the decay in the use of language and decline in the religious commitment of Ukrainians. It also led to limitations in their participation in public life. This led to a

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[10] Andrzej KWILECKI, *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce Ludowej* [National minorities in People's Republic of Poland], in ‚Kultura i Społeczeństwo', October – December 1963, no 4, pp. 87-88.

[11] Dariusz STOLA, *Kraj bez wyjścia? Migracje z Polski 1949-1989* [A Country with no exit? International migrations from Poland, 1949-1989], Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 2010, pp. 23-48.

[12] A typical example are the Greeks and Macedonians who were given political asylum in Poland in 1949-1951 (15,000 persons).

progressive assimilation of this group into Polish culture and society. However, the memory of resettlements triggered among them a sense of community based on suffered oppression and similar experiences. This maintained some degree of ethnic integration. As one of its leaders stated:

> *It turned out otherwise, however, it is telling about the power of a spiritual culture that these traditions, attachment to the religious values, education, songs, customs passed down from generation to generation, like the use of the vernacular; it meant that this identity in Poland, despite assimilation, remained, and this community has its own inner strength* [Ukrainian minority member 1].

Thus the Ukrainian minority was left with the awareness of a separation between the 'native' (indigenous) land, and areas of 'Diaspora' (now homeland).

As a result of the war and post-war population movements, almost the entire Polish territory has been culturally and ethnically unified into the Polish character. The following exceptions in this respect are: a small region of Polish-Lithuanian borderland (near Puńsk), inhabited by Lithuanians, the south-eastern part of the country (region around Białystok), which is dominated by Byelorussians, two small regions at the border with Slovakia, Spisz and Orava, inhabited by Slovaks, the area east of Opole, where the German minority is concentrated (Opole voievodship[13]), and 'islands' of Ukrainian settling in the Warmia and Mazury area (the region of Lidzbark Warmiński and Górowo Iławeckie), Western Pomerania (near Słupsk) and Lower Silesia (Wrocław and Legnica). This method of allocation of space affects the country's modern phenomenon of 'minority borderlands' in Poland, which are insular in nature and are located away from the state borders of their 'foreign homelands'.

3. Poland after 1945: from 'ethnic state' to 'nation-state'

After World War II, the Polish state authorities considered ethnic minorities remaining within its new borders to have been marginalized at least, or nonexistent at most. This was related to the implementation of the idea of one nation state, which was the main message of the then dominant political sides: London and the communists. After the experience of the last war, the abovementioned idea received a great deal of public support[14].

The dominant category of thinking, regardless of political views, became the 'nation', and one 'nation state'. The concept of the state including citizens of different nationalities was rejected, and the principle of a nation-state,

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[13] The underlined voivodeship (or province) has been a high-level administrative subdivision of Poland since the 14 century.

[14] Grzegorz JANUSZ, *Usytuowanie mniejszości narodowych w społeczeństwie i polityce państwa polskiego po 1945 r.* [The place of national minorities in the society and policy of the Polish state after 1945], in Jan JACHYMEK (ed.), *Mniejszości narodowe w polskiej myśli politycznej XX wieku* [National minorities in Polish political thought of the XX century], Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1992.

identifying citizenship with nationality, was approved. A new period saw, therefore, a re-definition of the Polish nation and the criteria of belonging to it. 'Poland' started meaning the Polish national community, whereas ethnic minorities had become 'foreign groups'. This was largely a consequence of the war - during the war ethnic divisions grew, limiting the possibility of using the term 'political nation' as a community of all citizens, who worked for the state without an insight into their ethnic distinctions[15].

Polish society was to become ethnically homogeneous in order to be free from 'internal enemies'. The above-mentioned idea was to be implemented through forced deportations of the German and Ukrainian populations, and limitations on the activity of other minority ethnic groups. At the same time, among the native population (so-called 'autochthon'), such as Silesians, Masurs, Pomeranians etc., a re-Polonisation verification was conducted. These ethnic groups represented the borderland communities of clearly formed, ethnically distinct, but unspecified national orientations, which ranged from a choice between Polishness and Germanness. After the last world war, they were in the grip of a dramatic dilemma: either to opt for Polishness and remain in their homeland, or doom themselves to deportation because of a sense of belonging to the German state or people. Their 'Slavic' origin was believed to be a good basis for the development of Polish national awareness. There was an attempt to hide other types of ethnic diversity, or reduce it to regional and historical variations in the Polish nation[16].

During the verification (or confirmation of 'being Polish'), most of these people chose Polish citizenship, though it did not mean identifying with the Polish nation:

> *The initial desire to have the opportunity to stay 'home' turned into an unbearable life, which was dominant after the war. The initial hope that the homeland returns became hopeless. The fact that the homeland 'left' forever came slowly into the awareness of the German population in Silesia, and therefore they often strived to move to Germany, but the Iron Curtain (the boundary between the East and the West) prevented that.* [German minority member 1].

The re-rebirth of the German minority did not take place until the late 1980s and early 1990s, in the regions of Śląsk Opolski and Upper Silesia, where it had been previously prohibited[17].

