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## GERMAN-OWNED GREAT LANDED ESTATES IN WIELKOPOLSKA IN THE YEARS 1815-1914

The upcoming 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) Uprising is a very significant anniversary for the people of the region, as it was – unlike the November and January Uprisings – the only one which ended in victory for the insurgents. In order to understand the circumstances preceding these events and the intricacies of the complex socioeconomic structure of what was then Poznań Province, research into regional history is necessary. It enables a broader understanding of the events and historical processes relating to more closely situated, and thus better known, places and people.<sup>1</sup>

From the Second Partition of Poland until the restoration of independence in 1918, Wielkopolska remained under foreign rule for 125 years (except in the time of the short-lived Duchy of Warsaw). As Hans von Rosen noted<sup>2</sup> “the Poznań land does not occupy a special place in the history of German culture and in the humanities. There are no great philosophers here, such as those of whom East Prussia can be proud, or great poets, whom neighbouring Silesia gave to the world in such a great number.”<sup>3</sup> Von Rosen emphasised, however, that a specific group of “German Poznań inhabitants” with a flair for practical issues and at the same time of a gentle and friendly disposition had developed over the centuries.<sup>4</sup> Although the second part of the sentence seems to be a subjective statement, in fact a distinct cultural and ethnic community was formed in Wielkopolska within just one century. This community, like the native residents, could be divided into classes on the basis of origin and material status.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Nikitorowicz, *Edukacja regionalna i międzykulturowa*, Warsaw 2009, p. 291, and D. Konieczka-Słowińska, A. Napierała, M. Michalski, *Dzieje Wielkopolski jako autorski wątek tematyczny w ramach przedmiotu „historia i społeczeństwo”*. *Dziedzictwo epok*. Klio. A periodical dedicated to history of Poland and world history, vol. 26 (3)/2013, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Freiherr von Rosen (1900-1999), German landowner in the Greater Poland and Kuyavian-Pomeranian regions, President of the German Weichsel-Warthe Compatriots' Association in the years 1959–1969 and 1977–1981, author of numerous publications dedicated to the life of the Germans in Poznań during the interwar period and the history of landed estates in the hands of the Germans before 1945.

<sup>3</sup> H. v. Rosen, *Saat und Ernte: Lebensbilder Posener deutscher Landwirte*, Rosbach vor der Höhe, Hameln 1978, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

The aim of this paper is to highlight the importance of the German-owned great landed estates in Wielkopolska and their place in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century history of the region. The owners of these estates, due to their mere presence and national distinctiveness, left a mark on important branches of the economy and the political life of the region. These factors, to a great extent, influenced the formation of antagonistic Polish-German relations and the specific understanding of national consciousness under Prussian rule. The issue of Germanisation of the land and public life is a well-known and much investigated problem in Polish historiography. On the other hand, not much attention is paid to the Prussian gentry and German burghers, who were active in agriculture and forestry (not necessarily legally – as will be discussed later) from the very beginning of their presence in Greater Poland.

At this point it is necessary to define what a great landed estate is. Researchers studying the problems of land ownership and the East Elbian agricultural economy have followed the definition of the German *Brockhaus Lexikon*.<sup>5</sup> According to this source, a manor estate whose arable land amounted to at least 100 hectares is called a great landed estate.<sup>6</sup> These estates were mainly located east of the Elbe River and were owned by members of the gentry, and later also by burghers, who were becoming increasingly wealthy. This article will consider the period from 1815 to 1914, and will refer to the lands within the borders of the Grand Duchy of Poznań, later called Poznań Province.

As has been emphasised by Kowalski,<sup>7</sup> quoting Sobczyński<sup>8</sup> and Plit,<sup>9</sup> (feudal) estates influenced the spatial shape of many phenomena of the time. In particular, this concerns the so-called relic borders and the broadly defined cultural landscape. Relics are understood as cultural and legal “survivals” that functioned for a long time as “imported” systems in the Polish territories. They may include, for example, the institutions of the manor estate areas in nineteenth-century Wielkopolska as units of territorial administration equivalent to the rural municipality, typical of Prussia.<sup>10</sup> However, the whole regional culture underwent characteristic transformation due to the influence of the newly arrived landowners. This applies to both language and religion, and especially to national traditions and social policy.

At the time of the creation of the Grand Duchy of Poznań, Wielkopolska had 776,000 inhabitants, 80% of whom lived off the land. According to Kozłowski, only

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<sup>5</sup> A. Frank, *Die Entwicklung der ostelbischen Gutswirtschaften im Deutschen Kaiserreich und in den Anfangsjahren der Weimarer Republik*, Regensburg 1994.

<sup>6</sup> *Brockhaus' Konversations-Lexikon*, vol. 13, Leipzig 1903, p. 783.

<sup>7</sup> M. Kowalski, *Wielkie posiadłości ziemskie Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów i ich wpływ na dzisiejsze środowisko antropogeniczne*, *Studia z Geografii Politycznej i Historycznej*, vol. 1, 2012, p. 113.

<sup>8</sup> M. Sobczyński, *Polskie doświadczenia w zakresie badań granic reliktowych i krajobrazu pogranicza*, in: M. Kulesza (ed.), *Czas i przestrzeń w naukach geograficznych. Wybrane problemy geografii politycznej*, Łódź 2008.

<sup>9</sup> J. Plit, *Piętno władzy i właścicieli odcisnięte na krajobrazie kulturowym*, in: S. Bernart (ed.), *Niematerialne wartości krajobrazów kulturowych*. Prace Komisji Krajobrazu Kulturowego No. 15, Komisja Krajobrazu Kulturowego PTG (The Cultural Landscape Commission of the Polish Geographical Association), Sosnowiec 2011.

<sup>10</sup> M. Kowalski, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

2659 out of the vast number of farmers could be considered lords of manor estates.<sup>11</sup> Due to the lack of more accurate statistics, it is difficult to determine how many of these in fact owned great landed estates. Since the mid-nineteenth century we have had detailed and relatively objective statistical records, which show the percentage of the German owners of great landed estates in Wielkopolska. However, this percentage had been steadily increasing ever since the Second Partition of Poland.<sup>12</sup> It is worth noting that the families of Wielkopolska landowners of German descent, living in the region for many generations, do not conform to the pattern of nineteenth-century society in the Prussian sector of partitioned Poland. They often succumbed to intense Polonisation, and what is more, their presence was subject to the old feudal order dating from the days of the Polish Nobles' Republic (*Rzeczpospolita szlachecka*).

