

Relations between the Local Administration of the Polish Eastern Territories and Non-Catholic Religious Associations in the Second Republic

by
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The Polish local authorities' activities into the religious sphere were plagued by organisational, legal and financial difficulties. These difficulties were the objective reason (i.e. apart from the policy implemented) why the Republic of Poland was not able to satisfy the urgent needs of religious associations. Most importantly it was neither able to determine a precise legal framework for the relationship between them and the state nor to ensure that the supervision system for religious affairs functioned properly. The main objective of this article is to shed some light on these problems as a factor of at least equal importance as government policy, which influenced the actual actions taken by the local Polish administration. The author attempts to strike a proper balance between these two elements. The political programme of the Polish authorities in the interwar period in both the religious and the national sphere is rather well-known and many studies have considered it in detail. Yet insufficient attention has been paid to the state's structural difficulties, which are seen as the underlying reason for the behaviour of government officials in the eastern territories.¹

1 Administrative and Legislative Preconditions

According to a 1922 report by the administrative government of Central Lithuania²,

¹ The article makes use of the terms "eastern territories" and "eastern voivodeships", which were both in use during the interwar period, to relate to the lands which was a part of the Russian Empire during the Partitions of Poland. The specific and individual character of the said territories was determined by historical and legal factors. From 1919 to 1920 the lands in question were under the authority of Civilian Administration of the Eastern Territories (Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich), and after the establishment of voivodeships the term was used to refer to the Vilnius Voivodeship (Województwo Wileńskie), Navahrudak Voivodeship (Województwo Nowogródzkie) and Polesia Voivodeship (Województwo Poleskie) – the so-called "North-Eastern Voivodeships" – and the Volhynia Voivodeship (Województwo Wołyńskie).

² Central Lithuania was an internationally not recognised state, mainly dependent on Poland. It was proclaimed in October 1920 as a result of the mutiny of the Polish general Lucjan Żeligowski. After a bid of the Central Lithuanian parliament, the state was incorporated into Polish Republic in April 1922, where its territory formed the Wilna Voivodeship.

“[a]ny definite and clearly defined stance on those complex and often highly sensitive issues, in other words the establishment of a uniform and consistent denominational policy, met grave difficulties, including but not limited to: obscure and irresolute behaviour, [...] the lack of clear cut guidelines and political platforms for the Polish government’s policies on a number of matters, the need of a close co-ordination of activities with the Polish central government and fundamental laws on Church and denominational matters [...]. The absence of any data or statistical information was also a serious obstacle.”³

Despite the specific political situation in the Vilnius area during that period, which was only a few months later finally integrated into the Polish state; and though that situation gradually improved in the years to come, it describes some essential problems local administrations had to face throughout Poland in the first years of its statehood. In the absence of a modern Polish state tradition, the establishment of administrative structures and the creation of the legal framework in which they were to function had to be conducted from scratch. There was a shortage of qualified staff in the civil service, and a lack of funds in the state treasury, which was reflected in low quality of governance. Meanwhile, the number of tasks with which the state authorities had to face was enormous. As a consequence, many of these had to be postponed, including the regulation of religious affairs. Thus the legal status of only some religious communities was regulated. As a rule these were temporary in nature, imperfect and limited to certain issues, as in the case of the Temporary Regulations on the Relationship of the Government to the Orthodox Church in Poland of 30 January 1922⁴ and the laws defining the functioning principles of Jewish religious communities.⁵ As a result, relations between the

³ Lietuvos Centrinis Valstybes Archyvas (LCVA) [Lithuanian State Central Archive], f[ondas] 51, ap[yrasas] 15, b[ylos] 24, p. 140v.

⁴ Tymczasowe przepisy o stosunku rządu do Kościoła prawosławnego w Polsce [Temporary Legal Provisions on the Relationship between the Government and the Orthodox Church in Poland], in: *Monitor Polski* (1922), 38, item 20.

⁵ See e.g.: Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia 28 października 1925 r. w sprawie utworzenia gmin wyznaniowych żydowskich na obszarze województw: wołyńskiego, poleskiego, nowogródzkiego, powiatów: grodzieńskiego, wołkowyskiego i gmin: białowieskiej, masiewskiej i suchopolskiej powiatu bielskiego województwa białostockiego oraz okręgu administracyjnego wileńskiego [Decree of the Council of Ministers of 28 October 1925 creating Jewish religious communities in the voivodeships of Volhynia, Polesia, Navahrudak and counties of Grodno, Wawkavysk as well as gminas of Białowieża, Masiewo and Suchopol of the county of Bielsk Podlaski in the voivodeship of Białystok and the Vilnius administrative district], in: *Dziennik Ustaw RP (DzURP)* (1925), 114, item 807; Rozporządzenie Ministra Wyznań Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego z dnia 21 czerwca 1927 r. o utworzeniu okręgów gmin wyznaniowych żydowskich na obszarach: powiatów białostockiego, bielskiego, grodzieńskiego, sokólskiego i wołkowyskiego województwa białostockiego oraz na obszarach województw: nowogródzkiego, poleskiego, wileńskiego i wołyńskiego [Decree of the Minister of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment of 21 June 1927 creating districts for Jewish religious communities in the counties of Białystok, Bielsk Podlaski,

state and various religious organisations were not rigidly defined. The provisions of the March Constitution of 1921 in particular guaranteed a broad spectrum of rights to religious organizations but these had not been fully developed by the applicable legislation. The legal imperfections, particularly the gaps and inconsistencies in existing regulations, impeded the formation of the appropriate relationship between local government and religious organizations.⁶ It was only on the eve of World War II that several new laws were passed to regulate religious activity at the appropriate legislative level.

The administration was also not properly organised to deal with matters concerning coherent religious communities, which were addressed in practice in two ways. At the central level, religious affairs were the province of the Ministry of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment (Ministerstwo Wyznań Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego), while ethnic affairs were the domain of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych), despite being directly related to religious affairs (the underlying assumptions of this policy were typically derived from the national policy).⁷ This division was reflected in the provinces. Admittedly, both religious and ethnic affairs consistently fell within the competence of voivodes in the voivodeships and starosts, subordinated to voivodes, in the counties (powiaty). Basically in charge for the provincial religious policy was the head of the Confessional Department (kierownik Oddziału Wyznaniowego) or the Confessional Affairs Officer (referent spraw wyznaniowych) in the voivode's office. He conducted the activities in that field and also represented the voivode in minor matters related to current tasks. However, even at this level there was a lack of co-ordination between religious and ethnic affairs. Tasks connected with national minorities were handled by the head of the Department of Public Safety, a body in the voivode's office organizationally separate from the religious unit. This division was eliminated only in the mid 1930s.⁸

Grodno, Sokółka and Wawkavysk of the voivodeship of Białystok and the voivodeships of Navahrudak, Polesia, Vilnius and Volhynia], in: *DzURP* (1927), 64, item 566.

⁶ In this situation, the concordat between the Holy See and the Second Polish Republic, signed in 1925, was the only proper legal act on the subject.

⁷ PAWEŁ A. LESZCZYŃSKI: *Centralna administracja wyznaniowa II RP. Ministerstwo Wyznań Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego* [Central Administration for Religious Affairs, Second Polish Republic. The Ministry of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment], Warszawa 2006, pp. 155-156; DOROTA ZAMOJSKA: *Wstęp* [Introduction], in: BRONISŁAW ŻONGOLŁOWICZ: *Dzienniki*, Warszawa 2004, pp. XXII-XXIII; *ibidem*, pp. 157, 170, 598, 690.

⁸ MICHAŁ GAŁĘDEK: *Organizacja i zadania administracji w sprawach wyznaniowych na Ziemi Wileńskiej w latach 1919-1939* [Organisation and Responsibilities of the Administration for Religious Affairs in the Vilnius area from 1919 to 1939], in: MAREK KIETLIŃSKI, KRZYSZTOF SYCHOWICZ et al. (eds.): *Kościół a państwo na pograniczu polsko-litewsko-białoruskim. Źródła i stan badań*, Białystok 2005, pp. 327-335; WOJCIECH ŚLESZYŃSKI: *Bezpieczeństwo wewnętrzne w polityce państwa polskiego na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej* [Internal Security in Polish State

Numerous organisational and legal issues arising mostly in the first half of the 1920s caused chaos and confusion in the local administration, but at the same time left broad discretionary power to creative individuals, as clear and thus potentially restrictive regulations were missing. The situation gradually normalised however, but this weakened neither local government nor the voivodes in charge. Following the May Coup d'Etat in 1926 the legal position of the voivodes was undoubtedly strengthened. They became the government representatives responsible for establishing the policy and supervising its consistent implementation throughout the region, in both the unified administration subordinate to the voivodes and the non-unified administration of independent – e.g. financial or school – bodies reporting directly to ministries. This was achieved through the presidential Decree of 19 January 1928 on the Organisation and Functioning of General Administration⁹ which established a new, broader and more comprehensive scope of local administrative competence.¹⁰ Yet voivodes were guaranteed a strong position by the officially declared policy of Józef Piłsudski's political camp.¹¹ Central government deemed that voivodes should have autonomy in conducting their activities in order to better adapt to local conditions. One of the main authors of these organisational principles was Henryk Józewski (1892-1981), who soon took over the voivode's office in Volhynia.¹² He spent many years using the independence of the territory under his authority to implement his own pro-

Policy in the North-Eastern Regions of the Second Polish Republic], Warszawa 2007, pp. 83-88.