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[15] Krystyna KERSTEN, *Polska - państwo narodowe. Dylematy i rzeczywistość* [Poland – the national state. Dilemmas and reality], in Marcin KULA (ed.), *Narody. Jak powstawały i jak wybijały się na niepodległość?* [Nations. How have they arisen and became independent?], Warszawa: Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1989, p. 462.

[16] Jan MISZTAL, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa na Ziemiach Odzyskanych* [The national verification on the Regained Territory], Warszawa: Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990.

[17] Marcin ZAREMBA, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce* [Communism, legitimation and nationalism. The

This ethnic homogeneity was considered one of the major achievements of the new state, and it clashed with these problems as they existed in the inter-war period. The myth of the ethnic homogeneity of Polish society was accompanied by the demise of PRL, and it played yet another important political role. The unified will of the people allowed the authorities to seize from the emerging political opposition an opportunity for political action (the reasons) and place it outside 'the national community'. Thus, it represented, to use the formula coined by eminent Polish historian Tadeusz Łepkowski, the attribute of 'full time communist nationalism'[18].

4. Transformation of ethnic exclusion - the evolution of policy towards national minorities in 1945-89

Although the regulations of the time treated ethnicity as a private matter for a given citizen, in practice it was just the opposite. The political aspects of the attitude towards ethnic minorities were repeatedly felt in the post-war period. They particularly concerned political crises, when the authorities changed; they disclosed their specific needs, thus giving birth to the activity of these communities. Then ethnic tensions sparked (1956, 1968, 1980-82). In fact, each and every ethnic minority played their part. The anti-Jewish events of 1968 and anti-Gypsy/Roma events of the late 1970s were the most extreme in nature and had the most serious consequences[19].

The state policy towards national minorities during the long period between 1945 and 1989 was diversified and varied as far as individual minority groups were concerned. The policy's main evolution points were determined by the dates of political crises in Poland. The scope and nature of exclusion of ethnic minorities varied according to the internal political situation of the country and the international situation.

The years between 1945 (1944) and 1947 were a period of nationality verification, camps, and forced displacements. These particularly applied to Ukrainians (the 'Vistula Action') and Germans. The last war provoked particular hostility towards the latter on the side of Poles. De-Germanisation campaigns were run, and the use of German language in public places was

nationalistic legitimization of the communist power in Poland], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2001, p. 154.

[18] Tadeusz ŁEPKOWSKI, *Uparte trwanie polskości. Nostalgie, spory, nadzieje, wartości* [The stubburn existence of Polish-ness. Nostalgia, disputes, hopes, values], Warszawa – Londyn: Wydawnictwo Aneks-Most, 1989, p. 50.

[19] Piotr MADAJCZYK (ed.), *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce. Państwo i społeczeństwo polskie a mniejszości narodowe w okresach przełomów politycznych (1944-1989)* [National minorities in Poland. The state and society and national minorities in the time of political crises (1944-1989)], Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 1998.

prohibited[20]. One of the representatives of the German minority summed this policy up:

> *The only solution after the war was to bring into force the idea of the Polish Silesian. Everything related to Germanness had been destroyed. All German inscriptions had been destroyed (including those on tombstones), first and second names were changed (not in court, but for example, by a clerk giving out ration cards), the use of German language was prohibited ... monuments to the victims of war were demolished, property was often confiscated. A lot of injustice was done, indeed, terror was introduced* [representative of German minority 1]

Other minorities enjoyed cultural freedom or were not of major interest to the authorities. Between 1945 and 1949, the Jewish population benefited the most among minorities in Poland. It had the freedom of developing its culture and maintaining its identity. This situation was determined by political considerations, such as getting support and help from influential Jewish communities around the world, but also by the fact that a substantial part of the Jewish population supported new transformational changes. At the same time, in the early post-war years, a large part of the Jewish population, including the Jews that had come from the USSR, emigrated. This process intensified for a while, especially after the Kielce massacre in 1946, but at the end of 1948, a new situation was created for the Jewish minority, as the state of Israel was established[21]. Anti-Jewish violence in Poland in 1944–1946 refers to a series of violent incidents that immediately followed the end of the war and influenced the postwar history of Jews, as well as Polish-Jewish relations (the exact number of Jewish victims is subject to debate, but the estimates ranged between 1,000 to 2,000). Those anti-Semitic riot incidents discouraged many Jewish survivors from rebuilding their lives there, and convinced them to emigrate. At the end of 1949, however, the authorities decided to limit the free development of the institutional and cultural life of this community. This resulted in the emigration of 109,000 people of Jewish origin from Poland[22].

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[20] Bernard LINEK, *'Odniemczanie' województwa śląskiego w latach 1945 – 1950 (w świetle materiałów wojewódzkich)* ['De-germanization' of Silesia Province 1945-1950 (in light of the official documents of Silesian province)], Opole: Wydawnictwo Instytut Śląski w Opolu, 1997.

