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## HISTORICAL POLICY AS A TOOL FOR CHANGING THE ETHNOCULTURAL SITUATION IN SILESIA

**Research aim.** The article's purpose is to examine the importance of historical policy in influencing the ethnocultural dynamics of the Silesian region. This article explores the role played by the management of historical processes in shaping and changing the ethnic and cultural landscape in this region.

**Methodology of the research.** The research methodology, based on historicism, objectivity, and systematicity principles, made it possible to consider the processes of instrumentalizing changes in the ethnocultural situation in Silesia and use a comprehensive approach that combines theoretical and empirical methods for a thorough analysis and conclusions.

**The scientific novelty.** The scientific novelty of the article lies in highlighting the previously poorly studied aspects of the impact of historical policy on ethnocultural processes in Silesia. The article includes an analysis of the current ethnocultural situation in Silesia, taking into account not only historical aspects but also current challenges and trends. This article is distinguished by a unique approach to studying historical politics and its role in ethnocultural processes, expanding scientific knowledge and introducing innovative approaches to studying this issue.

**Conclusions.** The study confirms that historical policy is an important tool for influencing ethnocultural processes in Silesia. The focus on the multiethnic character of Silesia indicates the need to study historical policies that take into account and support the region's diverse cultural heritage. The article contributes to the development of a scientific understanding of historical policy as a tool for changing the ethnocultural situation, especially in the context of regions with a complex history.

**Keywords.** Historical politics, Piast, Silesia, Polish People's Republic, "Returned Lands", ethnopolitical conflicts, ideology, memorialization, World War II.

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The "Returned Lands" are not "alien" to Poland – they preserve Polish culture and the memory of belonging to the Old Polish State of Piast and the Commonwealth. To understand what exactly the "Returned Lands" means, let's look at the current administrative division. If we move clockwise from the south, these are Western Silesia, Opole, Lower Silesia, almost all of Western

Pomerania, part of Pomerania, and most of the Warmia and Mazury Voivodeship territory. If we use the historical names, these are Upper and Lower Silesia, Lusatia and parts of the Lubuska region, Western Pomerania, and Masuria (East Prussia). The importance of this region at the time was demonstrated in 1138, when Bolesław Krywousty divided his property between his sons and Silesia went to the eldest of them. Władysław the Exile. His descendants ruled there for the next several centuries. In the thirteenth century, numerous settlers from Germany began to arrive in Silesia, new towns and mines appeared in the region, and agriculture, trade, and crafts developed. In the era of fragmentation, Silesian princes Henryk the Bearded, Henryk the Pious, and Henryk Probus (the Righteous) won Krakow's throne, symbolizing Poland's political unity. However, the power of the Kingdom of Bohemia was growing. Eventually, the Silesian princes of the Piast family recognized Czech suzerainty, and in 1335 Casimir the Great renounced the Kingdom of Poland's claims to Silesia. From then until the eighteenth century, the region shared the fate of the Kingdom of Bohemia, which in 1526 became part of the Austrian Habsburgs. The last of the Silesian Piasts, Prince Georg Wilhelm of Legnica, died in 1675 [2].

But the Polish People's Republic propaganda unequivocally called these territories "Returned Lands" [24]. The official explanation for the communist period was that in 1945 Poland returned to its historical lands, the legacy of the Piast, which the Germans had unjustifiably seized. Government propaganda constantly glorified the achievements in the West and masked the losses in the East. The borders of postwar Poland roughly coincided with the Ancient Polish state of Piast, which allowed them to talk about "returning to the roots" and "the homeland of the great Bolesław". Every effort was made to downplay the region's "German" character and draw parallels with the "Polish Middle Ages". Priority was given to the research and restoration of medieval monuments, while later objects (often of greater artistic value) were left to their own devices. The main source of historical consciousness in Poland at that time was historical fiction. This led to the mythologization of the historical past and the formation of ideas about the exclusivity of the Polish nation.

The foundations of this historical policy were laid in the interwar period. The newspapers of the time positively covered critical historical events and exalted the role of Polish figures. The national anthem of Poland, adopted in 1926, glorified the Polish people and their desire for freedom and self-sacrifice. As P. Bok noted, this anthem is "a vivid expression and perfectly characterizes the Polish historical narrative of the time" [54, p. 85].