⁹ Rozporządzenie Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej z dnia 19 stycznia 1928 r. o organizacji i zakresie działania władz administracji ogólnej [Decree of the President of Poland of 19 January 1928 on the Organisation and Functioning of General Administration], in: DzURP (1928), 11, item 86.

¹⁰ MICHAŁ GAŁĘDEK: Rozporządzenie Prezydenta RP z 19 stycznia 1928 r. o organizacji i zakresie działania władz administracji ogólnej – przełom w budowie ustroju administracyjnego państwa polskiego doby międzywojennej [Decree of the President of Poland of 19 January 1928 on the Organisation and Functioning of General Administration – a Breakthrough in the Development of the Administrative System of the Polish State in the Interwar Period], in: Zeszyty Prawnicze 11 (2011), 3, pp. 95-123.

¹¹ Piłsudski's political camp was the group of supporters of Józef Piłsudski, the dominant political figure in the interwar Second Polish Republic. Most of them had been officers in the Polish Legions and Polish Military Organization (Polska Organizacja Wojskowa, POW), and in the Polish Army (particularly in the years 1919/20, during the Polish-Soviet War).

¹² JAN KĘSIK: Zaufany Komendanta. Biografia polityczna Jana Henryka Józewskiego [The Commander's Trusted Man. Political Biography of Jan Henryk Józewski], Wrocław 1995, pp. 50-59; ANDRZEJ CHOJNOWSKI: Koncepcje polityki narodowościowej rządów polskich w latach 1921-1939 [Concepts of the Ethnic Policies of Polish Governments from 1921 to 1939], Wrocław 1979, p. 92. See also the article of CORNELIA SCHENKE in this volume.

gramme for state assimilation of the Ukrainian population.¹³ Józewski was fully aware of the strong position of voivodes, which he characterized, though – with some exaggeration, in that way:

“The competences and scope of matters within the responsibility of the voivode were broader than those of the Russian governor-general in tsarist times. The voivode’s office gave him the opportunity to take initiatives and activities in various directions and on various issues to a greater extent than other officials. Even a minister was more constrained.”¹⁴

The relations between the state and religious communities were shaped by the attitudes of local officials towards the representatives of religious and ethnic minorities. These attitudes reflected to some extent the deliberate strategy employed by the state. In reality, however, there were basically no coherent central government programmes, especially in the 1920s. Before the May Coup d’Etat in 1926 constantly changing coalition governments intensified the effects of the artificial separation of the ethnic and religious affairs at both the ministerial and provincial level. This made it difficult to create detailed and consistent guidelines and basically impossible to implement them long-term. After 1926 however, the stable government formed by Piłsudski’s camp did not develop a comprehensive ethnic and religious programme for a long period of time.¹⁵

As especially local authorities were often confused, lacking coherent guidelines as well as facing organisational and legal problems, this resulted in indecision and precariousness. Although as far as religion was concerned until 1935 some Ministers of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment and heads of the Department of Religions reporting to them issued certain guidelines on denominational affairs, such as some of the Polonisation and confrontation programme components mentioned below, relating to the government’s attitude toward the Orthodox Church in the years 1923/24 discussed below¹⁶, or those voiced in the years 1926-1929 which contained foundations

¹³ MICHAŁ GAŁĘDEK, PRZEMYSŁAW DĄBROWSKI: “Program wołyński” w świetle protokołu ze zjazdu wojewodów z Kresów Wschodnich z 2-3 grudnia 1929 r. [“The Volhynia Program” in the Light of the Minutes of the Conference of Voivodes from the Eastern Borderlands of 2-3 December 1929], in: *Przegląd Humanistyczny* (2010), 3, pp. 217-218.

¹⁴ HENRYK JÓZEWSKI: *Zamiast pamiętnika* [Instead of a Diary], in: *Zeszyty Historyczne* (1982), 60, pp. 65-157, here p. 137.

¹⁵ MIROSLAWA PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK: *Między tradycją a rzeczywistością. Państwo wobec prawosławia 1918-1939* [Between Tradition and Reality. The State vs. the Orthodox Church 1918-1939], Warszawa 1989, pp. 447-448; ELŻBIETA ALABRUDZIŃSKA: *Kościoły ewangelickie na Kresach Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej* [Evangelical Churches in the Eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic], Toruń 1999, p. 224; ZAMOJSKA (as in footnote 7), pp. XXII-XXIII.

¹⁶ Prior to the May Coup d’Etat there were no conditions to implement a consistent denominational policy because of the administration’s lack of preparedness (no institutions, personnel or finances etc.) and ongoing changes in government, particularly in the posi-

of the state assimilation programme.¹⁷ These did not evolve into any long-term agenda consistently implemented by the local administration. Although certain exceptions occurred here too, as illustrated by the actions of the Voivode of Volhynia, Henryk Józewski and the Voivode of Polesia, Jan Krahelski.

In general the frequently changing or simply too broad and inconsistent expectations of superiors usually resulted in a passive attitude among local functionaries. This was furthered by the number of various routine administrative tasks, such as the collection of statistical data, development of rules of conduct, implementation of new regulations and so on. The local administration, particularly in the 1920s, encountered enormous organisational difficulties. Inter alia this is reflected in a number of administrative inspection reports auditing the performance of general local administration agencies. Effects of this administrative inability included insufficient supervision of denominational affairs or even ignorance of the religious situation in a given county and of the legal obligations and courses of action applicable to it.¹⁸ Any measures taken lacked co-ordination with other parts of the administration and were only provisional responses to ongoing issues. As a result activities were conducted neither consistently nor efficiently. For the most part the local official – either a starost or the official for religious affairs in a voivodeship – did not have sufficient data to understand the complex issues associated with the functioning of religious associations.¹⁹ Therefore the responsible officers often preferred not to take any action, when its consequences appeared to be unpredictable.²⁰

In his report on the Orthodox Church submitted in late 1923, the central government Delegate for Vilnius, Walery Roman, to whom the Vilnius ad-

tion of the Minister of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment. Due to constantly shifting coalition governments this ministry was given to politicians from different parties. The Ministry went back on the track of Polonisation whenever a member of the National Democratic Movement held the office (Stanisław Głąbiński 1923, Stanisław Grabski 1925/26), but Polonisation efforts could be effectively hindered whenever this policy did not meet with the sufficient support of the entire Council of Ministers, Prime Minister and the Minister of Internal Affairs. See: LESZCZYŃSKI (as in footnote 7), pp. 232-237. At the same time the local administration (voivodes and starosts) also supported different party lines and as such harboured different ideas on nationalist and denominational policy. Ibidem, p. 288.

¹⁷ The author agrees with the view of Mirosława Papierzyńska-Turek, amply documented in her book, that despite declarations to the contrary and the preparation of certain preliminary documents in the first years after the May Coup d'Etat "the government did not have any specific agenda concerning the Orthodox Church". See: PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), pp. 165, 239-240.

¹⁸ Look e.g. reports of audits conducted in starost offices in the voivodeship of Vilnius, in LCVA, f. 51, ap. 1, b. 64, 69, 163, 244, 245, 297; f. 51, ap. 15, b. 71, 144, 171, 320, 321; f. 51, ap. 2a, b. 11-20, 69.

¹⁹ GAŁĘDEK, Organizacja (as in footnote 8), pp. 335-343.

²⁰ CHOJNOWSKI (as in footnote 12), pp. 27-29.

ministration reported, raised a number of issues which hindered or even prevented the local administration from exercising its duties efficiently, particularly in the initial stages. Firstly, the Government Delegation did not possess an updated list of clergymen in charge of the respective parishes. Secondly, due to the lack of funds, it was impossible to keep these files for clergy and parishes and religious communities. As a result the state was unable to supervise the personnel and property of the Orthodox Church effectively. Furthermore, the Government Delegate believed that “political propaganda”, which in his opinion the situation required, was fuelled by the *de facto* illegal “requisitioning” of Church property (according to administrative decrees, since there was no statute) and lack of necessary legal clarity which enabled the “diminishing of Church landholding”. Yet the local administration could not reduce the number of parishes because a decision on this matter had to be taken by the Ministry of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment. All this frustrated the activities of local government agencies, while the Government Delegate considered that the situation called for an immediate response. He based this on a general conviction that the Orthodox clergy had a negative attitude to the Polish State, was susceptible to Belarusian or Russian influences and exhibited low moral standards. In his opinion “truly loyal” priests were rare, unlike the “ostensibly loyal” ones. On the other hand many parishes remained unmanned due to ruined churches, lack of believers or clergy. Yet Roman considered that removing “disloyal clergy” would be difficult. He did not always consider the local authorities’ judgement “correct”. Furthermore, the officials reporting to him were not able to exercise direct control over the entire spectrum of the clergy’s activities, whose “adverse effects were only visible later on”, for example when children were sent to school, at elections etc. Lastly, there was no one to replace the “disloyal clergy”. In this context the Government Delegate thought that:

“in order to start winning the Orthodox clergy over we need to quickly and definitively settle all matters concerning them, such as setting the number of parishes, determining the size of land allotment and salary amounts and finishing the requisitioning of former churches. It would be better to implement some decrees to that effect, even if they were to harm the Orthodox Church, but we should rather do it as soon as possible, immediately, than tackle different issues gradually, issues that from the Catholic or Polish standpoint might seem crucial, but which still antagonise the other party and prevent it from securing a certain permanent *status quo* for its clergy.”²¹

²¹ Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN) [Archives of Modern Records], Warsaw, Ministerstwo Wyznań Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego (MWRiOP) [Ministry of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment], No 308, pp. 3-8; No 987, p. 319-324. See more: GAŁĘDEK, Organizacja (as in footnote 8), p. 338. Compare the report of the Voivode of Polesia, Stanisław Downarowicz, of 28 February 1923, in: WOJCIECH ŚLESZYŃSKI (ed.): Polesie w polityce rządów II Rzeczypospolitej [Polesia in the Policies of the Governments of the Second Polish Republic], Kraków 2009, pp. 30-32.