[21] On the socio-psychological atmosphere in the first postwar years in Poland see – Marcin ZAREMBA, *Wielka trwoga. Polska 1944-1947* [The Great alarm. Poland 1944-1947], Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak, 2012.

[22] Polish Jews began to leave Poland for a variety of reasons - many left because Poland became a communist country they did not want to live in, or because all private property had been confiscated by the new communist government, some left because they did not want to live where their family members were murdered and instead chose to live with relatives in different countries – Irena HURWIC-NOWAKOWSKA, *Żydzi polscy (1947-1950). Analiza więzi społecznej ludności żydowskiej* [The Polish Jews (1947-1950). The analysis of social ties of Jewish population], Warszawa: Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii PAN, 1996, p. XXI.

In subsequent years, 1948-1955 (1956), there was a progressive recognition of the presence of ethnic minorities in the country. This relates to a change in state policy criteria, where ethnic issues had given way to 'socio-economic class' issues[23]. This is the period when the policy towards the Gypsy/Roma community toughened. The state authorities recognized this community as a marginal and 'counter culture' group, questioning and contesting the main norms and values of society. It became mainly a 'target' of intensive assimilation into the majority society, and a 'social problem' to be treated for the common good of the society[24].

The next period, the years between 1956 and 1980, can be divided into two parts. The first part starts with a thaw in October 1956, which lasted until 1968. On the one hand, Germans departed from Poland (until the end of the 1950s); on the other, the authorities were trying to improve the situation of other ethnic minorities. Education and teaching in their mother tongues in schools was introduced. Socio-cultural associations and newspapers were allowed to be established, according to a rule, however – 'one minority, one organization, one newspaper'. After 1956, the Polish authorities allowed the establishment of more ethnic minority organizations, in the form of socio-cultural societies.

All major ethnic minorities of that time gained institutional forms of cultural life, supervised and funded by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MSW). The leaders of minority ethnic communities were also offered an opportunity for political activity. They were allowed a greater participation in local governments and party structures. Special administrative units to tackle policy towards ethnic minorities were also established.

These changes increased the activity of minorities, but the members of minority communities were not satisfied, because their needs and the need for a sense of security were not met. According to Ukrainians, the authorities had done little to address the issue of restitution or property compensation after their displacement in 1947. The issues related to the Ukrainians' attempts to return to their old places of residence were particularly sensitive. The return was strongly opposed, usually with good results, by the local authorities[25].

The representatives of the Jewish community were disappointed with the changes post-1956. They pointed to the passivity of the authorities towards manifestations of anti-Semitism[26]. The relatively favourable policy towards

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[23] Kazimierz PUDŁO, *Kształtowanie się statusu etnicznego ludności niepolskiej w Polsce (1945-1965)* [Formation of ethnic status of non-Polish population in Poland (1945-1965)], 'Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis', 1989, no 1023.

[24] Andrzej MIRGA, *Romowie w historii najnowszej Polski* [The Roma in contemporary history of Poland], w: Zbigniew KURCZ (ed.), *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce* [National minorities in Poland], Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1997, p. 156.

[25] Roman DROZD, *Polityka władz polskich wobec ludności ukraińskiej w Polsce w latach 1944 – 1989* [The policy towards the Ukrainian population in Poland 1944-1989], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Tyrsa, 2001.

[26] Helena DATNER, Małgorzata MELCHIOR, *Żydzi we współczesnej Polsce – nieobecność i powroty* [Jews in contemporary Poland – absence and returns], in Zbigniew KURCZ (ed.),

minorities changed in the mid-1960s, culminating in the events of March 1968. The vast majority of the 40,000 Jews in Poland by the late 1960s were assimilated into the broader society. However, this did not prevent them from becoming victims of a campaign organized by the Polish Communist Party which equated Jewish origins with 'Zionism' and disloyalty to a Socialist Poland. This caused the emigration of around 20,000 people of Jewish descent[27].

The events of 1968 had an unfavourable impact on the attitude the authorities had towards other minorities. The idea of a nationally homogeneous Polish state began to be advocated, and accompanied by a far-reaching discriminatory policy towards some minority groups. In 1975, the Russian Cultural and Educational Society was closed down for political reasons: *The past of this group was inconvenient to the authorities (during the interwar period), with their anti-Sovietness and reactionism, and were considered a threat to relations with the USSR.* [the Russian minority representative]. From that time until the beginning of the 1990s, the Russian minority in Poland was never discussed.

In 1980-1989, after a period of social recovery due to the emergence of the 'Solidarity' movement and martial law enforcement, the government policy towards ethnic minorities was characterized by reduced restrictions towards their societies and increased subsidies for their activities. A policy of liberalization towards the Jewish minority was instituted, facilitated by a resumption of official contact with the State of Israel. The government slowly withdrew from the policy of 'settlement and productivization' towards the Gypsy/Roma community and accepted its cultural and ethnic distinctiveness. At the same time, the authorities refused to recognize the German minority and to register student organizations of ethnic minorities (until 1988).