The emergence of German-owned great landed estates in Greater Poland after the partitions was closely linked, in the first phase of this long-running process, to scandalous embezzlement of state property and the political scandal whose behind-the-scenes details were later revealed by the Prussian official Hans von Held.<sup>13</sup> There were many speculators who did not seek to establish permanent manor estates (the so-called *Rittergüter*)<sup>14</sup> among the first Prussian noblemen who purchased Polish landed estates and the former Crown lands after the Second Partition. Subsequent analyses of this situation indicate that 245 estates in the new Prussian territories were sold to 48 people (mostly representatives of Prussian high-ranking officials) for more than 2 million thalers. The actual value of the property was more than twice that amount.<sup>15</sup> Molik, among others, described a specific transformation in the ethnic composition of the region. He pointed out that about 40% of the estates were meant to be nationalised and sold to private individuals at market prices,<sup>16</sup> but in fact 25 people from the

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<sup>11</sup> J. Kozłowski, *Wielkopolska pod zaborem pruskim w latach 1815-1918*, Poznań 2006, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> The presence of German noble families, generously endowed with estates in Wielkopolska by regional rulers from the Middle Ages to the partitions, is undeniable. Andrzej Kwilecki, an expert in Wielkopolska noble families and their history, wrote: "The borderland between Wielkopolska and Silesia and the Lubusz Land was the land of many families of not crystal clear national identity, of Slavic or German descent, whose branches, usually because of a religious factor, were either Polonised or Germanised (e.g. the Sczaniecki family from Sczaniec bearing the Ossoria coat of arms had a German branch called von Stensch; Polish and German lines of the Schlichtings, Unrugs, etc.)." Cf. A. Kwilecki, *Ziemiaństwo Wielkopolskie*, Warsaw 1998, pp. 13-15.

<sup>13</sup> *Die wahren Jacobiner im preußischen Staate oder actenmäßige Darstellung der bösen Ränke und betrügerischen Dienstführung zweyer preußischer Staatsminister*, Berlin 1800 (published anonymously, most probably by H. v. Held).

<sup>14</sup> This phenomenon was described more thoroughly by F. Paprocki, *Wielkie Księstwo Poznańskie w okresie rządów Flottwella 1830-1841*, Poznań 1994, pp. 173-174.

<sup>15</sup> J. Wąsicki, *Ziemie polskie pod zaborem pruskim. Prusy Południowe 1793-1806. Studium historyczno-prawne*, Wrocław 1957, p. 227, and D. Łukasiewicz, *Nowa analiza czarnego rejestru, studium źródłoznawcze*, in: *Roczniki dziejów społecznych i gospodarczych*, Kwartalnik Historyczny, 1997 (CIV), vol. 2, Poznań 1997.

<sup>16</sup> It primarily concerns the Crown estates belonging to the Polish monarch and confiscated church properties (mostly monastic) that were taken over in large numbers by the Prussian government in those years.

court circles in Berlin<sup>17</sup> came into possession of these properties. This and the subsequent action of the Governor (*Oberpräsident*) of the Grand Duchy of Poznań, Eduard Flottwell,<sup>18</sup> as well as the establishment of the Prussian Colonisation Commission at the end of the nineteenth century, caused Poles to develop a common belief that all German landed property had its origin in the unfair distribution of public and private goods. Hans von Rosen's statement that the origins of this ownership structure should be sought in entirely individual and honest German initiatives<sup>19</sup> is, in view of the above, a large and somewhat biased generalisation that does not accord with available sources and would require a further thorough analysis.

Even before the creation of the Grand Duchy of Poznań, Polish landed gentry living in the areas under Prussian rule had taken loans from Prussian banks for a total of 12 million thalers.<sup>20</sup> During the Napoleonic wars, by order of the authorities of the Duchy of Warsaw, the nobility did not pay off the due instalments and interest, which were rigorously exacted from the debtors after the reincorporation of Greater Poland into Prussia. As a result, by the end of the 1830s there were more and more Prussian merchants in the Grand Duchy of Poznań who were eager to buy Polish manors. One should also bear in mind the unfavourable conditions for agriculture in the 1820s, and the socioeconomic changes resulting from the enfranchisement of the serfs in the Grand Duchy of Poznań.<sup>21</sup>

A large-scale operation of top-down transfer of land from Polish to German hands, directed by Eduard Flottwell in the years 1830-1840, was intended to create small landed estates which would then be given to ordinary farmers. In a memorandum written and published years later, the former governor explained that he had striven to incorporate the Grand Duchy of Poznań into Prussia for good by breaking up great landed property.<sup>22</sup> It can be assumed that the idea of handing the great estates over to Prussian junkers (which in fact would mean only a change of owners) was alien to him. The estates were divided, and only a few of them still remained manor estates (*Rittergüter*). As a result of Flottwell's activity in 1832-1840, hundreds of manor estates formerly belonging to Poles passed into the hands of Germans, and this trend increased steadily until 1845.<sup>23</sup> Many of these estates were created by dividing

<sup>17</sup> W. Molik, *Przemiany w strukturze narodowościowej i społecznej wielkich właścicieli ziemskich w Poznańskim do końca XVIII do początku XX wieku*, in: W. Stepiński, M. Jaroszewicz (eds.), *Szlachta i ziemiaństwo polskie oraz niemieckie w Prusach i w Niemczech w XVIII-XX w. proceedings of a scholarly seminar 22-24 X 1993 held in Szczecin*, Szczecin 1993, p. 163.

<sup>18</sup> Eduard Heinrich Flottwell (1786-1865), Prussian administrative official, politician, Governor of the Grand Duchy of Poznań in the years 1831-1840, then Minister of Finance and Minister of Interior at the end of his career.

<sup>19</sup> H. v. Rosen, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> W. Wolniewicz, *O gospodarstwie majątkiem czyli o stosunkach finansowych w Księstwie Poznańskim*, Leszno 1855, p. 33.

<sup>21</sup> W. Molik, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-165.

<sup>22</sup> The information about Flottwell's memorandum to the king comes from a biographical note *Flottwell, Eduard Heinrich von*, in: *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 8, Munich/Leipzig 1878, p. 282.

<sup>23</sup> *GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 77 Ministerium des Innern, Tit. 438 No. 41: Erwerbung großer Besitzungen in der Provinz Posen und deren Wiederveräußerung an Erwerber deutscher Abkunft, 1833-1874*, p. 63.

large properties previously owned by Wielkopolska magnates, such as the Mycielskis, Radolińskis and Morawskis.<sup>24</sup> The number of large estates in the hands of Germans at the time of Flottwell's resignation can be indicated fairly precisely as follows: 410 of the manors belonged to Prussian citizens of German descent and 954 to citizens of Polish nationality, i.e. 30% and 70% respectively.<sup>25</sup>

The aim of this significant change in the ownership structure was to strengthen the German element among landowners, and this must have been felt in the social life of the province and in the countryside in particular. Since the original land reform naturally did not extend to the areas of the then Duchy of Warsaw, the enfranchisement of peasants took place in the Grand Duchy of Poznań later than in the rest of Prussia. Consequently, loosening of the feudal relations and the birth of classical capitalism did not take place in these lands until the years 1823-1836. Peasants were granted freehold (to some extent) on the basis of voluntary agreements and compensation for the land in the form of money or obligations towards the owner. In fact, this did not mean that new large Polish farmsteads and landed property would be created. In most cases the plots of land were bought by German merchants, many of whom thus became the owners of estates themselves. Not only interventionism and the Prussian bureaucracy led to shrinkage of the Polish possessions and degeneration of the great Polish landed estates. Opinions on the poor management of the land by the Poles began to be heard in the mid-nineteenth century. Contrary to what one might suspect, these were not just the opinions of the local Germans. *Ziemiańin*, a Polish periodical published in Poznań, said this in 1850:

In almost every district of Germany, France, Belgium, England and even the German part of Austria, there is an agronomy, industry and commerce magazine; in neighbouring countries there is more than one magazine for about 50,000 inhabitants, whereas no magazine dedicated to agriculture or industry has been published for a few years in the Duchy of Poznań, a part of Poland which should rank high in terms of well-developed agriculture. No magazines dedicated to agriculture or industry have been published here for years, although this part of Poland has better learning opportunities owing to foreign books as well as opportunities to visit foreign assemblies and view farms first-hand. We do not have a single organ to voice our opinions on economic matters. We have no opportunity to give each other advice, enlighten each other, so many delightful ideas, experience paid for so dearly die a miserable death. (...) Let's compare our farms with farms in Belgium, England, Germany, how far behind we are, how much we need to do to come closer to them.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, publications and scientific literature for farmers and landowners began to appear in the West as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century. The fact is that at the same time the low level of literacy among Poles and general lack of knowledge of foreign languages could have impeded access to this type of literature. For exam-

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<sup>24</sup> M. Laubert, *Der Flottwellsche Güterbetriebsfonds in der Provinz Posen: Ein Beitrag zur preußischen Polenpolitik und ostmärkischer Siedlungsgeschichte*, Berlin 1929, pp. 20-24, 33, 45.

<sup>25</sup> GStA PK, I. HA Rep., Tit. 438, *ibidem*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ziemiańin. Pismo Poświęcone Rolnictwu i Przemysłowi*, Poznań 1850, pp. 4-6.

ple, in Prussia the agronomist and later professor Albrecht Thaer<sup>27</sup> founded the first agricultural school in the Möglin manor near Berlin in 1804. He also wrote his most famous book *The Principles of Agriculture* at that time.<sup>28</sup> The school and his publications also enabled the Prussian landowners in Greater Poland to develop their skills in the management of the manor estates. One of these junkers was Karl von Treskow. Born in 1787 to an ennobled Berlin banker, Karl von Treskow was sent by his father to Göttingen in 1797 to study agriculture, and then to Albrecht Thaer's school. The estate in Owińska near Poznań was later administered by the young von Treskow while his father was on business trips abroad.<sup>29</sup> Of course, not only the remaining Prussian junkers in Greater Poland, but also the local Polish nobility, followed the example of the Treskow family. The most famous of them was Dezydery Chłapowski, who educated young students of agriculture, among them Maximilian Jackowski,<sup>30</sup> on his estate in Turew. However, the Prussian authorities thwarted his attempts, and a school of agriculture similar to that in Berlin was never established in the Prussian sector of partitioned Poland.

While it is possible to talk about the Germanisation policy consciously adopted by the Prussian state and the government in Berlin, it is difficult to speak about a consistent attitude of the Prussian and later German landowners with regard to the Polish population. A source to be considered here is a document from 1846<sup>31</sup> on the stabilisation of the situation in Poznań Province, drawn up by a committee established on the initiative of the Prussian landowners, whose aim was to present their own proposals for the province to the government.<sup>32</sup> What emerges from the document is a picture of junkers who try to remedy the problems in a determined, though (at least in their opinion) considerate and fair way, by submitting appropriate suggestions to the government. Strengthening of German ownership (“at least by creating a balance between Polish and German landowners”) would be done by: expropriation (with compensa-

<sup>27</sup> Albrecht Thaer, 1752-1828, doctor, botanist and pioneer of agronomy in Germany, founder of the Agricultural Academy in Möglin (*Landwirtschaftliche Akademie Möglin*), Prussian citizen from 1804, then professor at the University of Berlin.

<sup>28</sup> A. Thaer, *Grundsätze der rationellen Landwirtschaft*, 4 vols., Berlin 1809-1812.

<sup>29</sup> The history of the von Treskows is a peculiar example of rapid ennoblement and social advancement. The origin and history of the family in Greater Poland was described in detail by one of its members, Dr Rüdiger von Treskow, in his book *Gilly Schinkel Catel: das Landschloss Owinsk bei Posen; The Palace in Owińska near Poznań 1803-1806*, Berlin 2011.

<sup>30</sup> Maksymilian Jackowski (1815-1905), social and economic activist, landowner, agricultural school trainee in Turew, member of the Agricultural Society, co-founder of the Central Economic Society, co-editor of numerous agricultural and patriotic journals (“Orędownik”, “Rocznik Kółek”, “Poradnik Gospodarski”, to name just a few).

<sup>31</sup> The situation related to the uprising in Greater Poland in 1846. The conspirators were arrested before its outbreak. As a result an armed rebellion broke out on 4 March 1846. There were skirmishes in nearby localities (Górczyn, Kórnik), and eventually there was a battle on the Chwaliszewski Bridge. A natural disaster that befell Greater Poland in the following months resulted in riots in Poznań caused by hunger and led to growing social discontent.

<sup>32</sup> GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 77 Ministerium des Innern, Tit. 1083 No. 8: Gründung deutscher Vereine in der Provinz Posen zur Wahrung deutscher Interessen, 1846, p. 5ff.



tion) from the participants in the last uprising and resale of the confiscated estates<sup>33</sup> to “good and loyal Germans”; dissolution of Polish anti-Prussian organisations; *Landtag* reform (changing the electoral law to deprive the Polish landed gentry of numerical superiority and strengthening the Prussian gentry, the so-called *Ritterschaft*); and economic integration of the province with the western provinces. This process was to be facilitated by, among other things, the construction of railways or national roads linking the province with other regions of the Prussian Kingdom. The last proposal in particular would show later how important Poznań Province had been for the German export and sales market.

The German landlords in Wielkopolska became a stable class element in the province’s society even in the first half of the nineteenth century, and they clearly felt that they competed with both the ordinary people of the province and the Polish landed gentry. Religious and economic differences were still observed and the Grand Duchy of Poznań still did not seem to be a fully integrated part of the Prussian Crown, including transport and public administration. At the same time it should be noted that the German landowners wanted to be regarded as a separate class. They wanted to achieve that by strengthening their real and traditional political privileges and economic position, thereby creating a community parallel to the Polish landed gentry in Wielkopolska. It can further be concluded that a peculiar situation characteristic of the partitioned areas of Poland developed in Poznań Province. The society was divided not only into two nationalities, functioning side by side and having antagonistic relations until 1918, but also into two forever separate castes of landowners – a similar process took place in the other two sectors of partitioned Poland. How advanced was the process of such isolation among the members of the same caste, differing only in nationality, is demonstrated by an example described by Szuldrzyński.<sup>34</sup> Szuldrzyński recalled the memories of his father, the owner of, among others, a landed estate in Bolechowo, bordering on the property of the aforementioned von Treskow family:

There was no social interaction with the German neighbours [who were landowners, like the Szuldrzyńskis – F. M.]. My father recalled that when he settled down in Bolechowo, he paid his neighbours traditional visits, he was revisited, and that ended his relationships with his neighbours. When the county affairs required joint decisions and the neighbours came to my father, the conversation used to take place in his office, where the tea was brought by a servant but none of the family members was present. (...) The owners of the former monastic property were obliged to maintain a beautiful church in Owińska dating back to the first half of the eighteenth century. (...) We the young did not even know what they looked like. Sometimes our carriages passed each other on the way to church. We were going to Owińska, they were going in the opposite direction, to the

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<sup>33</sup> There was no question of breaking up or dividing the estates, which had thus far been preferred by such politicians as Eduard Flottwell and which would have been detrimental to Prussian junkers.