The local administration's passive approach was partly due to the tendency to pool competences, manifest at least until the 1930s.²² Voivodeship offices often complained about this. The Voivode of Łódź expressed this clearly in his letter of 1925. However, his opinion was relevant to the entire Polish territory – it was partially reflected in reports of other voivodes, including those of eastern voivodeships. He concluded:

“So far [...] the starosts and particularly the voivodes [...] act as mere intermediaries between religious associations and the Ministry [of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment], which is in fact virtually the only institution directly supervising these associations. This is in violation of regulations and harmful as: 1) it does not allow for direct interaction between the local authorities and religious associations concerned, so that those authorities, despite profound insight into the local environment, have no say in how matters are handled and how their substance is considered; 2) does not permit the swift resolution of any problem, which in many cases would be most desirable; 3) delays the conclusive resolution of problems due to the need to engage in a lengthy correspondence. Matters are complicated further if we consider that religious affairs are still governed by laws and regulations passed by the Russian authorities, which determine the order of instances in which the voivode enjoys the most extensive competences.”²³

On the other hand, the local official, almost exclusively a Pole, was allowed considerable administrative discretion. In the absence of coherent directives he could create, in a way, his own policy aims, if he did not want to avoid taking any action at all. Examples of a more active role of local officials – in the absence of coherent directives – typically reflected the prevailing attitudes in Polish society, infused by a deep-rooted conviction that “in Poland only Poles are hosts and full citizens and only they have a say about what goes on in their country”.²⁴ In effect, nationalist attitudes, evidenced by national megalomania and a drive towards Polonisation of ethnic minorities, dominated in local administrative circles.²⁵ Civil servants working in north-eastern Poland exhibited different attitudes and methods of conduct largely according to their place of origin. Native-born officials from the eastern provinces were usually burdened with the specific mentality of the Eastern Borderlands. They were convinced that non-Poles are to some degree second-class citizens and had a sense of superiority, which reflected in the belief that Poles in the region are guides for an unenlightened populace.²⁶ Yet, the indi-

²² See also: GALĘDEK, Rozporządzenie (as in footnote 10), pp. 105-106.

²³ AAN, MWRiOP, No 304, p. 197.

²⁴ PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), p. 272.

²⁵ CHOJNOWSKI (as in footnote 12), pp. 100-101; SERHY YEKELCHUK: *Ukraina. Narodziny nowoczesnego narodu* [Ukraine. The Birth of a Modern Nation], Kraków 2009, p. 176.

²⁶ WŁODZIMIERZ MĘDRZECKI: *Inteligencja polska na Wołyniu w okresie międzywojennym* [The Polish Intelligentsia in Volhynia in the Interwar Period], Warszawa 2005, pp. 196-197; Program wojewody poleskiego Stanisława Downarowicza o zadaniach i pracach państwowych na Polesiu skierowany do Wydziału Narodowościowego Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych [Stanisław Downarowicz, the Polesia Voivode, Agenda on Res-

genous official's familiarity with the local situation allowed him to perform his duties competently. In the long run, however, the administrative office was a really difficult job due to the very low economic status.

Delegated officials from other parts of Poland made an even worse impression. In the 1920s they usually came from Galicia. Many reports noted that after the war cities in which the local administration agencies were situated experienced a large influx of people from other parts of the country, who took up high-level positions in the state administration and the military. Zygmunt Fedorowicz noted, with respect to Vilnius, that: "[t]he newcomers hardly ever assimilated with the locals [...]. In most cases they remained a foreign element, one that did not feel or understand Vilnius' particular situation."²⁷ In the 1930s the problem was similar. In these times most of the delegated officials were army veterans with ties to Piłsudski's camp. The newcomers often did not understand the complex situation of the Eastern Borderlands, were not able to find their feet in the area, suffered under dire living conditions in an underdeveloped, poor and alien province far from home, all of which was exacerbated by the fact that they often keenly felt the hostile attitude of the local community.²⁸ As a result, they treated this service as exile, frequently looking on the natives with contempt and superiority, even though they were Poles.²⁹

The Orthodox Church, the second largest religious association in Poland after the Roman Catholic Church, was the institution which the local admin-

possibilities and Projects Undertaken by the State in Polesia, Addressed to the Department of Ethnic Affairs at the Ministry of Internal Affairs] in: ŚLESZYŃSKI, Polesie (as in footnote 21), p. 35. See also the documents *ibidem*, pp. 38-39, 42-43.

²⁷ ZYGMUNT FEDOROWICZ: *Trzydzieści lat mojego pobytu w Wilnie* [Thirty Years of my Stay in Vilnius], Kraków 2010, p. 161. See also e.g. *ibidem*, pp. 145-149; *Archiwum Polskiej Akademii Nauk w Warszawie* [Archive of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw], M. Kossakowski, *Diariusz* [Diary]; MICHAŁ K. PAWLIKOWSKI: *Wojna i sezon* [War and Season], Warszawa 1989, pp. 183, 282, and the above-mentioned archive materials, especially the reports of local government inspections into the quality of officials' work for the use of province authorities. Although the author is aware that the clerical staff was far from perfect (see e.g. MĘDRZECKI (as in footnote 26) pp. 194-195), he believes that certain negative opinions of officials employed in the borderlands, for example that they were "morally low", or that "corruption" and "extreme lawlessness and arbitrariness" (CHOJNOWSKI (as in footnote 12), p. 29) were commonplace, is unsubstantiated.

²⁸ The author largely subscribes to the view of JOANNA JANUSZEWSKA-JURKIEWICZ: *Stosunki narodowościowe na Wileńszczyźnie w latach 1920-1939* [Ethnic Relations in the Vilnius Area from 1920 to 1939], Katowice 2010, p. 649, who also presented examples of a different perception of the issue of nationalist and denominational situation in the Eastern Territories by officials from outside the Eastern Borderlands. See also WŁODZIMIERZ MICH: *Problemy mniejszości narodowej w myśl politycznej polskiego ruchu konserwatywnego (1918-1939)* [Ethnic Minority Problems in the Political Thought of the Polish Conservative Movement (1918-1939)], Lublin 1992, pp. 164-165.

²⁹ PAWLIKOWSKI (as in footnote 27), pp. 168, 275-285; FEDOROWICZ (as in footnote 27), pp. 145, 149, 161, 176; JANUSZEWSKA-JURKIEWICZ (as in footnote 28), pp. 409-410.

istration mainly regarded as connected with hostile or at least heavily critical of the Polish state political circles, most likely to become a tool for anti-state activities. To prevent this, the authorities aimed to keep a tight but legal grip on the Orthodox Church and to reduce its assets and influence over the population. Similarly, albeit with less determination, the local administration sought to organize the supervision of other religious associations on the basis of limited confidence and according to government policy objectives. The state tried to secure the most extensive powers for itself in order to encroach on religious communities' personnel policy. It was mandatory to notify the voivodes of the nominations of candidates for most church positions, as they had the right to object to any personnel decisions undertaken by the church hierarchy without offering reasons for their decision. Voivodes could also request that an appointed cleric be dismissed or transferred to another location.³⁰

These powers were however only used in the main field of ethnic disputes between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches concerning activities considered to demonstrate disloyalty to the Polish State. Where those were not sufficient the administration applied other sanctions. For instance, the authorities took advantage of religious associations' financial dependency on the state by not awarding or suspending subsidies, or of general prerogatives, such as denying Polish citizenship and expulsion from the country.³¹ Meanwhile, administrative repression was often applied without any special investigation. This practice did not usually affect criminal charges, which were referred to courts where the state sought to comply with democratic standards. However, the administration's activities were frequently based only on general information, often uncertain and unconfirmed, with no attempt to check its reliability thoroughly. Local authorities continuously collected information about internal life of religious associations, especially about the attitude of the clergy. However organizational difficulties, the poor training of the officials responsible for public safety in the starost's offices and the police forces subordinate to them, and the inaccessibility of most religious communities made it difficult to assess the situation correctly.

The government's resorting to legal loopholes and ambiguities for its own ends created an even worse impression. The authorities delayed decisions that could satisfy the vital needs of the population, such as the rebuilding or

³⁰ MICHAŁ GAŁĘDEK: Nadzór administracji rządowej nad związkami wyznaniowymi w województwach północno-wschodnich i na Wołyniu w latach 1920-1939 [Government Supervision of Religious Organisations in the North-Eastern Voivodeships and Volhynia from 1920 to 1939], in: GRZEGORZ GÓRSKI, LESZEK ĆWIKŁA et al. (eds.): *Cuius regio, eius religio? Zjazd Historyków Państwa i Prawa*, Lublin, 20-23 IX 2006 r., pp. 378-401.