Starting in the late 1970s, national minorities in Poland became virtually invisible to the public, and their situation *resembled the behaviour of fish in an aquarium. They were shouting, some even saw them, but they were not heard* [Expert 1]. This was the case for every ethnic group. However, the drama of each and every group varied.

5. On the rights of national minorities and the political and legal regulations applying to them

Until 1989, state policy did not expose public issues connected with national minority communities. There was no discussion on their rights and status in Poland and their relationship with the majority.

The above-mentioned issues were usually revealed for a short time during breakthroughs and political crises. The way of thinking on minority ethnic

Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce [National minorities in Poland], Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1997, pp. 74-75.
[27] See Helena DATNER, Małgorzata MELCHIOR, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

groups was followed by introducing legislation and policies towards minorities. That was proclaimed by a new Polish communist constitution, enacted in 1952. It confirmed the guarantee of equal rights for citizens (Art. 67) and the principle of ethnic non-discrimination (Article 81). The concept of 'national minority' appeared neither in the Constitution, nor in the rest of the Polish legal system. It had been replaced by a broader and more ambiguous concept of 'nationality', as in the Article on the non-discrimination principle[28]. The shape of the Constitution was fundamentally amended in comparison with the regulations of the pre-war constitutions, in which the issue was regulated in depth[29].

On the basis of registered ethnic minority associations, one can state that the authorities officially recognized the following ethnic minority groups in Poland: Byelorussians, Czechs and Slovaks, Lithuanians, Gypsy/Roma, Russians, Ukrainians and Jews. Immigrant groups such as Greeks and Macedonians at the end of the 1980s, and the Vietnamese (as a student organization), were also accepted. The Lemko community was not accepted by the authorities as a separate group, getting included in the Ukrainian minority[30].

Tatars, Armenians, and Karaites, for whom religion plays a vital role, were treated more as exotic religious communities than national or ethnic groups[31]. Tatars were also recognized due to the need to maintain good diplomatic relations with Arab countries and, as one of its senior representatives said: they were treated *as a living heritage, which was sometimes troublesome* [representative of the Tatar minority 1][32].

The official recognition of national minority communities was largely ideological and political, not legal. The dominant attitude was that of 'a limited consent' towards their activity in wider society. On the one hand, manifestations of ethnic minority folklore (music bands, literary contests, etc.) were allowed mainly at the local and regional levels. On the other, the existence of some minority communities was denied.

This was especially apparent with reference to Germans and the native ('autochthon') population. The former were treated as a political taboo, and

[28] Wiesław SKRZYDŁO, *Prawo konstytucyjne w latach 1944 – 1989* [Polish constitutional law in 1944-1989], in Wiesław SKRZYDŁO (ed.), *Polskie prawo konstytucyjne. Stan prawny na dzień 1 września 1997 r.* [Polish Constitutional Law. Its state on the 1 September 1997], Lublin: Wydawnictwo Morpol, 1997, pp. 60, 178-180.

[29] Jerzy TOMASZEWSKI, *Mniejszości narodowe w prawie polskim 1918-1939* [National minorities in the Polish legal system 1918-1939], ‚Więź', 1997, no 2.

[30] The group of Lemko/Ruthenians can be distinguished (within the Ukrainian minority) with 50-60,000 members. One part of them consider themselves a separate ethnographic group within the Ukrainian minority, while the other part aims at separation and the establishment of their own national group.

[31] Polish Tatars (4-5,000 persons), Armenians (8-15,000 persons) and Karaites (200 persons) constitute small autochthon, ethnic and religious societies inhabiting Poland. These communities give evidence of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious history of Poland.

[32] Leszek OLEJNIK, *op. cit.*, pp. 586-590.

their German national identification was rejected. It was accompanied by the public anti-Germanness of the political system, which was an important element of its national legitimacy[33].

Ethnic minority associations were restrained and controlled. Their activities could not go beyond a cultural and educational form. This system survived almost unchanged until the end of the eighties. Change was not possible without the democratization of the whole Polish system of government. Minority associations did not provide ways to publicly declare their ethnic distinction, although that was important to maintain in their private life. The leaders of the current Ukrainian and Jewish minority associations appreciate the significance of those organizations at that time for the survival of these groups' cultures, despite what one of them called *the dirty game with the regime played by those organizations.* One of the Ukrainian minority leaders states his attitude towards the issue:

> *I personally asses the activities of UTSK* [The Ukrainian Socio-Cultural Society -S.L.] *since 1956 as edifying. In particular, activities and achievements of local active members in many villages and towns [...]. This was the society in charge of organizing the cultural and educational life for our community in Poland. They worked under the very close supervision of the administrative authority of the Ministry of the Interior. This activity was strictly licensed; it could not have been expected to flourish greatly. It had to be kept within certain frameworks, in isolation from the rest of society, restricted, highlighting folklore only ... these were great achievements for those days* [Ukrainian minority representative 3].