In the 1920s, J. Piłsudski embarked on a course of glorifying the participants of the January 1863 Uprising, which for a long time occupied a prominent position in Poland's historical narrative. This historical event was central to scientific discussions and political discourse (including in Polish-Russian relations) [10, p. 122]. In the photographs of the 1920s, presented by J. Andrychowicz-Skrzeba, one can often see participants of the January Uprising with medals. Earlier, in 1919, they were promoted to the first officer rank and awarded lifetime financial payments from the state treasury. In 1922, a special uniform was created for the participants of the January Uprising [42, p. 113]. Their glorification (as well as the event itself) was caused by J. Piłsudski's political considerations. In the past, he had mainly pro-German views and saw the future of Poland in its close alliance with Germany, which was to counteract the imperial ambitions of the Russian Empire [10, p. 16]. That is why, after 1918, the Polish historical narrative became predominantly anti-Russian. Instead, "it had a positive attitude toward Germany, especially in the 20s of the twentieth century" [22, p. 56]. At the same time, hostile attitudes toward Germans persisted in Polish society. The "German as an enemy" was firmly rooted in the historical narrative of interwar Poland, but the country's political elite did not support it. However, not everyone shared J. Piłsudski's views [10, p. 17].

In interwar Poland, nationalist sentiments grew stronger primarily in those areas where Poles competed with national minorities. First of all, it was about the Jews, who mostly had strong positions in trade. It was in the 1920s and 1930s that radical nationalist student organizations appeared, seeking restrictions and, in some cases, a ban on Jewish education in Polish universities [42, p. 113]. The issue of the Jewish population of Poland became more acute in the late 1930s. J. Andrychowicz-Skrzeba notes that the result of harsh propaganda by the Polish government was "an extremely

negative attitude toward the Jewish minority” [42, p. 114]. The growth of Polish political radicalism in the 1920s and 1930s, shaped by propaganda and recourse to historical narratives that glorified Polish history and “whitewashed” its pages, led to considerable ethnopolitical conflicts in Silesia.

Germany’s attack on Poland in 1939 caused significant changes in Polish historical consciousness that proved to be long-lasting. According to a report by the Public Opinion Research Center based on a 2018 survey, World War II is still considered one of the most important events in Polish society [1]. In particular, 23% of respondents considered this event to be important. Even less important was attached to the Baptism of Poland in 966, although this fact clearly shows the close relationship between historical politics and Catholicism.

Among the memorial sites related to religion and the Second World War (including Polish-German relations), it is worth mentioning St. Anne’s Mountain. This is the most important Catholic shrine, to which devout Poles make a pilgrimage every year. At the same time, it is an important secular place of remembrance. In May 1921, bloody battles took place here during the Third Silesian Uprising, and in 1932 a memorial amphitheater was built (it lasted until 1944). Subsequently, the Soviet Monument to the Insurgent Rank was erected in its place [23, p. 184].

During the Polish People’s Republic era, several thousand demonstrations with the participation of top state officials were regularly held on St. Anne’s Mountain. Despite this, the place did not lose its main purpose as a pilgrimage site for believers. In 1983, John Paul II held a service here [23, p. 172]. The place itself, according to P. Przyba, “has been a field of dispute between Poles and Germans for 78 years and creates conflicts in perception” [23, p. 180]. In the 1920s, St. Anne’s Mountain became the center of the German narrative of Upper Silesia, an important place of German national memory associated with the Third Silesian Uprising [23, p. 180]. In 1941, it was supposed to be visited by A. Hitler, but the visit was canceled the day before [11, p. 192].

After the establishment of the pro-Soviet regime, St. Anne’s Mountain became an integral part of anti-German propaganda. In July 1945, a demonstration was held to honor Silesia’s return to Poland. W. Gomulka and Bishop B. Kominek took part in the celebrations. It can be noted that the place became the main ideological point in the process of integration of the “Returned Lands” by the Soviet authorities. Its religious purpose was not neglected either.