³¹ ANTONI MIRONOWICZ: Kościół prawosławny na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku [The Orthodox Church in the Polish Territories in the 19th and 20th Centuries], Białystok 2005, p. 90; ŚLESZYŃSKI, *Bezpieczeństwo* (as in footnote 8), pp. 220-221.

opening a new church, or the creation of new parishes, justifying their conduct by the lack of regulation necessary to make decisions.³²

Legal loopholes combined with more or less conscious violations of the rule of law could also result in the arbitrary imposition of obligations and constraints on religious associations which had no solid legal basis. One such example was a circular of the Voivode of Polesia, Stanisław Downarowicz, in which he informed his subordinate starosts that the clergy were obliged to notify their respective starosts whenever they travelled outside their dioceses.³³ Yet on many occasions the central administration also accused the local authorities of negligence involving incompetent application of laws, especially typical of the period preceding the May Coup d'État. For instance in a letter of late 1923 a head of the Ministry's Department of Religions denounced the local administration for their inaction in the campaign of requisitioning Orthodox churches. Voivodes blamed their inertia on the lack of a relevant law, while the department head argued that the campaign might well be carried out based on "generally accepted provisions of the international law". Following his interpretation of the existing legal context:

"The foundation of the Polish state meant *ipso facto* that all legal acts of the Russian government's oppression became null and void. Therefore the Orthodox community's possession of any churches that had been seized from the Catholics (which for Poland was in all cases illegal) forfeited the protection of the state executive."³⁴

As Downarowicz writes, voivodes and starosts in his opinion

"failed to understand this, adamantly opposing the Catholic population who reclaimed their former churches, because they followed the decree of the General Commissioner for the Eastern Territories no. 25 of 22 October 1919, which mandated that not all Catholic churches should be reclaimed but only the Roman Catholic ones and only those that after their demolition had not been converted into Orthodox churches. This narrow interpretation of the issue did more harm than good."³⁵

³² See numerous examples concerning the Orthodox Church described in the following monographs: MIRONOWICZ, Kościół prawosławny (as in footnote 31), pp. 124-141, 147-179, 189-198; PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), pp. 132-193. This situation, however, also troubled other religious associations. The issue was raised by, for example, the Government Delegate for the Vilnius area. See: AAN, MWRiOP, No 372, p. 38. See also: JANUSZEWSKA-JURKIEWICZ (as in footnote 28), pp. 472-473, ALABRUDZIŃSKA (as in footnote 15), pp. 43-44. Religious associations were, however, also sporadically able to exploit this situation to expand their spheres of activity, as attested by the rapid growth of the Jewish community in Vilnius. See: LCVa, f. 51, ap. 1, b. 11, pp. 1-70; f. 51, ap. 15, b. 24, pp. 141-141v. See also: JANUSZEWSKA-JURKIEWICZ (as in footnote 28), pp. 440-444.

³³ PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), p. 151.

³⁴ AAN, MWRiOP, No 308, p. 3.

³⁵ Ibidem.

The legal chaos was also exploited by religious associations. Voivodes indicated that one of the reasons why the protection that the state government afforded to religious association was lacking – particularly the Catholic Church but to a lesser extent also other denominational associations – was that “the religious authorities excluded [...] state government and failed to inform them of certain events which were particularly relevant to the asset situation of individual parishes”.³⁶

On the other hand the unregulated legal status of religious associations and numerous issues related to their activities had a very negative impact on the assessment of administrative operations. Formally, parts of Russian law established before the First World War remained in force in the Eastern Territories, except for regulations which were not compatible with the fundamental laws of the Polish State. These included discriminatory provisions under tsarist law, such as those governing certain religious associations. But the problem was that the Polish authorities did not specify to what extent the regulations remained in force. This caused many difficulties for the functioning of religious associations. In reality they were discriminated against.³⁷

Most of the Russian legislation required “far-reaching adjustments”. In the official circle it was considered “outdated and incompatible with the approach of today’s legislation on denominational matters in general”.³⁸ In consequence the governmental Committee on Legislative Proposals for the Eastern Territories reported that the local administration could not function properly under those laws. The Committee noted that “if one considers laws governing denominational matters, one issue that springs to mind is their defective application or mostly their non-application in situations where they would offer a perfectly sufficient legal basis for desirable and often necessary decrees”.³⁹

This situation lasted basically until the closing years of the interwar period. Even if some regulations concerning state-church relations were established, they only regulated a small part of the issues at hand. Usually these were not universally binding laws. Furthermore, although the mere fact that such regulation existed improved the position of religious associations, the rules that were issued usually construed to allow the greatest possible subjugation of religious organisations to the interests of the state and to create favourable conditions for a wide range of administrative interferences. As a result, the

³⁶ PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), pp. 199-200.

³⁷ Ibidem.

³⁸ AAN, MWRiOP, No 372, p. 48. See also: PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), p. 139. The document entitled *Zestawienia i wnioski dotyczące stanu prawnego w dziedzinie wyznań* [Lists and Conclusions Concerning the Legal Situation in the Area of Religion] prepared in 1925 by the Committee for Legislative Proposals for the Eastern Territories (*Komisja Wniosków Ustawodawczych dla Ziem Wschodnich*) was very useful as a reference and made the application of Russian and Polish laws much easier. See: *ibidem*, No 367, pp. 108-125.

³⁹ AAN, MWRiOP, No 367, p. 124.

complex system of legal norms severely handicapped the normal functioning of religious associations, fuelling a variety of conflicts. There was considerable discrepancy between constitutional provisions, guaranteeing the principles of freedom of conscience or freedom of religion, and political practice. Actions taken by the authorities usually complied with the laws in force, but their compliance with the March Constitution was more doubtful. As has been mentioned above the authorities took advantage of the fact that their actions were based on makeshift, imperfect legislation, which did not implement the constitutional principles to a satisfactory extent.⁴⁰

2 Religious Policy and the Idea of Polonisation until 1935

The ethnic and religious policy pursued by generally both the central and local authorities was based on the conviction that Polish presence in the Eastern Territories needed strengthening. As evidenced most clearly by the example of the Orthodox Church, which aroused the greatest interest of the state, the central and local authorities essentially agreed that the purpose of an ethnic and religious policy should be the drive “to arouse in the non-Polish population the willingness to become a Pole and a Catholic”.⁴¹ Although these words, uttered by Colonel Marian Turkowski, date from the late 1930s, when the Polonisation campaign notably intensified, one might assume that it was relevant to the entire interwar period. In this respect the following conclusion of Marianna Papierzyńska-Turek’s research seems valid:

“The government of the Second Republic, regardless of any temporary or local – in Volhynia – experiments with state assimilation, which might have also marked the beginning of denationalization, took more or less decisive steps towards national assimilation from the first years of independence.”⁴²

Apart from the Orthodox Church the Polonisation policy was not generally applied to religious and national minorities since this was considered simply impracticable in the prevailing situation.⁴³ The government, among other things, abandoned attempts at national assimilation of the Jewish communities, which represented the second largest religious minority in the Borderlands. This concept was not present in the political platforms of parties which formed subsequent Polish governments from 1919, especially as the eastern provinces were characterised by a firmer sense of ethnic and religious identity compared to other districts of the Republic of Poland, and even a tendency to isolate themselves from the Polish community. The strong attachment to their own customs and culture (evident especially in Vilnius, a city of rich historical traditions and of great importance for the Jewish com-

⁴⁰ PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), pp. 147, 150.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 272.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 443. See also pp. 228-299.

⁴³ See e.g. JANUSZEWSKA-JURKIEWICZ (as in footnote 28), pp. 660-662.

munity) resulted, in fact, in the rejection of even the more moderate concepts of Polish-Jewish cultural rapprochement.⁴⁴ Jews inhabiting small towns and villages in the Eastern Territories were better integrated into the local community and more eager to undergo state or even national assimilation.⁴⁵

The state was not at all interested in minor religious associations such as the evangelical churches, the Islamic Religious Union, the Karaim Religious Union or the Old Orthodox Church. Apart from being considered insignificant by the administration, most of them were assessed as undoubtedly loyal to the Polish State and thus no measures needed to be taken to change this situation.⁴⁶ They were often located in Vilnius or in the Vilnius area and permanently coexisted with local Polish society. Different ways of living were characteristic of the Jews and some other religious communities such as the Karaim Religious Union or the Old Orthodox Church. They usually functioned in some degree of isolation from Polish society, reflected by the limited insight the authorities had into their internal religious life.⁴⁷

Undoubtedly certain minority religious communities, especially the largest of them – the Jewish religious communities and the Orthodox Church – felt to a greater or lesser extent that the authorities generally treated them as an alien element, stressing the unity of patriotism and the Catholic religion, favouring Catholics in public life, employment, access to offices, education and in many other areas.⁴⁸ In this context developing the appropriate relationships with a state which failed to adequately represent the interests of non-Polish and non-Catholic part of its citizens was sometimes very difficult, but not impossible. In this situation the Orthodox Church, Jewish communities and possibly (this claim is, however, unsupported by historical evidence) other minor religious associations often only masked their critical attitude to the Republic of Poland.⁴⁹

However, the example of the Orthodox Church demonstrates the close correlation between ethnic and religious policy. As mentioned above, unlike other religious associations, this Church and similarly but to a much lesser extent, the Jewish communities, were also seen as the institutions connected

⁴⁴ JAROSŁAW WOLKONOWSKI: *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Wilnie i na Wileńszczyźnie 1919-1939* [Polish-Jewish Relations in Vilnius and the Vilnius Area 1919-1939], Białystok 2004, pp. 63-74, 127-132, 173-179, 339; JANUSZEWSKA-JURKIEWICZ (as in footnote 28), pp. 327-328, 439, 544-546; TIMOTHY SNYDER: *Henryk Józewski i polsko-sowiecka rozgrywka o Ukrainę*, Kraków 2008, pp. 100-102. English Version: *Sketches from a Secret War. A Polish Artist's Mission to Liberate Soviet Ukraine*, New Haven et al. 2005.