The official attitude towards minority ethnic groups was characterized on the one hand by the limited right to maintain their identity (mainly through folklore), and on the other, by their exclusion from the public sphere as an ethnic minority, emphasising assimilation as a means of social integration. The policy towards minority ethnic groups was supported by other processes: socio-economic changes in Poland at the time, in particular industrialization, migration from the countryside to cities, expansion of mass culture in Polish language (mainly in radio and television), as well as the national (Polonization) role of the Catholic Church[34].

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[33] Andrzej SAKSON, *Mazurzy – społeczność pogranicza* [Masurs – the bordeland community], Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1990; Michał LIS, *Ludność rodzima na Śląsku Opolskim po II wojnie światowej (1945-1993)*, [The native population on the Opole Silesia after Word War II (1945-1993) Opole: Państwowy Instytut Naukowy – Instytut Śląski, 1993; Maria SZMEJA, *Starzy i nowi mieszkańcy Opolszczyzny* [Old and New inhabitants of Opole Silesia], Opole: Państwowy Instytutu Wydawniczy – Instytut Śląski w Opolu, 1997.

[34] See: Piotr MADAJCZYK, *Niemcy polscy 1944-1989* [The Polish Germans 1944-1989], Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, pp. 9-11; Józef CIĄGWA, *Słowacka mniejszość narodowa w Polsce w latach 1920-1996* [Slovak national minority in Poland 1920-1996], in Zbigniew KURCZ

6. 'Hidden ethnicity' of minority ethnic groups – awareness
of the effects of ethnic exclusion

The political exclusion of ethnic minorities spawned a phenomenon of 'hidden ethnic pluralism', which operated in the people's consciousness without any support from public institutions. It seemed that the members of minority ethnic groups were allowed to maintain a sense of their otherness as long as it was not be noticeable to others. Contacts with their countries of origin ('foreign fatherlands'), their 'living' culture and language, did not exist or were severely limited. For minority ethnic groups the only opportunity for publicly maintaining their ethnic identity were education in their native languages (relatively limited), and local cultural activities, primarily based on folklore.

In ethnic minority environments, 'a syndrome of intimidation' and fear of public declarations of their ethnicity were in force. They were especially apparent among the perceived risk groups because of their historical experience, Ukrainians and Germans, but not only. Among minority ethnic communities the syndrome evolved into a strategy of 'pragmatic adaptation', operating in two versions - 'a besieged fortress' and 'concealment'.

The first option meant a tendency to close themselves off in their own milieu ('the ghetto') to defend and maintain their national values. As one of the ethnic minority leaders said: *The Ukrainians constitute a scattered community, which makes it difficult to create a compact group in a place of residence, and this is decisive of its ghetto character.* [Ukrainian minority representative 2].

Each and every opening to the 'outside world' could have, in fact, threatened extinction of distinctiveness. As one of the Ukrainians stated:

The ghetto was a simple choice, either our ghetto will exist, or we will disappear. The ghetto was an effective solution in the post-war half-century and proved correct. But it no longer proved correct in the context of an open world [Ukrainian minority representative 2].

The 'syndrome of intimidation' was also described by another interviewee from the Ukrainian community:

After all, until 1956, when organizations were non-existent, there were no individual Orthodox churches or basically, the Orthodox Church did not function, except for individual priests. It was very intimidating, which resulted in a young man going to high school with a command from home, 'that you should not admit who you are because they will expel, destroy you,' that 'you will not have any future, you will not graduate,' etc. This kind of behaviour was very strong until the seventies ... This was the most significant factor in assimilation. [Ukrainian minority representative 3].

(ed.), *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce* [National minorities in Poland], Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1997, pp. 196-199.

This scenario also occurred among other minority ethnic groups, such as Armenians. One of its leaders says: *In 1945 – 1980 there was a sense of fear of disclosing that this was an organized group, mainly due to the memory of persecution in the USSR* [Armenian minority representative 2]. Another representative added that: *It was to be kept silent that they had been in the USSR. They had a sense of fear, bad experiences with Soviet occupation, and especially fear caused by the memory of deportation* [Armenian minority representative 1].

The 'concealment' option meant hiding deeply their nationality ('its movement to the private sphere') and pragmatic adaptation to wider Polish society in this respect. One of the Germans said, somewhat surprisingly: We learned *a perfect camouflage over these several dozen years. My wife did not know with whom she lives, you know* [German minority representative 1]. The above-mentioned interviewee added that *the German minority has become a real ethnic minority only since the late eighties. Previously, starting in 1945, it was an underground, secret minority, same as the 'Solidarity' movement* [German minority representative 1].

The experiences of the post-war years produced in minority ethnic groups a defensive approach to social inclusion based on national patterns and 'primordiality' ethnic criteria (family origin, endogamy and denomination). Maintenance of ethnic identity was mainly through family and religion. As one of the Armenians said: *Identity was maintained in private, mainly by household education and religion* [Armenian minority representative 1]. Thus, ethnic minorities remained not only hidden from the wider society because of their ethnicity, but they became assigned and closed, and membership was inherited.