<sup>34</sup> Thanks to rational management by its progenitor Józef Szuldrzyński, the bourgeois family rose to the position of landed gentry in Greater Poland through a systematic purchase of landed estates in the first half of the nineteenth century and marrying representatives of the old landed gentry of the region. Cf.: S. Leitgeber, *Szuldrzyńscy* in: „*Gens*” 1999/2000 *The Genealogical-Heraldic Society in Poznań*, Poznań 2000, pp. 1-10, and A. M. Skałkowski, *Józef Szuldrzyński; 1801-1859*, Poznań 1939.

Protestant church in Murowana Goślina. We used to nod our greetings automatically – neighbourly courtesy relating more to the coaches than the people. This separation from the Germans arose quite naturally, not due to any chauvinistic attitude, but due to a sense of the lawlessness that was the basis of their presence on the Polish soil.<sup>35</sup>

This is most probably a simplified picture, but certainly one providing a general outline of the relationships that developed between Polish and German owners of the great landed estates in Poznań Province. This case is even more interesting because both families consisted of bourgeoisie who, as a result of social advancement and ennoblement and systematic accumulation of property, were among the prominent citizens of Wielkopolska, but who because of religious and national differences remained permanently in rather cold relations. Undoubtedly, this principle applied to most relations between German and Polish landowners.

Apart from the great landed estate, which was commonly known as the manor estate, other forms of landed property also began to appear in Wielkopolska in the nineteenth century, such as latifundia and territorial domains modelled on the media-tised duchies of the old Reich (among them the so-called *Herrschaften*). Although they were already deprived of most privileges (including an autonomous judiciary) in the mid-nineteenth century, and they were administratively distinct from other landed estates mainly by their name (duchy, majorat, fee tail, etc.), their size exceeded the average size of a landed property many times. A realistic picture of this phenomenon emerges from, among others, the *Güteradressbuch für die Provinz Posen* dating from 1907.<sup>36</sup> Although several Polish names (von Mielzynski, von Kwilecki, von Kurnatowski, Graf von Radziwill, von Poninski, etc.) can still be found in this source, alongside the majority of landed estates the names of Prussian noblemen or German burghers alternate with those of Polish noblemen at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nobility from the old German Reich were already coming to Wielkopolska in the first half of the nineteenth century. Their largest property was the Duchy of Krotoszyn, which covered about 25,000 hectares.<sup>37</sup> It was owned by the Prussian family of the Thurn and Taxis princes. They, in turn, had received the property as compensation for waiving their right to the postal monopoly in the Prussian provinces on the Rhine and in Westphalia. Like in Silesia, these estates became dominiums as male-line hereditary fiefdoms, along with all the rights and liberties to which free estates were entitled.<sup>38</sup> It is true that this is a unique situation in the entire Poznań Province (no other German or Polish aristocratic family had such extensive property which was *de jure* a small separate state); however, many of the landed estates were purchased by members of the ruling royal families from Germany proper as

<sup>35</sup> J. Szuldrzyński, *Mój ojciec i jego czasy*, in: T. Szuldrzyński: *Wspomnienia wielkopolskie*, Lublin 2012, pp. 16-19.

<sup>36</sup> *Niekammers Güter-Adressbücher: Band 6: Posen*, vol. 6, Szczecin 1907.

<sup>37</sup> A. Handke, A. M. v. Rohrscheidt, *Zarys dziejów Krotoszyna i ziemi krotoszyńskiej*, Turystyka Kulturowa, No. 9/2010.

<sup>38</sup> F. Mierniczak, *Krotoszyn dzisiejszy i dawny*, Ziemia, vol. 13, Warsaw 1928, No. 19, pp. 301-305.



early as the first half of the nineteenth century. Although the estates in Wielkopolska were often ordinary manor estates, many of them were later transformed into majorats and fee tails,<sup>39</sup> combining neighbouring estates purchased earlier into one uniform entity. These estates, unlike the ordinary landed gentry's estates, often covered several thousand or tens of thousands of hectares of forests and meadows, which in practice gave them great freedom and economic and political independence.

Apart from the princes of Thurn and Taxis, also representatives of the counts of Pückler, princes of Anhalt (related to the British Crown), princes of Stolberg-Wernigerode, princes of Reuss (the so-called "junior line"), princes of Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha, princes of Hohenlohe-Oehringen, as well as numerous Silesian magnates such as the well-known and wealthy princes von Hochberg-Pless, purchased many estates in Poznań Province. Most of these magnates, however, had their family residences outside of that province and the Prussian sector of partitioned Poland (as was often and accurately noted in the Poznań *Güter-Adressbuch*), so they no doubt visited Greater Poland quite rarely. Interestingly, after taking a closer look at the biographies of the above-mentioned German magnates, it can be said that most of them were closely associated with the court in Berlin, as they were diplomats, politicians or court officials.<sup>40</sup>

Most of the great latifundia, however, still belonged to the ancient Wielkopolska families, such as Radziwiłł, Potulicki, Czarnecki, Potworowski and Radliński. Most of them were active in social life and faithful to national issues in the province. This group also included such members of the noble families who were able to find their place in the progressive Germanisation of the landed property. Among them were such prominent figures as Atanazy Raczyński<sup>41</sup> or later Hugo von Radolin<sup>42</sup> and Michał Radziwiłł "Rudy"<sup>43</sup>. However, most families had always been opposed to their

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<sup>39</sup> The Prussian Landrecht provided for conversion of manorial estates into undivided fee tails, inherited by the eldest representative of the family (majorat). Both of these legal institutions had already been known in the modern era in East Prussia, Pomerania or Brandenburg. They were known under the name of *majątek ordynacki* [entail] in Poland.

<sup>40</sup> Random examples: Maximilian Freiherr von Schlichting-Bukowice, royal chamberlain and member of the Prussian House of Lords (*Herrenhaus*), Hugo Fürst von Radolin, Imperial-Royal pantler and German ambassador in London, and Wilhelm Prinz von Stolberg-Wernigerode, secretary of the German embassy in London, on the basis of: *Güter-Adressbuch der Provinz Posen, Szczecin* 1907, pp. 55, 69, 79.

<sup>41</sup> Atanazy Raczyński, 1788–1874, brother of Edward Raczyński, landowner, deputy of the provincial parliament of the Grand Duchy of Poznań, Prussian ambassador in Lisbon and Madrid, member of the Prussian House of Lords (*Herrenhaus*).