R. Traba presents an interesting periodization of historical policy in postwar Poland. The Polish historian notes that the first period is 1945–1949 and defines it as a period of “living memory” [25, p. 54]. During this period, the memory of German crimes and the consequences of the Second World War is still alive. In turn, the historical policy was aimed at fighting against everything German. In terms of territory, the main focus was on the “Returned Lands”. Thus, on October 21, 1945, the monument to Wilhelm I in Wroclaw was destroyed. “The fall of the Wilhelm monument is the fall of Hitlerism, which will never rise again”. The narrative about the role of the Red Army in the liberation of Poland is being actively developed, monuments to “unknown soldiers are being erected and cemeteries are being built for fighters for the liberation from Nazism” [25, p. 55–56].

The main strategy of historical policy in the Polish People’s Republic in the 1940s and 1950s was to spread the following postulates in the public consciousness:

- the struggle of the Home Guard
- Polish-Soviet military brotherhood;
- The Red Army is the main factor in the victory over the occupier;
- glorification of the defensive war in 1939;
- glorification of the pro-Soviet part of the Resistance Movement as a force that did not succumb to the occupier, and the formation of a negative attitude towards the anti-Soviet underground [26, p. 62].

In the postwar years, historical policy in Poland was shaped by pro-Soviet propaganda. Memorial sites were established both in the “Returned Lands” and throughout the entire territory of the Polish People’s Republic. In the Polish-German relations, there were initiatives aimed at cooperation in the cultural and economic spheres [11, p. 124].

L. Niejakowski characterizes the development of historical policy in the Polish People's Republic more vividly and comes to more moderate conclusions (especially regarding the impact of the events of World War II on it). "It should be noted that Polish society was in a certain dissonance: on the one hand, the loss of independence and powerful German propaganda, on the other hand, led to a desire to survive. That is why there were ambiguous events in the country's socio-political life", the author notes [21, p. 131]. In this regard, it is worth noting that the Germans saw the Catholic Church as the main threat. That is why German propaganda in the period before 1945 aimed to separate the church and reduce its role in shaping historical identity [21, p. 114].

Germany's policy against the Poles and Polish Jews (the latter accounted for 18% of Poland's population at the end of 1939) brought back the stereotype of the "enemy German" in political life, as J. Kiwerska emphasizes [15, p. 151]. This was skillfully used by Soviet propaganda. Under its influence, various taboos were introduced in the study of history in postwar Poland and, most importantly, a vision of history was spread that viewed the past through the prism of ideological struggle (including in the coverage of international relations). At the same time, the negative image of Russia in the historical consciousness of Poles formed before the Second World War remained, and it spread even more after 1945. According to L. Niejakowski, the negative experience of relations with the Russians was deeply rooted in the historical consciousness of the Poles and was also supported by the Polish church [21, p. 113]. To improve Poles' attitudes toward the USSR and to form a "correct" historical narrative, the ready-made anti-German patterns that existed in Soviet propaganda were needed. They were borrowed by the pro-Soviet forces in Poland, which tried to consolidate Polish society and raise their authority in this way [12, p. 162].

V. Borodziej notes that anti-German propaganda had two functions: instrumental and compensatory [22, p. 47]. The first one was to support the idea of communism throughout the Polish People's Republic period. Four days before the referendum held on June 25, 1946, the Voice of the People newsletter was published, emphasizing the need for an extremely hostile attitude toward the German population and the threat of territorial revisionism on the part of Germany: The Germans are encroaching on the "Returned Lands". The British authorities support them in this.

The historical policy pursued in postwar Poland emphasized the justice achieved. Political elites were convinced that in the millennial conflict between Poland and Germany, the former won a fair victory and gained considerable advantages [11, p. 109]. Among other things, the head of the Polish Peasant Party (PSP), Stanisław Mikołajczyk, was the exponent of this opinion. In 1946, he said in a speech: "We have always believed that the Germans were our eternal enemy, but we won" [14, p. 16].

The formation of a negative attitude toward Germany in Polish society drew negative criticism from the international community and even the head of the Vatican. The letter of Pope Pius XII on March 1, 1948, contained the following words: "[...] the expulsion of 12 million people as a form of response to the crimes of Nazism cannot be part of Polish policy" [6, p. 112]. The letter provoked strong criticism among the Polish scientific elite. The head of the Western Institute, Prof. Z. Wojciechowski, together with T. Lehr-Slavinski, prepared a letter to Polish Bishop A. Głęda, in which they noted that "the Pope's letter is a form of attack on the restored Polish state" [11, p. 40].