For a lot of members of minority ethnic groups, such as Ukrainians and Lemko, religious institutions were the ones that helped in ethnic survival. They were distinct from the wider Catholic population. As one of the Lemko leaders said: *at that moment a mainstay of survival was religion* [Lemko minority representatives 1]. A special role was played by the Greek Catholic church and the established community of 'compatriots': Nevertheless, *I think the most important place is the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church not as an organization, but as a religious community* [Ukrainian minority representative 1]. Its role was gaining significance in local communities, where it became the only public manifestation of ethnic affiliation:

> *Religion is the main grounds of identification for the Ukrainian community, particularly at the local level. In many communities there is very often no other forms of manifesting one's identity aside from religion, and in many communities activity started from religion and activities related to it, I don't know...., from the creation of a parish, construction of a chapel, this was how any social activity of Ukrainians began* [Ukrainian minority representative 2].

Contact with the community meant participation in the faith and in religious ceremonies, and it was the first contact with the culture and language of this group:

*The Orthodox Church constituted a shelter, although the status of the Greek Cath-
olic church was basically informal. It was a mainstay of one's own traditions, at-
tachment to the religious holidays, a distinct calendar and so on. It was a very re-
ligious identity, but also the awakening of a cultural one* [Ukrainian minority
representative 4].

The effects of public exclusion turned out to be socially significant. The
members of minority ethnic groups were functioning in two independent socio-
cultural cycles - the 'public-Polish' and 'private-ethnic minority'. They simulta-
neously acted as ordinary citizens and workers in Polish society, and in private
as well as in community life they followed their own 'ethnic' values and behav-
iour. They became full representatives of the ethnic minority group only at
home, church, a group of 'compatriots' etc., where they spoke, behaved and
celebrated 'their way'. This was the area closed to outsiders and independent of
the state. In contact with the wider world, the rule of behaving 'just like every-
one else' was in force. They referred to their own ethnicity in a manner that
would not cause a hostile reaction from the authorities or the majority.

7. Excluded from their own future – a sense of historical discrimination

For ethnic minority groups, the Polish state after 1945 was not simply the
People's Republic of Poland (PRL). They did not experience the 'Solidarity'
movement of the 1980s in the mass way that Poles did, and thus they did not
create full and alternative culture circulation (thought-ideas) in relation to the
authorities of the time. They did not give vent to the 'communist state', be-
cause for them it was still 'the Polish state.' Because of a lack of freedom to
express the interests of minority ethnic groups, tensions and ethnic animosi-
ties between minority ethnic communities and the wider population were also
kept secret. They mainly concerned the interpretation of the interwar period
and World War II, as well as the years immediately following thereafter.

First of all, representatives of the Ukrainian and Lemko, German, Jewish,
Slovak and Byelrussian communities draw attention to the above-mentioned
issue. The Ukrainians and Lemko expected the condemnation of 'Vistula Ac-
tion' from 1947: *It must be clearly named, because it had signs of ethnic cleansing*
[Ukrainian minority representative 4]. They emphasize that it was directed
against them as citizens of the Polish state. They demand both moral and
economic settlement (return of property).

Similarly, Germans were mostly annoyed by 'historical understatements'
on the history of Silesia associated with the presence of German culture and
the events of the last war: *What Stalinists did to our women and children, this is
who the great Red Army fought, as they entered Germany, they were fighting wom-
en and children and the elderly - this has not been mentioned ...* [German minor-
ity representative 1].

The effect the 'bad past' had was to weaken this group, producing fear of disclosing their ethnic identity. Hence, it resulted in the need to learn German, especially for the generation that did not have a chance to do so. According to the leader:

> *The first feature of distinctiveness is the language. The second one is the culture. Now, what is the hallmark of the German minority? The language has been lost. The way I refer to it – the language has been removed. Because that is what it was. If there is no language, it is hard to have a culture. Because culture is preferably practised through this language, is it not?* [representative of the German minority 1].

Similarly, in the relations between Lithuanians and Poles, the issue that produces the split is the assessment of the interwar period. For the Jewish community a 'bad memory' of the Second World War and the first post-war years still plays a significant role, including the attitude of the Polish Home Army and the Catholic Church towards them[35]. As one of the leaders states: *These issues are still waiting to be settled* [Jewish minority representative 1]. Similarly, Slovaks have a sense of historical discrimination because of *Polonization and deterioration of Slovakness after the war* [Slovak minority representative 1]. The problems of the historical past play a considerable role, and this applies to the interpretation of the events of World War II and the successive years. This unsettled past is also the case in relations between Poles and Byelorussians. It refers to the period immediately after the war and ethnic tensions [Byelorussian minority representative 1].

In summary, the component that connects almost all minority ethnic communities is their deep sense of discrimination and a lack of public recognition of their other history, distinct from the Polish interpretation of events of the interwar period and World War II. In the social dimension it takes the form of 'a history of grievances', 'a mutual account of grievances' and 'bad memory'. These matters could only be discussed openly after 1989[36].