⁴⁵ See especially a description of the multi-layered process of closer relations between the Polish and the Jewish community in the Vilnius area: JANUSZEWSKA-JURKIEWICZ (as in footnote 28), pp. 453-455, 534-553.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, pp. 457, 473, 652-653, 655; ALABRUDZIŃSKA (as in footnote 15), p. 220.

⁴⁷ JANUSZEWSKA-JURKIEWICZ (as in footnote 28), pp. 457, 474, 657.

⁴⁸ ŚLESZYŃSKI, *Polesie* (as in footnote 21), p. 30.

⁴⁹ IDEM, *Bezpieczeństwo* (as in footnote 8), p. 229.

with political circles which were at least critical of the Polish State. Polish state activities were bound to meet with a negative social response, not only among Orthodox clergy, but also among the faithful. The vast majority of them were Belarusians or Ukrainians. The Orthodox Church became, aside from the language and the territory, the main component of the emerging Ukrainian and – to some extent – Belarusian national movements. The government was aware that the activists of both these nations exploited religion in the political struggle against the Polish state. The programme and practices of the central and local authorities therefore relied essentially on the fight against national aspirations in general and among the clergy in particular.

After World War I however, within Polish borders this religious association was a mere extension of the Russian Church. Its character was a remnant of the Partition period, and lasted as such until 1924 as a result of its dependence on the Patriarch of Moscow. The clergy usually came from the local Russian community which, depressed by the loss of its dominant national position, initially would not accept the creation of an independent Polish state. They perceived their own Church as a bastion against the Polish and Catholic influence. For these reasons in the early years of independence the attitude of the Polish authorities towards the Orthodox Church was hostile. In general, any action taken in this period was perceived as the struggle against a Church representing the vestiges of the “invader” state.⁵⁰ As the political situation stabilised, the Russian nature of the Orthodox Church did not seem quite as dangerous as on first glance; especially as it was dependent on the Polish state from 1924 through autocephaly and regulations ensuring strict supervision over its internal life. It was however still perceived as an organization which sought to threaten the interests of the Republic of Poland, and shunned any forms of cooperation. The extensive and comprehensive report prepared in 1927 by the Security Division of the Polesia Voivode’s Office on the “Russian movement and influence in Polesia” was probably the most striking evidence of that claim; the report concluded:

“The Russian element in Polesia [...] while ostensibly professing loyalty to the Polish state in fact harbours a hostile and antagonistic view of it, aiming to make the great and undivided Russia a reality. The conscious attitude of the entire Russian intelligentsia in Polesia is geared toward the strengthening of [...] Russian national sentiment, which they attempt to spread to the entire Orthodox community of Polesia [...] The Orthodox clergy in Polesia [...] represent the most conservative faction in the Russian movement.”⁵¹

Other reports follow in the same vein to quote only the conclusions of the local administration in the Vilnius area, both from early (1921/22)⁵² and late

⁵⁰ PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), p. 197.

⁵¹ ŚLESZYŃSKI, Polesie (as in footnote 21), pp. 70-71.

⁵² LCVA, f. 51, ap. 15, b. 24, pp. 53-54. See also: JANUSZEWSKA-JURKIEWICZ (as in footnote 28), pp. 461, 463-464.

(1937)⁵³ interwar period. This was the primary reason why the authorities at best tolerated its Russian character, but never supported it, even though it prevented Ukrainisation and Belarussification.⁵⁴

Thus government attempts to make the Orthodox Church more Polish and to transform it into an instrument for implementing its assimilation policy were unsuccessful. Irrespective of the Piłsudski camp's declared policy aims and administration in the years 1926-1935, mainly in the areas adjacent to the ethnically Polish lands (but also in the Belarussian territories), steps were taken to implement the Polish language in the Orthodox Church and mobilise Polish Orthodox circles wherever possible.⁵⁵ The attitude of the local authorities in relations with this Church, in contrast to those with most other religious associations, was a consistent intent to assimilate or simply polonise the non-Polish population, with varying degrees of intensity. Differences were limited mainly to the methods of operation which changed greatly after 1935. In the earlier interwar period assimilation policy towards non-Polish minority groups was – except for its incoherence and paucity of guiding thought – moderate. Apart from occasional displays of intolerance, local authorities generally sought to avoid harassing any particular social group based on their nationality or religion or implementing repressive methods overtly serving conversion or denationalization (understood as a process of changing one's ethnic identity from non-Polish to a Polish). Frequently they agreed to a limited compromise, considering to some extent the expectations of national and religious minorities. Often, however, the only reason to avoid the implementation of a Polonisation programme was the conviction of its ineffectiveness or harmfulness to relations between the state and national minorities. Ordinarily, the local administration tried to avoid any attempts aimed directly at the Orthodox Church, fearing the radicalization of the anti-state movement among the Orthodox population. The administration of the voivodships was focused on rather moderate activities in the delicate sphere of religion, not wanting to alienate the population, and therefore often suspended more peremptory measures or withdrew from them.

⁵³ AAN, MWRiOP, No 384, p. 78.

⁵⁴ See general tenets of the platform of the Minister of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment Gustaw Dobrucki from 1928 in: PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), p. 240, and the concept of Volhynian Voivode Henryk Józewski, presented at the congress of voivodes in Lutsk in 1929 (GAŁĘDEK/DĄBROWSKI (as in footnote 13), pp. 209-220).

⁵⁵ PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), pp. 240, 243-245; EUGENIUSZ MIRONOWICZ: Polityczne uwarunkowania funkcjonowania Kościoła prawosławnego w Polsce w latach 1920-1939 [Political Conditions of the Functioning of the Orthodox Church in Poland in the years 1920-1939], in: Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne 24 (2006), pp. 117-152, here pp. 148-150; MIROŚLAWA KALINA: Polonizacja Cerkwi prawosławnej w województwie białostockim (1918-1939) [Polonisation of the Orthodox Church in the Białystok Voivodeship], Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne 2 (1995), pp. 74-104.

During the period prior to 1926 the complaints made by the Head of the Department of Religions at the end of 1923 about the conservative and thus excessively lax denominational policies of voivodes in eastern voivodeships were of particular note. The criticism focused on indecisiveness in the fight against the Orthodox Church, which the author considered a bastion of resistance against the Polish State. Such extreme views were however rare in both the central and local administration. The author pointed to the above mentioned inaction in "requisitioning of churches" and "diminishing the Orthodox Church's landholdings". He claimed that "without seizing that independent subsistence base and forcing them [the Orthodox clergy – M.G.] to rely on state aid there can be no permanent [straightening out – M.G.] of relations". The author emphasized disapprovingly that "even now voivodes – were they to have more initiative – could purge their territories of unwanted Orthodox priests". He pointed out that bishops were required to remove parish priests if the voivode should request it and that voivodes themselves could apply administrative coercion to combat "disloyal clergy" yet they all the while claimed that the Ministry of Internal Affairs, among other institutions, was opposed to the expulsion of priests who had not been deposed by their bishop. Eastern Borderlands voivodes were ignorant of their rights and obligations in issuing temporary administrative decrees and would "wait for relevant regulations to be laid out in writing or for a minister or the people to take the initiative". He saw not only no results but also no willingness to prevent the de-Polonisation of the people of the Eastern Borderlands. "The goal is to extinguish the influence of Polish culture in the Eastern Borderlands" – explained the head of the Department of Religions:

"and the traditions of belonging to the Polish State, which had been wiped out during partition. The Eastern Borderland voivodes as yet did not exploit the rivalry between the Orthodox clergy, who favoured Russia, and Belarusian and Ukrainian nationalism. The government's policy in this matter has been inconsistent, to the point of promoting nationalist movements and opposing Russian monarchists, but it is now becoming clear that Russians and Russophiles would find it easier to accept Polish schools than the nationalists."⁵⁶

The situation did not change significantly in the following years. In the period 1924-1927 the government focused on threats posed by the growing communist movement like saboteurs' attacks and later the expansion of Hromada, a Belarusian political organisation under the influence of the communist movement and was forced to face the critical condition of state finances. As a result the implementation of denominational policy once again had to take second place.

⁵⁶ AAN, MWRiOP, No 308, pp. 3-7. See also a similar view of the Minister of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment, Stanisław Gąbiński – PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), p. 232.