In fact, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, there was a situation where historical propaganda and historical policy in Poland were concentrated on Germany. Their core was the justification of the need to "expel" the Germans from their eastern territories. The next task was to preserve this "necessary vision" in order to ensure the immutability of Poland's new western border. To this end, the acquired territory was interpreted as a kind of compensation for all the damage caused. According to V. Borodziej, not only the results of the Second World War, but also the events of previous centuries were used to create a halo of justice around these events [8, p. 48].

The myth of the "Returned Lands" also legitimized the alliance between Poland and the Soviet Union [11, pp. 372–380]. Everything was created to ensure that the idea of the Polish state's indivisibility and its new borders' immutability depended on close ties at the Moscow-Warsaw level. Direct instructions from the USSR in this matter obviously could not succeed without the support of Polish political elites. According to S. Garstiecki, it was W. Gomułka who actively supported the

negative image of Germany in Polish society, as “he was convinced that the Polish-German antagonism remained unchanged” [33, p. 379].

The figure of W. Gomulka and his political views is a rather interesting example of the implementation of historical policy. It was he who launched the anti-German course of postwar Poland’s foreign policy when, in 1948, at the First Congress of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Party, he said: “German insatiability, the century-old “Drang nach Osten” is a threat to Poland. We must act proactively” [11, p. 379]. A. Wolff-Pawienska notes that the anti-German image introduced in the 1940s and 1950s contributed to changes in school curricula. “The impression of German hostility was reinforced and dominated in textbooks. Moreover, the difference between different historical periods of Germany was not taken into account” [28, p. 132].

The principles of Poland’s foreign and domestic policy at the time were also substantiated in scholarly studies on Polish-German relations [13]. The negative image of Germany began to intensify after the creation of two German states (GDR and FRG), which opposed each other. In particular, the Chairman of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers’ Party, B. Berut, in his speech in 1948 said: “The Polish people welcome the establishment of the German Democratic Republic, which has forever destroyed Germany’s plans for marching eastward and its territorial expansion. There will be no more territorial revisionism, the border will finally be established on the Oder and the Nysa Lusatian”. In the Polish press, the interpretation of the problem of the western border changed depending on the political situation. K. Hinrichsen and other authors, studying the media coverage of this issue, concluded that the Polish-German border, which directly concerned only the GDR, was an element of the integration of Polish society [12, p. 470].

In the Polish society of the time, historical symbols that glorified the victories of the Poles over the Germans were actively spread. R. Traba noted that the symbol of the Battle of Grunwald was used too often in the Polish People’s Republic. In particular, in the early years of the Polish People’s Republic, it was mandatory for middle managers, students, and schoolchildren to visit the National Museum in Warsaw. A special place during these excursions (and they were especially active in 1953–1954) belonged to Jan Matejka’s painting “The Battle of Grunwald”. Much attention was paid to the memorialization of this event of the Middle Ages. “The committee responsible for celebrating the anniversary of Grunwald passed a resolution to erect a monument in the city park. Work on the arrangement of this stone has already begun. It will be installed on the main flowerbed in the new part of the park, near the pond, overlooking the Zagvidiany mountains and forests”. The height of the rock will be about 6 meters, and a white eagle made of cement will stand on top of it [25, p. 14–15].

In his research on Poland’s historical policy in the Polish People’s Republic era, L. Niejakowski distinguishes two stages: 1945–1956 and 1956–1989. The Polish scholar defines the first of them as totalitarian or Stalinist, which was based on anti-German historical policy. At the same time, emphasis was placed on strengthening the nationalist vision of history, forming the primacy of the Poles’ sacrifice during World War II [20, p. 55]. Another important feature was the silence about the crimes of the Soviet Army. This was especially true of the Katyn and “Forgotten Soldiers” issues. In our opinion, L. Niyakovsky’s periodization is quite accurate. It reflects the processes that took place in the historical policy of the Polish People’s Republic. After all, 1956 was not only the end of the Stalinist style of governance, but also the demonstrations that led to the fall of Stalinism in Poland [21, p. 66].