8. From 'foreignness' to 'images' in the perception of minority ethnic communities

In post-war Poland, the issue of minority ethnic groups was non-existent in the awareness of Poles. They had no opportunities to experience the problems of coping with the otherness of these groups, as well as to develop

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[35] See: Jan T. GROSS, *Neighbours: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001; Jan T. GROSS, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz*, Random House, 2006.

[36] Lech M. NIJAKOWSKI, *Domeny symboliczne. Konflikty narodowe i etniczne w wymiarze symbolicznym* [The symbolic domains. National and ethnic conflicts in symbolic dimension], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, 2006.

strategies for co-existing with them. In the 1970s, society at large recognized members of minority ethnic communities rather as a reminder of the multi-national Polish history, or as 'folklore monuments' rather than citizens of a distinct nationality in a common state. Information on them no longer existed in the statistical yearbooks and in scientific literature.

Research on national minorities in the post-war period was hindered, and in the case of certain groups, even made impossible, mainly due to political reasons. These themes were one of the 'research taboos' in Polish social sciences. This was manifested, for example, in the difficulty to obtain funds for, delays in publishing, or censorship of papers on ethnic minorities. This obviously does not mean that valuable publications on selected minority ethnic groups such as Gypsy/Roma, Lithuanians, Lemko, Byelorussians and Tatars did not come out during this time. However, they were of interest because of their ethnographic clarity and folklore, rather than due to their identity and interaction with others.

The problems of the state policy towards ethnic minorities and guaranteed rights were not the subject of public debate. The attitude towards them had a notion of extraordinariness, not if historical inveteracy and traditional co-existence. Until today, the experienced ethnic homogeneity of Polish society makes the wider society respond to ethnic distinction with fear and aggression. As one of the interviewees said:

It is certainly true that Polish society is so incredibly mono-ethnic, mono-cultural and mono-religious that it is usually the case that they do not accept the existence of national minorities as a fact; for example, in the fact that one does not necessarily identify him/herself with the sign of a cross. This causes virtually constant amazement and then hostility [Jewish minority member 2].

The representatives of minorities stress that there is no awareness of the existence of minority ethnic groups in Poland, their specific status and needs. If they are considered at all, it is only in the context of other countries [Jewish minority member 1].

These problems were mainly highlighted by Ukrainians. It is related, in their opinion, to the predominance of a negative stereotype in Polish society, which is:

Hyper negative, including preaching doom and gloom. It is all well known – black in the roof of the mouth and with a knife in their teeth, right? Murderers ('rezuns') and other such things. This means we are bloodthirsty, in fact, we have killing in our blood, and avidly so. And if there is anything positive about us – we sing nicely. [Ukrainian representative 2], as well as a memory of the Polish-Ukrainian conflicts during World War II lingering up until now. This spawns fear of publicly proclaiming their nationality (*existence of a negative stereotype of Ukrainians – well, what I can say, it functions in Polish society, it has an impact on one's admittance into the Ukrainian minority in Poland* [Ukrainian representative 4].

The absence of minorities in public awareness produced momentous effects. This meant that not only were they forced out of social awareness, they became *publicly withdrawn* [Russian minority representative 1]. It also caused mythologisation of ethnic images of individual ethnic minority members in the social awareness of Poles. The mythologisation referred to the negative experiences of the last world war, and formulation of relations with them in a category of historical antagonisms difficult to solve.

Poles ceased to have contact with real members of ethnic minorities both in the public space and in real life. The place of actual meetings was taken by 'images' of ethnic minority representatives and simulations of real events that had come to pass. Despite their imaginary nature, they had and still have an influence on Polish thinking about the 'the others'.[37]

9. Recovering from ethnic exclusion – national minorities in the era of the 'Solidarity' movement (the 1980s)

In Poland, the recognition of national minorities as distinct ethnic groups began before 1989. It was primarily associated with the formation of the 'Solidarity' movement in 1980. Members of minority ethnic groups treated the 'Solidarity' movement with caution and suspicion, mainly because they did not believe in its success, as well as due to its strong display of national and Catholic values. As one of the leaders of the German minority says:

Liberation movements such as the 'Solidarity' movement resulted in hope for a change in the situation in Poland. In the early eighties (in 1980 and 1981), the German population in Poland fully supported this movement, only exceptionally, however, did they join it. All too often it was too national [German minority member 1].

This was indeed one of the reasons for their 'silent' support for the imposition of martial law. For Orthodox Byelorussians, martial law was even 'salvation': *The whole community believes that martial war was salvation* [Byelorussian representative 1].

The example of 'the Solidarity revolution' was also the signal for these communities, showing them the possibility for establishing their own independent organizations and public activities. After August 1980, they formulated and issued a few petitions to the authorities. They demanded, among other things, that the existing socio-cultural minority associations be given political representation, a number of seats for their representatives in the Sejm

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[37] Ireneusz JEZIORSKI, *Od obcości do symulakrum. Obraz Żyda w Polsce w XX wieku* [From strangness to symulacrum. The image of Jew In Poland In XX century], Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS, 2009, pp. 337-385.

and national councils, widespread access to mass media, a significant increase in funds for publications, etc. The official authorities of ethnic minority societies were also criticised.