3 Orthodox Church and National Policy toward Ukrainians and Belarusians

The 1923 assessment made by the Head of the Department of Religions that the local administration was reluctant to take a more radical stance on the Orthodox Church coincides with views expressed by eastern voivodes and directives they sent to their subordinate starosts, both before the May Coup d'Etat and after the Sanation Camp seized power. The Voivode of Polesia, Jan Krahelski, described the essence of that movement, which opposed the policy of confrontation and Polonisation, most clearly, since 1930 officially and consistently promoting the view that:

“today’s Polish Borderland nationalists create a situation in the Eastern Territories that is extremely harmful and dangerous to the Polish State. [...] Nationalists naively follow the illusions that strong-arm practices and brutal oppression could serve as instruments of Borderland policy in the hands of a Polish patriot.”⁵⁷

In this context the policy of moderation towards different religions and nationalist movements was born, out of an instinctive conviction shared by some government officials that the relentless fight against national and religious minorities – especially against the Orthodox community – led to nowhere. Volatility and inconsistency between oppressing the Orthodox Church and making peace with it, supporting its Russianness or to allowing its – albeit partial – Ukrainisation or even Belarussification, were more than noticeable throughout the 1920s and early 1930s. Efforts to win over the Orthodox community and to ensure its state assimilation were hardly effective but then also the most oppressive measures directly targeting the Orthodox Church and aiming to promote the concept of Polonisation were limited to areas considered ethnically Polish (voivodeships of Lublin and Białystok). Even there, however, those efforts ceased halfway through and never became as radical as in the late 1930s. If one were to find a common denominator in the mixed messages sent out by the local administration, one might claim that the prevalent tendency was to handle delicate and extremely sensitive religious matters with moderation. The government took public expectations at least partly into consideration, because it usually understood that the situation in the Eastern Borderlands, tense and complex as it already was, should not be additionally inflamed without good reason.

⁵⁷ ŚLESZYŃSKI, Polesie (as in footnote 21), p. 38. See also, inter alia, the concepts of Government Delegate in Wilno Land Walery Roman in a document from 1923 (GAŁĘDEK, Organizacja (as in footnote 8), pp. 338-340); the Voivodes of Polesia Stanisław Downarowicz and Jan Krahelski (ŚLESZYŃSKI, Polesie (as in footnote 21), pp. 31-32, 45-46); the views of the Voivode of Navahrudak and Vilnius Władysław Raczkiewicz (GAŁĘDEK/DĄBROWSKI (as in footnote 13), pp. 220-223) and the views of Volhynian Voivode Henryk Józewski; see also the evaluation of the activities towards the Orthodox Church in the Vilnius Voivodeship (JANUSZEWSKA-JURKIEWICZ (as in footnote 28), pp. 466-467).

For example the authorities objected to the restitution of Orthodox churches conducted by Catholic bishops. All voivodes opposed it by undertaking an appropriate resolution at the conference of eastern voivodes in Luts'k in 1929.⁵⁸ Any benefits from that action were outweighed by fear that this initiative could radicalize anti-government sentiment in society, enhance the popularity of nationalist movements and perpetuate the negative image of Poland as an enemy of Orthodoxy abroad. Admittedly, a repressive policy was enforced locally. Such activities seemed justified to the authorities because of the dangers and instability that occurred in the early years of Polish statehood. Actions were however usually rather cautious and shaky, but not subtle.

In the decade following the May Coup d'État in 1926 an ideological justification for that policy was found in the so-called tenet of "state assimilation," which was officially propounded as the guiding principle of Poland's ethnic policy.⁵⁹ The concept embodied the already popular idea of winning national and religious minority support for Poland's statehood by offering them different concessions, which included catering to religious needs. The aim was to demonstrate the attractiveness of Poland, its tenets and its culture, so that the people of the Eastern Borderlands would be convinced that it would be worth living in a state shared by all communities and actively contribute to its development and so that they might become loyal citizens. In reality the implementation of this concept was limited – as in the previous period – to certain minor concessions offered to minorities mainly in the educational sphere such as terminating the school plebiscites which it was mandatory to implement under the democratic principles of the March Constitution of 1921.⁶⁰ In dealing with the Orthodox Church and other religious associations, the administration still used less severe means of harassment or methods that did not seem to target those associations directly.

These absolutely insufficient and unsatisfactory initiatives in this case resulted not from a failure of the state apparatus, but from deliberate central and

⁵⁸ GAŁĘDEK/DĄBROWSKI (as in footnote 13), p. 222. Complete minutes of the conference are to be found, among other sources, in Lietuvos Mokslu Akademijos Biblioteka [Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences], f. 254, b. 518. Large parts have been published. See: CZESŁAW MADAJCZYK: Dokumenty w sprawie polityki narodowościowej władz polskich po przewrocie majowym [Documents on Ethnic Policies of the Polish Authorities after the May Coup d'Etat], in: *Dzieje Najnowsze* (1972), 3, pp. 137-169, here pp. 161-169.

⁵⁹ WALDEMAR PARUCH: *Od konsolidacji państwowej do konsolidacji narodowościowej. Mniejszości narodowe w myśli politycznej obozu piłsudczykowski (1926-1939)* [From State Consolidation to Ethnic Consolidation. Ethnic Minorities in the Political Thought of Piłsudski's Camp (1926-1939)], Lublin 1997, pp. 124-138.

⁶⁰ HENRYK ZIELIŃSKI: *Polityka mniejszościowa rządów II Rzeczypospolitej* [Government Policies on Minorities in the Second Polish Republic], in: STEFAN KRZYSZTOF KUCZYŃSKI (ed.): *Pamiętnik XII Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków Polskich*. 17-20 września 1979. Część 2, Katowice 1979, pp. 123-134, here p. 131.

local policy.⁶¹ This is even more evident if one considers that there are two sides to this story. The Orthodox Church and nationalist circles involved in religious affairs were by definition suspected of carrying out anti-state activities. In consequence in the Orthodox Church – unlike in other religious associations – a clergyman was absolutely discredited not only by proven immoral, criminal or anti-state activities but also by mere involvement in the Ukrainian or Belarusian movement. Even the admission of Belarusian or Ukrainian nationality was often enough to put one's career in jeopardy. The government, though inconsistently, required the clergy's loyalty to the state.⁶² "A clergyman's worth must be measured by his character, his attitude toward the interests of the state and by his influence on the citizens and not only by how pliant he is to any requests of the local authorities – which is currently not the case, with many clergymen being treated in a patronizing way" – this is from directives for the local administration issued by the Minister of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment in 1938; which despite their moderate character seem to be an accurate reflection of the entire interwar period.⁶³ The local authorities diligently supervised every priest's contacts with political, cultural, and even co-operative activists. Situation reports submitted by starosts indicated that issues related to the activities of religious associations, particularly the Orthodox, were considered nearly as vital as political and nationalist activities, and mostly deemed to be an integral part thereof.⁶⁴ The officials and police forces acting at their behest paid attention to the content of sermons, showing zero tolerance to any criticism of the Polish government's policy towards the Church and punishing even single "offences". Obviously most notable were repressive measures sponsored by the central government which targeted the highest ranking church officials including Eleutherius, Bishop of Vilnius, and Volodimir, Bishop of Grodno in the early 1920s on account of their opposition to the autocephaly. Yet even later conflicts between the state and the Orthodox Church, such as the attempt to introduce the Gregorian Calendar, tended to result in sanctions applied by local officials, particularly against those suspected of harbouring any resentment toward the Polish State.⁶⁵

⁶¹ PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), pp. 239-240.

⁶² Ibidem, p. 145.

⁶³ AAN, MWRiOP, No 385, p. 141.

⁶⁴ See situation reports of starosts of the voivodeship of Vilnius; LCVA, f. 15, ap. 2, b. 232; f. 20, ap. 1, b. 12-17; f. 51, ap. 1, b. 65, 124, 165, 246-247, 308; f. 51, ap. 15, b. 26-38, 131, 279-280, 350-355.

⁶⁵ PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), p. 236. See also: ANTONI MIRONOWICZ, Kościół prawosławny (as in footnote 31), p. 125 (removal of clergymen from places where churches had been shut down), p. 152 (attempts to shut down Orthodox monasteries), pp. 173-174 (personnel policy applied to Orthodox clergy in the Polish Army); compare also the assessment of the Orthodox clergy in the Vilnius area by the Government Delegate for Vilnius, Walery Roman, AAN, MWRiOP, sygn. 987, p. 320.

Special attention was given to an Orthodox ecclesiastic's behaviour during current political events, such as a census or parliamentary elections, as well as to the observance of governmental directives concerning services, sermons, meetings with the faithful, using the Julian Calendar and other issues. The authorities also made efforts to restrict the operations of fraternities and other organizations (for example liquidating the biggest Fraternity of St. Cyril and St. Methodius in Ostróg⁶⁶) which allowed participation of lay people in the internal life of the Orthodox Church and the vast majority of whose members were Ukrainians or Belarusians.⁶⁷

The above mentioned examples quite clearly demonstrate the duality of the administration's policy towards the Orthodox Church in the Eastern Territories regardless of organisational problems. This applies also to some extent – taking account of their differences – to other religious associations, such as Jewish communities. On the one hand the local authorities introduced initiatives encouraging national and religious minorities to seek rapprochement with the Polish State, thereby subjugating them, and on the other hand they sought to eradicate any activity deemed threatening to their interests and to public safety. Effective implementation of both of these goals was very often impossible, or exceeded the capabilities of local authorities due to their insufficient qualifications to conduct such a sensitive policy.