<sup>42</sup> Hugo Fürst von Radolin (Radoliński), 1841-1917, Prussian ambassador in St Petersburg, Constantinople and Paris, knight of the Order of the Black Eagle, he received the hereditary title of duke from the emperor in 1888. Wilhelm II appointed him secret secretary of state, master of court ritual and chief pantler at the court in Berlin.

<sup>43</sup> Michał Radziwiłł, 1870-1955, colonel of the German Army and major in the British Army; however, for most of his professional life he served as a diplomat for the Russian Empire, for example, an *attaché* at the embassy in Paris. In conflict with his family since his youth, he brought the inherited Przygodzice entail to bankruptcy.

German neighbours (as described by Szuldrzyński, quoted above) and to the Prussian government.

The growing dominance of the German bourgeoisie, a new group among the owners of the great landed estates, could be noticed in both the 1907 register and its new edition of 1913.<sup>44</sup> Since the enfranchisement of the serfs in Poznań Province and the emergence of elements of the classic free market economy in Prussia, members of the wealthy bourgeoisie who had already at the end of the nineteenth century purchased manor estates in Greater Poland from both the Polish landed gentry and Prussian noblemen began more and more often to come to the fore. Although they did not have noble titles, they added the name of the manor estate to their own name like old families used to do.<sup>45</sup> They also began imitating local German aristocrats and Polish landed gentry in their behaviour and social life. At the end of the nineteenth century, despite the initial rivalry and reluctance of the Prussian nobility towards the bourgeoisie who were buying land, a gradual rapprochement began which contributed to both economic and social interaction. The German scholar Wolfram G. Thielmann mentions primarily hunting as a socially and politically integrating factor. Hunting was held in high esteem both in Prussia proper and the Prussian sector of partitioned Poland.<sup>46</sup> At the time, Prussian noblemen and bourgeois landowners used to go hunting together, which was certainly a strong factor integrating the two communities, but at the same time separating them from the Polish landowners, who organised parallel hunts during the Hubertus hunting season. The Prussian hunting law was also a factor that reinforced that distinction. According to that law, the right to organise hunting was inseparably linked to possession of a suitable area of land and forest.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, as Molik estimated, at the beginning of the nineteenth century almost 70% of the great landed estates were in the hands of Germans, and Polish landowners prevailed only in the categories of large latifundia and entails.<sup>48</sup>

While considering the role of the German great landed estate in the economic history of Wielkopolska, one should pay attention to the historical and social relations in the region taken as a whole. In German historiography until the first half of the twentieth century, Poznań Province was also considered part of the so-called *Ostelbien* (areas east of the Elbe). Unlike in the western regions, the agricultural economy continued to grow in this geographical region of Europe. Despite the breaking up of

<sup>44</sup> *Niekammers Güter für die Provinz Posen*, vol. 2, Leipzig 1913.

<sup>45</sup> Examples from Greater Poland: the Hoffmeyers-Złotnik, Kujaths-Dobbertin (Dobrzyniewo) and Hildebrands-Kleszczewo.

<sup>46</sup> W. Thielmann, *Adel im grünen Rock, Adliges Jägertum, Großprivatwaldbesitz und die preußische Forstbeamtenerschaft 1866-1914*, Oldenburg 2004.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. H. Hiller's monograph, *Jäger und Jagd. Zur Entwicklung des Jagdwesens in Deutschland zwischen 1848 und 1914*, Münster 2003 and a list of laws that had affected the formation of substantive law and hunting law in Prussian provinces, compiled by C.L.H. Rabe (ed.), *Sammlung Preußischer Gesetze und Verordnungen, welche auf die allgemeine Deposital-, Hypotheken-, Gerichts-, Criminal-, und Städte-Ordnung, auf das allgemeine Landrecht, auf den Anhang zum allgemeinen Landrechte und zur allgemeinen Gerichtsordnung, auf die landschaftlichen Credit-Reglements und auf Provinzial- und Statutar-Rechte Bezug haben, nach der Zeitfolge geordnet*, Halle 1882.

<sup>48</sup> W. Molik, *Przemiany...*, p. 173.

many Polish landed estates into smaller farmsteads, which resulted in an influx of peasant farmers to towns (*Landflucht*) where they found employment in factories, the level of industrialisation was very low under Prussian rule. Unlike the German bourgeoisie in the west who became wealthy as a result of political changes following the enfranchisement of the peasants and the Revolutions of 1848, both old Prussian noblemen and burghers were mostly traditional farmers who did not invest in industry and did not set up any factories.<sup>49</sup> Manufacturing and industrial activities were limited to the construction of objects strictly related to agricultural production such as breweries, distilleries, sugar mills and sawmills, or the processing of by-products of agricultural production. This condition also persisted after the First World War in the years 1918-1939.<sup>50</sup> In fact, it meant that Wielkopolska and its landed estates were mainly concerned with supplying food products to more industrialised regions of the Reich or exporting them abroad.<sup>51</sup>

It is difficult to get a clear picture from various deliberations on the relationships between the owners of the great landed estates and Polish people. The fact is that the Germans, both members of the Prussian nobility and wealthy bourgeoisie, formed their own institutions in parallel to Polish organisations, to support their compatriots. The German Eastern Marches Society (commonly known as *Deutscher Ostmarkenverein* or as *Hakata* among Poles) and Germanisation in schools are the most popular subjects in Polish historiography, especially in the regional history of Wielkopolska. German historiography has always been more reserved in this regard, although recent publications have directly or indirectly addressed the problem. For instance, Malinowski examined the participation of the old Prussian aristocracy in *Hakata* in his book on the attitude of German nobility towards national socialism. Interestingly, most of its members consisted of lower ranking civil servants. One of the few exceptions was Prince Otto Graf zu Stolberg-Wernigerode, who was persuaded to become a member by Ferdinand von Hansemann and Heinrich von Tiedemann.<sup>52</sup> The predominance of burghers and intelligentsia certainly motivated leading members of *Hakata* to recruit great landowners, but this undertaking proved to be difficult and ultimately ineffective. Karin Aubert, author of private memoirs about life on the German–Polish border in the years 1897-1945,<sup>53</sup> wrote that the German landowners and aristocrats looked

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<sup>49</sup> Cf.: D. Matelski, *Rola ziemiaństwa niemieckiego w industrializacji ziem polskich w latach 1815-1945*, in: *Studia z Historii Społeczno-Gospodarczej XIX i XX Wieku*, vol. 8 /2010, Łódź 2010, pp. 57-76.

<sup>50</sup> *Kurier Poznański*, 1938, no. 288 published 28 June, and no. 432, published 22 September.

<sup>51</sup> A decline in the share of great landed estates in the German agricultural economy was recorded at the end of the German Empire. This was due to, among other things, lack of competitiveness of the German market when confronted with the growing economic and agricultural power of the Russian Empire. Mass exports of grain to America and Great Britain and even imports of food products to some provinces of the Reich meant that landed estates were often divided and sold, and in some cases completely closed down or colonised. An in-depth analysis and summary was made by A. Frank, *op. cit.*

<sup>52</sup> S. Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer. Deutscher Adel und Nationalsozialismus*, Frankfurt 2004, pp. 179-180.