The imposition of martial law did not stop this process, and during the entire decade of the eighties, representatives of ethnic minorities in Poland made many attempts to establish their own independent organizations, minority student associations and publishing houses. Registration applications were refused, and their activists often met with persecution. The German minority representatives were the most active. Until 1989, they submitted several applications for the registration of German organizations in various Polish cities, and two applications for permission to publish a newspaper for the German-speaking minority. All applications were refused and the leaders involved were urged to emigrate to Germany. This did not stop the mobilization progress of this ethnic group[38].

The social and political mobilization of the indigenous population of Silesia, highlighting its German origin, has become the biggest phenomenon of ethnicity in mid-eighties Poland: *The German minority movement is the emancipation movement of Silesians, fighting for their own identity and space* [Expert 2]. At the time, the first informal organizations of the German minority began to be established. Their aim was to stop the emigration of the native population to Germany.

The changes in the situation of ethnic minorities in Poland took place in the second half of the 1980s. They are associated with two facets of the issue: the changes taking place on the international arena, especially in the USSR; and the attempts to democratize the country's political system. Another important element of those attempts was the rebirth of Polish minority communities living in Poland's eastern neighbours - especially in Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine. The future policy towards ethnic minorities in Poland had to take into account a symmetry factor – the treatment of ethnic minorities in Poland could have a direct impact on the situation of Poles in other countries.

This is a time of positive changes towards associations and local groups, freedom of expression increased, leading to the development of pro-pluralist awareness in society. They affected the organization of minority ethnic groups, their political activity and attempts to reconstruct their identity. The revival of ethnic minorities in the second half of the eighties was symptomatic, and expressed through a considerable increase in religious practice of these religiously distinct communities (Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches). The increase in religious practices was also common among the Catholic Polish population. A meaningful role in the process was played by the millennial anniversary celebration of the Baptism of Rus in 1988. The worship services conducted in their native languages had often become the only public manifestation of their ethnic

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[38] Dariusz MATELSKI, *Niemcy w Polsce w XX wieku* [Germans in Poland in the XX century], Warszawa-Poznan: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1999, pp. 254-255.

identity. There were also attempts to conduct worship services in German (in Catholic churches). The first Holy Mass in 'the heart language' (i.e. German) took place in the basilica at Mount St. Anne (Opole Silesia), on a symbolic day of democratic changes in Poland, i.e. 4 June 1989 (the date of the first half-free parliamentary election in Poland after 1945).

The manifestation of attachment to religious values by these groups was of particular importance since they had no other 'equivalent' assets of *esprit de corps*, such as political power, education, etc. The consequence of this ethnic revival was an increase in their social activity. Minority ethnic communities have gradually become pressure groups, and their activities have begun to focus on implementing their recognition and their right to their own culture, education and establishment of social and political organizations.

Since the mid 1980s, the 'Solidarity' opposition began to pay more attention to the problems of ethnic minorities in Poland. The 'Solidarity' opposition revitalised contacts with representatives of minority ethnic groups. Ethnic minorities entered a period of democratic transition with a sense of discrimination, both political and cultural (language). They were revived from being *the sleeping community* [Armenian minority member 1]. They saw a reconstruction of their ethnic life in the framework of open public life in Poland, and of their external relationships with their 'foreign fatherlands'. The change of their public image and the removal of negative stereotypes were also meaningful. While under the old system they had developed a survival strategy, in the situation of a general democratization they had to make an effort to develop new ways of conducting activities.

9. Conclusions

Until 1989, the post-war history of Poland may be regarded as one of the examples proving Andreas Wimmer's thesis on the relationship between the processes of modernization and nation-state formation, and ethnic exclusion in modern societies. It may be treated as the 'shadow side' of communist modernization and the nationalising state[39].

To sum up, in the period 1945 - 1989 in Poland it is clear that ethnic exclusion applied first of all to members of minority ethnic communities. It was based on the collective and objective criteria of belonging to 'the other' rather than to the Polish group, and issues of individual and subjective self-reckoning were not taken into account in government policy. This was mainly due to World War II: on the one hand there were territorial and population changes,

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[39] Andreas WIMMER, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-5; see also Andreas WIMMER, *Ethnic Exclusion in Nationalizing States*, In: Gerad DELANTY, Krishan KUMAR (eds.), *Handbook of nations and nationalism*, London: Sage, 2006, pp. 334-336.

on the other, the dominant belief in the impossibility of co-existence of Poles with certain ethnic groups after the recent events of the war.

The attitude towards ethnic minorities was characterized by two things: their limited right to hold on to their identity (mostly through folklore), and their exclusion from the public sphere as a minority (i.e. due to their ethnicity), with the emphasis on assimilation as a means of social integration. The characteristics of social integration were the following: it was poorly institutionalized and of 'limited consent'. This resulted in the combination of two elements: the policy accepting distinctiveness (education and culture at a local level), and ethnic discrimination at a national level.