The first monuments in postwar Poland were erected at war crimes sites and cemeteries where there were collective graves of the dead or murdered (both Jews and Poles). The purpose of honoring such memorial sites was to “awaken the ties between the homeland and the Returned Lands” [25, p. 56], and to form an emotional bond between them.

Monuments depicting the course of the Polish struggle in World War II became the carrier of this idea of integration of new lands. In fact, they were reduced to a demonstration of sacrifice (emphasized by W. Wrzeszynski when analyzing the peculiarities of memory in bilateral relations) [29, p. 57] or “blood sacrifice” (R. Traba’s definition) in the fight against the German occupiers [25, p. 56]. This idea was contained in the monument in Szczecin, which was erected on the site of the monument to Wilhelm I (the cornerstone was laid in April 1946). At the top of the monument was a

white eagle with the inscription “Watching over Odra”. An important monument that retains its significance to this day and is an emotional embodiment of the struggle against the Third Reich is the Monument to the Heroes of the Ghetto in Warsaw (unveiled in April 1948) [25, p. 58]. It is interesting that the memorialization of this event was better developed than in the case of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. This may have been the reason for the mistake in the speech of the German president in 1994, when, during the solemn commemoration of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, he mentioned the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Poland’s historical policy in the first postwar years also focused on giving an important role to the Red Army in the process of liberating Poland. The history of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 was seen as the result of the interaction between the Polish underground and Soviet troops. At the same time, the issue of Polish losses in the East, as K. Rukhniewicz notes, was not raised at all in the historical policy of Poland in the 1940s and 1950s [24, p. 28].

After the end of World War II, Polish historical policy was completely directed against Germany. This was obviously due not only to pressure from Moscow but also to the mood of the Polish political elite. This was the key to the powerful success of the anti-German narrative in Polish society, which was instilled primarily through propaganda. The success of the processes is clearly demonstrated by R. Kaczmarek, who notes that 46% of respondents (2014 survey) indicate a fear of “poor Poland being redeemed by rich Germany” [27, p. 94]. In the 1940s and 1950s, new monuments were erected to glorify Soviet figures and those Poles who participated in World War II on the side of the Red Army [24, p. 24].

At the same time, in the 1940s and 1950s, there was a “monopoly of memory” associated with the history of World War II. R. Traba identifies two trends in this process in Polish society:

- legalization as part of the ideology or “victory of the People’s Fatherland” and sacrifice only at the hands of the Nazi occupiers;
- legalization as part of the nationalization of memory, i. e. the sacrifice of the Polish people alone in the fight against Germany [26, p. 36].

Most likely, the legitimization of the memory of World War II is also related to the deepening ideological struggle between the Soviet Union and the West and Prime Minister Konrad Adenauer's unwillingness to move away from the Holstein Doctrine. All this led the Soviet Union to seek to strengthen its western borders in Central and Eastern Europe by spreading historical narratives about the martyrdom of the Polish population in the fight against German Nazism [3, p. 129].

This only increased the anxiety of the Polish elite. Fear of German revanchism is part of the Polish historical narrative. R. Traba quotes Janusz Wiechorek, director of the Committee for the Protection of the Memory of Struggle and Martyrdom: “During the Second World War, Poland suffered the greatest losses among civilians compared to other participants in the world war. More than 6 million victims – men, women, and children – tortured by the Nazis, killed in gas chambers and burned in the crematoria of Auschwitz, Brezhinka, Majdanek, Treblinka, Sobibor, Bełżec, Helmno, and other death camps, shot in places of mass extermination on the streets of cities and villages - this is the price that the people paid for the preservation of the Fatherland and Freedom, this is an ugly register of brutal crimes” [26, p. 60].

This problem is observed in the process of creating a museum on the territory of the Auschwitz concentration camp (Polish: Oświęcim, German: Auschwitz). In 1999, on the recommendation of the Polish Institute of National Policy, it was given its original (German) name, Auschwitz-Birkenau II. From the very beginning of the museum’s functioning (1947), the narrative of the presentation of events was based on the fate of Poles. “It was not about selecting information, but about selecting the presentation of information”, writes B. Linek [17, p. 298].