<sup>53</sup> K. Aubert, *Eine Familie in deutsch-polnischen Grenzgebiet 1897-1945. Persönliche Erinnerungen und Erläuterungen*, Munich 2010.

sceptically at *Hakata* because of the liberal-conservative views characteristic of this social group. The fact is that any state intervention against Polish landed property could also have turned against the junkers. Aubert referred to the work of Hans von Rosen, who argued that German landowners believed that *Hakata*'s activity might have disturbed relations between Polish and German subjects of the Prussian King, who continued to promise equal treatment of both nations.<sup>54</sup>

There are also a few examples of intercession by Prussian landowners on behalf of Poles. At the time of an escalation of hostility between Germans and Poles in connection with a strike by children in Września, caused by their resistance to saying prayers in German, the Polish press published a statement by the liberal conservative Otto von Treskow, the Prussian lord of the Radojewo estate:

(...) the government was persuaded to make Polish Catholic children receive religious instruction in German, this is wickedness and stupidity which should be severely punished. Children, if they are older, will say: "If the clergy did not protect us from this, then apparently they did not have the good will to do that" – then they will turn away from the church and become social democrats.<sup>55</sup>

The conflict between the landowner von Haydebreck, a retired colonel from Poznań Province, and *Hakata* may serve as another example. This incident gained much publicity throughout the Reich and in the other countries that had participated in the partitioning of Poland. In a 1911 issue of the Cracow magazine *Nowa Reforma* (New Reform) we read:

The Polish society under Prussian rule, oppressed and persecuted at every turn, finally got the satisfaction of knowing that a serious split has occurred in the camp of its most fierce enemies, i.e. *Deutscher Ostmarkenverein*. A clear sign of this split is the publication of a confidential circular of retired Prussian colonel v. Heydebreck by one of the German newspapers a week ago (...). Mr. Heydebreck speaks on behalf of the Germans in the Grand Duchy of Poznań who are tied to that province by birth, property and occupational activity (...). He accuses *Deutscher Ostmarkenverein*'s board of directors of putting pressure on the government in the wrong way and in a direction that is not desirable by the German population of the district; furthermore, this leads to dissent and political confusion even among this population. The publication of this circular made a great impression on the press and wide German circles, which was further enhanced when it turned out that this bold action of Mr Heydebreck had found sincere recognition among a highly esteemed group of German landed gentry.<sup>56</sup>

A certain degree of pragmatism can be noticed here, because the socialist movement emerging in Polish society aroused serious concerns among both German aristocrats and Polish conservatives in Poznań Province. Nevertheless, the small proportion of German landowners in the organisations of anti-Polish nationalists in Wielkopolska, as well as the fact that Polish people found permanent employment on German

<sup>54</sup> H. v. Rosen, *Deutsche Güter und ihre Besitzer*, in: W. Threde, P. Naraski (eds.), *Polen und sein preußischer Streifen 1919-1939. Die deutsche Volksgruppe in Posen und Pommerellen*, Berlin 1983, p. 49.

<sup>55</sup> The speech of Adam Woliński, the barrister, in defence of Września victims, w: *Mowa mec. Adama Wolińskiego w obronie ofiar wrześnińskich*, Postępowanie, Poznań, 26 November 1901.

<sup>56</sup> *Nowa Reforma*, No. 363, Kraków, 10 August 1911, p. 1.

landed estates, show that the attitude of the German landowners towards the native population of Greater Poland was more practical than antagonistic. In this matter, diaries, memoirs and biographical notes of both the Prussian landowners and political activists of both nationalities in Poznań Province would be valuable sources. A comprehensive work – a compilation of biographical records of prominent German owners of manor estates – was produced by Hans Freiherr von Rosen<sup>57</sup>, who has already been mentioned several times. However, this compilation, like most biographical narratives, is somewhat biased and shows Prussian families and German bourgeoisie in a very favourable light. The lack of an objective critical approach is also noticeable in Polish historiographical and biographical studies, such as the collections of workers' biographies written and edited in the years 1980–1981. Admittedly, they contain several mentions and recollections of the families of farm workers living in Wielkopolska in those years, but at the same time they are formulated in the spirit of the then-dominant regime and give an exceptionally negative image of the Germans in general, and the so-called “bourgeoisie” and landowners in particular.<sup>58</sup> The reminiscences of Polish nationalists and descendants of Polish landed gentry seem to be somewhat more interesting and more detached, although here one can also find examples of one-sided and negative narratives.<sup>59</sup> This is a very broad research topic and it needs further exploration, especially because issues concerning *Hakata* and the Prussian Colonisation Commission have been well examined for decades, whereas the case of the German landowners, who, as has been noted, did not contribute much to these organisations and institutions, as well as their attitude to the Polish population, are poorly known and described.

At the outbreak of World War I, most of the great landed estates in Poznań Province were in the hands of Germans. Such a situation could not continue without consequences for the overall functioning of the economy and society of Greater Poland. The process of the purchasing of landed estates by Prussian nobility, and later Germanisation practices under Flottwell and Bismarck, as discussed in the first part of this paper, had led to the unfinished process of merging the Prussian sector of partitioned Poland with the German state, which the Polish population perceived as a painful and unjust process. Poznań Province had been expected to become, due to its geographical location and economic importance, an integrating factor for the then eastern regions of Germany.

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. footnote 3.

<sup>58</sup> A. Bartoszek (ed.), *Robotnicze losy. Życiorysy własne robotników pisane w latach konfliktu 1980-1981*, vol. 2, Poznań 1996.

<sup>59</sup> A completely different picture of German–Polish relations in the Prussian sector of partitioned Poland and the life of the landed gentry of Wielkopolska is presented by Tadeusz Gustaw Jackowski, the grandson of Maksymilian Jackowski, diplomat and national activist. His memoirs written at the end of the 1960s are both a private testimony to the days of his youth in the Prussian sector as well as a warning, written despite the forthcoming conciliation between his homeland and the Federal Republic of Germany (recognition of the Oder–Neisse line and signing of the PRL-FRG treaty in December 1970). Jackowski presented a relatively simple image of the whole German population in Wielkopolska, putting its presence in Poland in the nineteenth century on a par with the Nazi occupation of 1939-1945. Cf.: T. G. Jackowski, *W walce o polskość*, Kraków 1972.