Overall the government tried in various ways to give the Orthodox Church a more Polish character – at first tentatively and inconsistently, only since 1933 on a large scale and often without attempting to keep up appearances and moderation – to prevent Belarussification and Ukrainisation and to convert it into an instrument in the assimilation process. This policy manifested itself in local authority pressure not to introduce the Ukrainian or Belarusian language into the Church (virtually within the entire territory of the eastern voivodeships except for Volhynia under Voivode Józewski) and efforts to promote the Polish language (particularly in the areas of Lublin and Białystok), especially in religious education. Any further moves were prevented by the lack of a Polish Orthodox population to be used as a force in the more progressive Polonisation of the Orthodox Church. In areas inhabited by Ukrainians there were no serious efforts to denationalise the locals, as this was quite generally considered impossible.⁶⁸

The policies carried out in 1928-1938 at the initiative of Voivode Henryk Józewski, who had consistently pursued a programme of state assimilation in Volhynia, should be regarded as exceptional. Józewski – who in late 1920s and early 1930s found support in the Ministry of Religious Beliefs and Public

⁶⁶ PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), pp. 299-300.

⁶⁷ ŚLESZYŃSKI, *Bezpieczeństwo* (as in footnote 8), pp. 220-226; ANTONI MIRONOWICZ, *Kościół prawosławny* (as in footnote 31), pp. 161-166.

⁶⁸ PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), p. 272.

Enlightenment⁶⁹ – was convinced that Polish interests lay not the Russianness but the Ukrainisation of Orthodox Church in this area and the democratisation of Orthodox Church life as a means to that end, which might be a strong argument in favour of an agreement between the Poles and the Ukrainians.⁷⁰ In fact, due to the resistance of some of officials subordinated to the Voivode of Volhynia – or perhaps also with his silent approval – his policy enabled the Ukrainian laity in the Orthodox Church. On the other hand it seems that the Voivode himself never waived the possibility of implementing the Polish, not the Ukrainian, language in the Orthodox Church.⁷¹ His policy goals were the same as those of voivodes who supported state assimilation, only conducted using more sophisticated methods. The difference stemmed from the specificity of the territory managed by Józewski and his acknowledgement of the full crystallization of Ukrainian national consciousness, which the voivodes managing the areas dominated by the population of Belarus did not allow. Even so, Józewski's actions testified to the fact that the concept of state assimilation normally needed to go hand in hand with the idea of strengthening Polish ownership in the borderlands. This approach was justified by the fear of using a too far-reaching programme to benefit the objectives of Ukrainian nationalism, which conflicted with the interests of the Republic of Poland, and which somehow forced Józewski to restrict his assumptions.⁷²

The idea of strengthening Polish ownership, however, in the absence of Polish state efforts to attract minorities which sometimes only arose from the state's dire financial situation, essentially precluded the effective implementation of state assimilation. A positive attitude to the real needs of religious communities, which was the prerequisite of any success, depended on the aims of public safety and national policy. In effect, the authorities tried to meet them only inasmuch as there was no doubt that they did not endanger the dominant position of the ethnic Poles in the state. The conduct of the au-

⁶⁹ See statements by minister Gustaw Dobrucki at the conference of officials for religious affairs which took place in 1928, in: AAN, MWRiOP, No 277, pp. 475-495; W. LUBICZ [PIOTROWICZ]: *Z zagadnień narodowościowych i ustrojowych w Cerkwi Prawosławnej w Polsce* [Ethnic and Administrative Issues Concerning the Orthodox Church in Poland], in: *Sprawy Narodowościowe* 2 (1928), pp. 169-190.

⁷⁰ SNYDER (as in footnote 43), pp. 200-204; ŻONGOLŁOWICZ (as in footnote 7), p. 698; PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), pp. 241-242; KĘSIK (as in footnote 12), pp. 82, 108.

⁷¹ JÓZEWSKI (as in footnote 13) pp. 72, 68-71; GAŁĘDEK/DĄBROWSKI (as in footnote 13), p. 14; PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), pp. 243, 245-246.

⁷² For various assessments of Jozewski's policies see e.g.: SNYDER (as in footnote 43), pp. 97-98; PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), pp. 117, 245; ANDRZEJ CHOJNOWSKI, JAN JACEK BRUSKI: *Ukraina [Ukraine]*, Warszawa 2006, p. 117; MYKOŁA KUCZEREPA: *Polityka II Rzeczypospolitej wobec Ukraińców na Wołyniu w latach 1921-1939* [Policies of the Second Polish Republic toward Ukrainians in Volhynia from 1921 to 1939], in: *Przegląd Wschodni* 13 (1997), pp. 139-154, here p. 149; KĘSIK (as in footnote 12), pp. 64-66, 71.

thorities in the areas inhabited by the Belarusians (especially in the Vilnius, Navahrudak and Polesia Voivodeships) proves this. Unlike in Ukraine, the Belarusian national movement generally did not regard the Orthodox Church as the most important factor in the rebirth of the nation and the country. Nevertheless, the trend towards the Belarussification of the Church was clear, though the demands were limited to meeting the population's needs, the recognition of its linguistic rights and dignity. Also, the usually loyalist attitude towards Poland and the weakness of the Belarusian national movement proved harmless to the state. The authorities were therefore not so anxious about a possible change in the national character of the Church. This pattern of relations was, in a way, a test of the administrative authorities' real intentions. In accordance with the state assimilation principle, the lack of a real threat should have prompted the government to satisfy the needs of the population as far as possible, in order to convince the people of the benefits of belonging to the Republic of Poland.⁷³ But even in the years 1926-1935, when the pursuit of such a policy was officially declared, and though the situation here was less difficult than in Volhynia, the local administration in areas of Belarus did undertake initiatives similar to that of Voivode Józewski. Admittedly, other voivodes often declared that they intended to implement a programme of moderate national tolerance and full religious tolerance. Voivode Jan Krahelski instructed his subordinate starosts in 1930:

"The subconscious nationalism spreading in our society must be vehemently opposed [...]. Belarusians and Ukrainians who are becoming ready to take part in political life should find a place for themselves following the principle that all a country's citizens enjoy equal rights."⁷⁴

Władysław Raczkiewicz, Voivode of Vilnius, at a conference in Lutsk in 1929 approved of most of the Volhynia programme proposals, which aimed to involve national minorities in the country's political life.⁷⁵ His successor, who in the 1920s had served for a long time as Voivode of Navahrudak, Władysław Beczkowicz, was believed to be widely respected in the Belarusian community due to his moderate policies.⁷⁶ Their subordinates, the heads of the Department of Religions in the Vilnius Voivode's Office, Kazimierz Okulicz and Wiktor Piotrowicz, were seen on many occasions to oppose the implementation of any constraints on national and religious rights, both in administrative circles and in public. Yet this almost always coincided with ensuring the role of the Polish state as the sole protector of the population and their faith. In reality this protective role was supposed to amount to strict control over the Orthodox Church, managing its affairs in such a way that would in the future allow the authorities to mould it into an instrument of the

⁷³ PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), pp. 222, 228.

⁷⁴ ŚLESZYŃSKI, Polesie (as in footnote 21), p. 51.

⁷⁵ GAŁĘDEK/DĄBROWSKI (as in footnote 13), p. 223.

⁷⁶ See: LESZCZYŃSKI (as in footnote 7) p. 262; LUBICZ (as in footnote 69), pp. 169-190.

state, if not lead to national assimilation. From the very beginning therefore, officials consistently opposed the idea that the Orthodox Church could become an instrument of Belarusian national revival under the auspices of the Polish State.⁷⁷ Of course, they also never turned away from the possibility of implanting the Polish language in the Church in this territory.

4 Repressive Polonisation in the Second Half of the 1930s

The politics of the authorities was particularly clear in the territories adjacent to the ethnically Polish lands, where the population did not have a fully crystallised national consciousness or did not declare Polish nationality. From the beginning, local authorities in those territories tried to implement an explicit policy of Polonisation of the Orthodox and their Church.⁷⁸ But even here clear objectives were not followed by consistent efforts, which indicated weakness, and even a lack of a deeper interest in this issue in the local administrative apparatus. For example in the Białystok Voivodeship attempts made in 1924/25 to introduce Polish as the language of worship and implement the so-called “modern” calendar failed.⁷⁹ And in 1929 in the Lublin Voivodeship protests of the Orthodox community thwarted the voivode’s plans to demolish “unnecessary” Orthodox churches.⁸⁰ Only in the 1930s did the authorities manage to co-ordinate and intensify their efforts to implement long-standing goals. For example in the Lublin Voivodeship the systematic action of cleansing parishes of Ukrainian clergy while strengthening and institutionalizing the Polish Orthodox population began in 1934. These actions were a prelude to the initiatives taken in the second half of the 1930s.