Sacrifice and the greatest losses became the basis of Poland’s historical policy in the 50s and 60s and fully reflected the picture that took place in Polish society at that time. The institutional body that ensured the historical policy in Poland at that time was the aforementioned Council, which had full control over the formation of historical policy [26, p. 61]. This body had functions similar to modern institutions of national memory. However, the definition of the main idea of historical policy at that time was the prerogative of the communist authorities, and most scientific research on history

was conducted within the framework of the ideological struggle. Scientific institutions had to comply with this principle [26, p. 62].

A wide network of committees was organized to protect and research memorial sites. This network operated within the framework of the action “Perpetuation of the places of struggle against the Nazi occupier” organized in 1956, which was held under the slogan “Let not a single drop of blood be forgotten” (Polish: “Niech ani jedna kropla krwi nie zostanie zapomniana”) [26, p. 63].

Contemporary Polish historians such as M. Bozhevyich, L. Musiv, P. Pshyba, and others assert that Poland currently adopts a different policy towards minorities. The relationships between the Polish government and representatives of numerous national minorities are often influenced by various factors, sometimes coincidental. The consequences of World War II, the history of past relationships, national ambitions of ethnic minorities, social factors, and so on are elements that continue to shape historical policy.

### **Конфлікт інтересів**

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## **ІСТОРИЧНА ПОЛІТИКА ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ ЗМІНИ ЕТНОКУЛЬТУРНОЇ СИТУАЦІЇ В СІЛЕЗІЇ**

**Мета дослідження.** Проаналізувати вплив історичної політики на етнокультурну ситуацію в регіоні Сілезія. Проаналізовано різноманітні аспекти політичних рішень, які впливають на формування та трансформацію етнічних та культурних ідентичностей в цьому регіоні протягом різних історичних періодів. Спеціальна увага приділяється ролі державних інституцій, законодавства та історичний нарратив у створенні або зміні етнічних меж та культурних практик.

**Методологія дослідження.** Методологія заснована на принципах історизму, об'єктивності та системності, дозволила розглянути процеси інструменталізації змін етнокультурної ситуації в Сілезії та застосувати комплексний підхід, який поєднує теоретичні та емпіричні методи для ґрунтовного аналізу та висновків.

Наукова новизна статті полягає у висвітленні раніше малодосліджених аспектів впливу історичної політики на етнокультурні процеси в Сілезії. Стаття містить аналіз сучасної



етнокультурної ситуації в Сілезії, враховуючи не лише історичні аспекти, а й сучасні виклики та тенденції. Ця стаття вирізняється унікальним підходом до вивчення історичної політики та її ролі в етнокультурних процесах, розширенням наукових знань та запровадженням інноваційних підходів до вивчення цієї проблематики.

**Наукова новизна.** Новизна випливає із завдання комплексного визначення ролі історичної політики як інструменту зміни етнокультурної ситуації в Сілезії. Сілезія є регіоном з багатоетнічною та багатокультурною спадщиною. Зміни етнокультурної ситуації в цьому контексті мають широкий вплив на співіснування різних етнічних груп. Сілезія, розташована на перехресті культурних та історичних шляхів, відіграє важливу роль у міжнародному контексті, а вивчення етнокультурних змін має велике міжнародне значення. У статті наголошується на важливості історичної політики як інструменту впливу на етнокультурну ситуацію, що робить актуальним її дослідження в контексті сучасних викликів і можливостей розвитку регіону.

**Висновки.** Дослідження підтверджує, що історична політика є важливим інструментом впливу на етнокультурні процеси в Сілезії. Зосередження уваги на багатоетнічному характері Сілезії вказує на необхідність вивчення історичної політики, яка враховує та підтримує різноманітну культурну спадщину регіону. Стаття сприяє розвитку наукового розуміння історичної політики як інструменту зміни етнокультурної ситуації, особливо в контексті регіонів зі складною історією.

**Ключові слова.** Історична політика, П'ясти, Сілезія, Польська Народна Республіка, «Повернені землі», етнополітичні конфлікти, ідеологія, меморизація, Друга світова війна.

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