The importance of this region for the integrity of the German state can be confirmed by official documents and publications from the first decade after the Great War. The loss of Poznań Province had an unambiguously negative effect on the neighbouring provinces of Germany. Both small farmers and great landowners in the young Weimar Republic were severely hit by the adverse effects of the war. The condition of German agriculture was terrible. During the war, in order to keep their own farmsteads and adapt to the war economy, farmers caused significant detriment to their property by selling an excess of livestock and deadstock, practising monocultural farming, using artificial (often toxic) fertilisers and neglecting the melioration infrastructure.<sup>60</sup> There were, however, two other compelling reasons that contributed to the stagnation of the economy and agriculture in eastern Germany: the change of the borders and the loss of an entire province. The Poznań market played an important role for both western producers and consumers from, for example, Brandenburg, Pomerania, Saxony and Silesia. How significant Wielkopolska was for the neighbouring provinces can be deduced from the correspondence between different economic or state institutions and the government in Berlin shortly after the loss of Poznań Province by Germany. On 8 March 1920, the mayor of Frankfurt an der Oder wrote to undersecretary Göhre from the Prussian state ministry: “Parts of the Poznań and West Prussian Provinces were taken from us by force and what remained was deprived of [economic – F.M.] connections<sup>61</sup> (...) Now every effort should be made so as to ensure that the culture and economy of other centres serve the Eastern March just as it used to be in the case of the city of Poznań.”<sup>62</sup> This quote proves that in the minds of Germans at the beginning of the twentieth century, Poznań and its surroundings represented one of the eastern outposts of German culture and not just an important trade route and economic zone, although the latter played no less important a role in the crisis, as is proved by the report on the economic crisis in the eastern provinces, drawn up in Frankfurt an der Oder in August 1926, which stated that “Poznań has always been a large market and a city favoured by the state.”<sup>63</sup>

In an effort to assess how the German great landowners who settled in Wielkopolska in the nineteenth century influenced the history of that region, one should first consider the economic factors. The examples mentioned in this article may lead to the conclusion that the class of landowners originally saw themselves as competitors to the old nobility in Wielkopolska. Indeed, until the mid-nineteenth century a relative balance in the proportions between the two nations gradually developed. The granting

<sup>60</sup> A. Frank *op. cit.* p. 33.

<sup>61</sup> This concerned the border areas, from which the so-called Frontier March of Posen-West Prussia was formed (German *Grenzmark Posen-Westpreußen*) with headquarters in Pila (then Schneidemühl). It was established on 11 January 1921 and survived until 1 October 1938. In the early years of the interwar period it suffered greatly from the loss of economic links with Poznań and the Wielkopolska region.

<sup>62</sup> GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 90 A, No. 1105, *Lage der nationalgefährdeten östlichen Grenzgebiete und die Maßnahmen zu ihrem Schutz in politischer, wirtschaftlicher und kultureller Hinsicht (1920-1925)*, p. 3

<sup>63</sup> GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 77, Tit. 4037 No. 7 *Einzelanträge aus den Ostprovinzen (von Ostpreußen, Grenzmark Posen-Westpreußen, Regierungsbezirk Köslin, Frankfurt/Oder; zum Ostprogramm)*, p. 4.



of land ownership rights to burghers and the aggressive policy of the government in Berlin towards the entire Polish population in many respects did not coincide with the aspirations of the old Prussian nobility, who on the one hand began to accept their new non-noble class companions (*Standesgenossen*), but on the other hand still distanced themselves from the settlement movement that was developing at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>64</sup> The imperial German settlement movement, which developed out of Flottwell's policies and culminated in the German Eastern Marches Society and the Prussian Colonisation Commission, found a continuation in the post-war Weimar Republic. Somewhat similar measures enacted in the Second Republic of Poland were the agricultural reform and the law of 10 July 1920 under Władysław Grabski's government. In both cases, the government began a gradual process of reducing the size of large landed estates,<sup>65</sup> although it is worth noting that this was detrimental not only to German property owners, but also to the Polish landed gentry, as the regulations were to apply equally to both groups.

A large number of great landed estates remained in the hands of Germans in the interwar period and during the German occupation of Wielkopolska. Von Born-Fallois, von Bülow, the Counts von der Goltz, von Treskow, von Massenbach, the

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<sup>64</sup> It was known in Germany as *Innere Kolonisation* (interior settlement). Migration processes taking place at the end of the nineteenth century aroused serious concerns in nationalistic circles, who viewed anxiously the outflow of the German rural population to the cities and the more and more common purchase of the farmsteads left by them by the Poles. The law of 1890 on the formation of rentable property (*Rentengüter* – small, tenant-owned farms of fifteen acres or so, economically privileged and accounted for by the profitability of their agricultural production) provoked anxiety among the Prussian junkers, whose indebted and resold properties were often broken up by colonial agencies (e.g. *Ostpreußische Landesgesellschaft*, *Pommersche Ansiedlungsgesellschaft* etc.). In 1912, The Society for the Advancement of the Interior Settlement (*Gesellschaft zur Förderung der inneren Kolonisation*) was set up on the initiative of the agronomist Max Sering and the state official Friedrich von Schwerin. While the settlement movement continued in the Weimar Republic, the disappearance of large landed estates in the provinces neighbouring Wielkopolska was still recorded after 1919, which justified – in the opinion of the local authorities at the end of the 1920s – the need for a top-down colonisation movement on the Wielkopolska border. Source document: *Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv in Potsdam* (The Brandenburg Main State Archive in Potsdam – henceforth BMSAP) BMSAP, 3B I S 199; *Anträge auf Osthilfe für den Kreis Soldin für verschiedene Bauten und für eine landwirtschaftliche Ein- und Verkaufsorganisation; 1930-1931 (Akte) Magistrat, Lippelne 10 Nov 1930 an Regierungspräsident in Frankfurt/Oder*, p. 14.

<sup>65</sup> The post-war situation of the German great landed estate is difficult to describe in numbers, but undoubtedly it was very difficult just after the war. In the opinions of politicians, the great landed estates remained the most important branch of the economy (cf. reports of the agricultural associations on the condition of the agricultural economy and applications for subsidiary loans for agriculture in the east (*Osthilfe*) until 1929, source document: BMSAP: 3B I S 180; *Berichte aus landwirtschaftlichen Kreisen über die Lage der Landwirtschaft und Anträge auf Reichsgrenzhilfe (1929)*). These reports show that the government in Germany found it difficult to assess the size of the estates in the Reich because every single one had to be assessed individually. Regional governments in the German provinces did notice that the great landed estates had become smaller or disappeared completely, but they interpreted that as implying a need to fence themselves off from Poland along the border facing towards Poznań, by creating a belt of German “soldier peasants” (*Wehrbauern*). Their compatriots left behind the eastern border are less and less frequently mentioned in the documents from the end of the 1920s.

Barons von Rosen, the Counts von Schlieffen, von Reiche, the Counts von Stolberg-Wernigerode, von Unruh, von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff<sup>66</sup> and many others, whose listing and detailed discussion would require a separate publication, were among the most prominent landowner families in the Second Republic of Poland. The families mentioned above owned estates in such places as Sienno, Żurawia, Czajcze, Owińska, Radojewo, Chłudowo, Biedrusko, Pniewy, Konin, Grocholin,<sup>67</sup> Wioska, Rozbitek, Borzęciczki, Mniszki and Markowice. Although some of these places, formerly belonging to Poznań Province, are now located in adjacent provinces (e.g. Kujawsko-Pomorskie), they were part of Wielkopolska for most of history.

There were noble residences in all of the above-mentioned localities; however, a large number of them were devastated or completely destroyed after the Second World War. It is brick-built farm buildings that have been mostly preserved from those times. The agrarian reforms of the interwar period and subsequently in the People's Republic of Poland destroyed the system, already fully developed in the nineteenth century, of property ownership, religious variety, patronage of landowners over churches and schools and the ubiquitous symbolism of cultural relics in the countryside, thereby causing the gradual loss of reminders of the great landed estates – not only those belonging to Germans, but those of the old Polish landed gentry as well.