The government attempted to follow the detailed policy guidelines elaborated by the Ministry of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment, aiming consistently to ensure “complete assimilation of the Orthodox community and to intensify, where possible, the expansion of Polish culture”.⁸¹ “Let us make this one thing clear” – as in 1939 the Head of the Department of Religions, Henryk Dunin-Borkowski, instructed his subordinates in the Voivode’s offices: “Within the limits of the Voivodeships of Vilnius, Navahrudak, Polesia, Białystok, Lublin and the three northern counties of the Volhynia Voivodeship – our goal is Polonisation.” Previous achievements were reviewed, including almost all the work of the Orthodox Publishing and Research Institute in Grodno, actively supporting and planting in the Orthodox Church clergymen “who were disposed to fully comply with our policies”. In the long run the government expected to enforce the 1938 decree, which – as has been

⁷⁷ ŻONGOLŁOWICZ (as in footnote 7), p. 697.

⁷⁸ PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), pp. 229-230.

⁷⁹ KALINA (as in footnote 55), pp. 89-90.

⁸⁰ PAPIERZYŃSKA-TUREK (as in footnote 15), pp. 357-358.

⁸¹ AAN, MWRiOP, No 385, p. 258.

seen – gave “the state maximum control” “over the new Orthodox clergymen”. Furthermore the authorities planned to introduce Polish as the language of religious instruction in territories believed to be susceptible to Polonisation and to gradually make it the language of sermons and additional religious services.⁸²

On the other hand – largely with major involvement of the military authorities – a number of measures were taken during this period which were explicitly repressive and directly aimed at the Orthodox Church, the symbol of which was the demolition of a church in the Chełm area.⁸³ They mostly however focused on territories where Ukrainians prevailed and the government essentially decided to pursue a different strategy. As Dunin-Borkowski explained, “as opposed to Catholic mission activities following the Latin rite, in the form in which they are being currently conducted in Polesia or the Vilnius area [...] forcible implementation of the religious requisitioning [campaign – M.G.] in Volhynia was based on an assumption that in the face of the extensive degree of Ukrainisation of the Orthodox religion, planting a seed of Polishness in those people would only be possible after first converting them to Catholicism and the Latin rite.” Dunin-Borkowski, while generally supporting that claim, considered the previous methods incorrect, stressing that “the state government cannot act as a missionary”⁸⁴, should avoid “any actions which would make it appear to be opposing religion” and refrain from “causing concern in the provinces about the existence of current Orthodox churches”⁸⁵.

Regardless, however, of the plans to implement “non-confrontational Polonisation”, which were thwarted by the outbreak of World War II, the events of the late 1930s created an overly negative, and therefore false, image of the activities of the Polish local administration in the entire interwar period. These occurred in the different political realities of the late 1930s, characterised by a shift in objectives and especially in working methods. In the second half of the 1930s the influence of an authoritatively established, nationwide religious policy on ongoing local administrative activities was incomparably greater than in the first years of the Polish state’s existence. It gradually increased as state and legal structures became organised and improved. The administrative discretion of local officials was restricted; their scope to follow their own convictions in their work was constantly limited. The activity framework was becoming more tightly defined by legal and administrative guidelines from central government (as shown in the abovementioned 1938 decree and detailed 1939 guidelines by the Head of the Department of

⁸² Ibidem, pp. 258-264.

⁸³ ANTONI MIRONOWICZ: Rewindykacja prawosławnych obiektów sakralnych w II Rzeczypospolitej [Requisitioning of Orthodox Churches in the Second Polish Republic], in: Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne 21 (2004), pp. 83-103, here pp. 96-102.

⁸⁴ AAN, MWRiOP, No 385, p. 263v.

⁸⁵ Ibidem, p. 260.

Religions, Dunin-Borkowski) whose implementation was controlled by a continually improving supervision system.

At the same time in mid-1930s the central authorities finally formulated a detailed plan of action in the national and religious sphere. Of particular note are for instance mentions that only after that time did the government undertook to closely examine and formulate its policies towards minority religious associations for the first time during this period.⁸⁶ The guidelines were then expected to be rigorously applied by voivodes who used them to create regional action strategies tailored specifically to their territory.⁸⁷ Voivodes reported extensively on their implementation progress to the Head of the Department of Religions, including the submission of comprehensive statistical data which reflected the specific nature of their respective territories.⁸⁸ The programmes and resulting activities implemented were generally much more repressive in nature, geared towards confrontation and seeking to put pressure on the implementation of Polonisation activities with no real regard for their negative public perception.⁸⁹ Yet there were still voices warning the local administration – which by that time was dominated by the proponents of the latter camp – to exercise moderation in its methods.⁹⁰ The scales tipped violently however in favour of Polonisation and the greatest possible subjugation of the Orthodox Church as a means to achieving that end. Yet it was important that those actions did not generally gain the support of local Poles, even though they often sympathised with a moderate national ideology.

* * *

To summarise, until 1935 the authorities in particular attempted, quite ineffectively, to strike a balance in relations with the Orthodox Church. On the one hand they introduced initiatives which were supposed to encourage national and religious minorities to seek rapprochement with the Polish state, thereby subjecting them to its influence, and on the other hand they sought to eradicate any activity deemed threatening to their interests and to public safety. Effective implementation of both of these goals was very often impossible, or exceeded the capacity of local authorities due to their insufficient skills to

⁸⁶ Ibidem, pp. 168v-173, 264.

⁸⁷ SNYDER (as in footnote 44), pp. 205-206.

⁸⁸ AAN, MWRiOP, No 385, p. 256. See for example report of the Head of the Social and Political Section of the Vilnius Voivode's Office of 1939; *ibidem*, pp. 165-173.

⁸⁹ EUGENIUSZ MIRONOWICZ: *Plany integracji ziem wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej w polityce obozu sanacyjnego (1935-1937)* [Plans to Integrate the Eastern Territories of the Second Polish Republic in the Policies of the Sanation Camp], in: *Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne* 18 (2002), pp. 118-130, here p. 118; KRYSZYNA GOMÓŁKA: *Polityka rządów polskich wobec mniejszości białoruskiej w latach 1918-1939* [Polish Government Policies toward the Belorussian Minority from 1918 to 1939], *ibidem* 4 (1995), pp. 106-120, here pp. 116-117.

⁹⁰ AAN, MWRiOP, No 385, pp. 259v-260.

conduct such a sensitive policy. The Polish state was not able to inspire genuine loyalty among the largest religious and national minorities due to chronic organizational problems and the lack of a coherent long-term programme. The situation changed in the second half of the 1930s, but repressive policies aroused major controversies and caused concerns as to their consequences.

Zusammenfassung

Die Beziehungen zwischen der Lokalverwaltung in den polnischen Ostgebieten und den nicht-katholischen Religionsgemeinschaften in der Zweiten Republik

Die polnischen Kommunalbehörden wurden bei ihrem Umgang mit den einzelnen Religionsgemeinschaften mit zahlreichen organisatorischen, rechtlichen und finanziellen Schwierigkeiten konfrontiert. Diese waren der Grund dafür, warum die Republik Polen – unabhängig von den politischen Zielen der jeweiligen Zentralregierungen – nicht dazu in der Lage war, selbst grundlegende Bedürfnisse der religiösen Gemeinschaften zu befriedigen. Am wichtigsten erscheint hierbei die Tatsache, dass der polnische Staat keinen genauen rechtlichen Rahmen für seine Beziehungen zu den religiösen Gemeinschaften festlegte und kein reibungslos funktionierendes Verfahren zur Betreuung der religiösen Angelegenheiten gewährleisten konnte. Der vorliegende Artikel will insbesondere zeigen, dass diese Probleme einen mindestens ebenso wichtigen Faktor bildeten wie die politischen Entscheidungen selbst, die von der Regierung gefällt wurden und das praktische Vorgehen der polnischen Kommunalverwaltung beeinflussten. Der Autor versucht diese beiden Elemente untereinander angemessen zu gewichten. Das politische Programm der polnischen Behörden in der Zwischenkriegszeit, das die religiösen und staatlichen Bereiche betraf, ist in der Forschung bereits detailliert betrachtet worden, während die strukturellen Schwierigkeiten des Staates als eine fundamentale Ursache für das Verhalten der Staatsbeamten in den östlichen Gebieten bislang nicht ausreichend berücksichtigt worden sind.

Das hauptsächliche Problem bildet dabei die Beziehung zwischen den Kommunalbehörden und der Orthodoxen Kirche. Zusammenfassend lässt sich festhalten, dass sich bis 1935 gerade die Behörden – eher erfolglos – um geregelte Beziehungen zur Orthodoxen Kirche bemühten. Auf der einen Seite unternahmen sie Initiativen, mit denen die nationalen und religiösen Minderheiten dazu ermutigt werden sollten, sich dem polnischen Staat anzunähern und sich so dessen Einfluss zu unterwerfen. Auf der anderen Seite mussten sie jegliche Aktivitäten im Keim ersticken, die ihre Interessen oder die öffentliche Sicherheit zu gefährden drohten. Die effektive Umsetzung dieser beiden Ziele erwies sich in vielen Fällen als unmöglich, und die Kommunalbehörden waren damit überfordert, eine derart heikle Politik durchzuführen. Der polnische Staat war wegen chronischer organisatorischer Probleme und mangels eines schlüssigen langfristigen politischen Programms nicht dazu in der Lage, bei den größten religiösen und nationalen Minderheiten eine grundlegende Loyalität herzustellen. In der zweiten Hälfte der 1930er Jahre konnten einige der genannten Defizite zwar behoben werden, die repressive Politik jener Jahre führte jedoch zu massiven Kontroversen und Bedenken bezüglich der Konsequenzen.