The existence of landed estates in the hands of Germans in Wielkopolska in the Prussian sector of partitioned Poland had a significant influence on the formation of antagonistic relations between the two nations, but in most cases this was not directly connected to the policy of the government in Berlin. After the partitions, a class of Prussian landowners developed alongside the Polish landed gentry. In the middle of the nineteenth century this group grew larger, as it incorporated non-noble landowners of German bourgeois descent and richer and richer German farmers. Indeed, in the case of the latter there are instances of explicit collaboration with the anti-Polish policy of the Kaiser's Germany, but their statistical representation differed significantly from that of other occupational groups. Thus, until the outbreak of the First World War, German great landed property had had a steadily growing influence on both the economy and the social life of Wielkopolska. German owners could enjoy the full support of the state authorities, and it was quite common

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<sup>66</sup> The Wilamowitz-Moellendorff family, once Polish gentry using the Ogończyk coat of arms, possessed, among others, the Markowice, Godjewice, Wymysłowice, Kobylniki, Łagiewniki, Kraszyce and Roźniaty estates in Poznań Province. Hugo v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff was the president of the province, his brother Ulrich v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff was a professor of classical philology in Berlin, and their distant ancestor Wichard von Möllendorff was a Prussian field marshal who entered Greater Poland and Pomerania at the head of the Prussian army during the Second Partition of Poland. The family remained in Greater Poland until 1945.

<sup>67</sup> The property belonging to the aforementioned Hans von Rosen, who has written numerous articles and books on his ancestral home, cf.: A. Szybowicz, *Grocholin – pałucka siedziba niemieckiej rodziny von Treskow-Rosen* in: *Materiały do Dziejów Kultury i Sztuki Bydgoszczy i Regionu*, booklet 12, Provincial Cultural Centre in Bydgoszcz, Bydgoszcz 2007, pp. 97-108, and H. v. Rosen, *Geliebtes Grocholin* (1973), as well as H. Frhr. v. Rosen, *Grocholin. Geschichte eines deutschen Gutes in Posen – geliebt – verloren – unvergessen*, Leer 1985.

that they were active members of conservative political parties and local governments. Many of the landowners received administrative and legal education and held important clerical positions. Often they belonged to several organisations, and at the same time held posts in local and central government. For example, Heinrich von Heydebrand und der Lasa, the German owner of six properties in the county of Leszno, was a member of the *Provinziallandtag* (Provincial Council), a member of the supervisory board of the Poznań Chamber of Agriculture (*Landwirtschaftskammer zu Posen*), a member of the Prussian House of Lords, and a knight of the Order of Saint John. Other examples include Heinrich Carl K pfer, landowner and member of the Prussian Parliament and Poznań *Landtag*, and Georg von Massenbach, purchaser of several landed estates near Poznań (which he then passed to his sons), who was a member of the Prussian Parliament and a Conservative Party activist. The percentage share of the great landed estates gradually began to outstrip that of Polish-owned property, and adding to them the small properties in the hands of poorer German farmers and state-owned property, one may conclude that there was indeed successive Germanisation of land in Wielkopolska, which would not have achieved such significant success if it had not been for the purchasing of manor estates by the gentry and burghers from the German cultural sphere.

In the interwar period there was a rapidly increasing outflow of the German population from the area of the whole Prussian partition.<sup>68</sup> This largely concerned members of liberal professions, civil servants, teachers and small farmers, and to a much lesser degree German owners of landed estates. The actions of the Central Liquidation Bureau in the years 1919–1927<sup>69</sup> were mainly directed against those landed estates which were owned by the Prussian state and not private owners. The previously mentioned Duchy of Krotoszyn was unique in this respect because, as a fief of the Crown it was considered state property, being merely managed by the Thurn und Taxis family.

Throughout the interwar period, the descendants of the landowners who had arrived at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, acting on their own initiative, created private associations and organisations<sup>70</sup> in order to protect the interests

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<sup>68</sup> D. Matelski, *Mniejszość niemiecka w Wielkopolsce w latach 1919-1939*, Poznań 1997, p. 24.

<sup>69</sup> The Central Liquidation Bureau was set up by a decree published in Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) 1919, No. 12, item 132, followed by an Act of 4 July 1923 on the organisation and scope of operation of the Central Liquidation Bureau (Dz. U. 1923, No. 75, item 583). In Wielkopolska the liquidation of the Prussian state property and the estate of persons without Polish citizenship was handled by the Commissariat for German Liquidation in Poznań.

<sup>70</sup> The first organisation to represent the interests of the (entire) German ethnic minority in Poland was the German League for the Protection of Minority Rights (*Deutschtumsbund zur Wahrung der Minderheitenrechte*), banned in 1923 for its allegedly anti-state activity. Later, the Germans set up the *Deutsche Vereinigung im Sejm und Senat f r Posen, Netzegau und Pommerellen*, DV for short. The organisation survived the interwar period and embraced Germans from both former districts of the Prussian province. For more than 20 years, the owners of great landed estates, for example, Georg Busse-Tupaly and Erwin Hasbach, the tenant of a large estate in the Toruń district, often stood at the head of this organisation. A comprehensive dialogue with various occupational groups and owners from all over the Second Republic of Poland can be observed in the case of the German minority of the interwar period. Cf: col-

and legal status of Polish citizens of German nationality. It was the political transformation that took place in Poland after 1945 that put an end to the economic and cultural presence of the German element in Wielkopolska. In addition, it effectively eliminated ethnic minorities from the Eastern Bloc countries, as well as terminated the existence of great private estates in the hands of private owners.

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**Keywords:** Wielkopolska (Greater Poland), great landed estate, Prussian partition, Polish–German antagonism, Prussia, junkers, gentry

#### ABSTRACT

*A great landed estate is defined as a farmstead with a minimum area of 100 hectares, operating as an independent enterprise or owned by members of the gentry or wealthy middle class. The functioning of such landed estates (known in Germany and under Prussian rule as Rittergüter) was closely linked to the ownership structure of past times, when private ownership of land entailed a number of privileges and high social prestige.*

*Poznań Province was an exporter of crops and agricultural produce, and on account of its geographical and geopolitical location was perceived as part of the East Elbian (Ostelbien) economy. At the same time it provided a market for manufacturers of farming tools and machines from the neighbouring provinces (mainly Brandenburg). At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Wielkopolska countryside was dominated by German great landed estates, which within the span of a century had managed to link Wielkopolska to Prussia and the German state in a way that was expected to be permanent. The participation of German landed estate owners in the economic and social life of Wielkopolska in the years 1815–1914 must be assessed as a dynamic process of transformation of the whole of Wielkopolska within just one century. Those changes were still noticeable in the interwar period, when a majority of the landed estate owners assumed Polish citizenship and actively contributed to the economic and political life of the Second Republic of Poland.*

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lections of Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu (the National Archives in Poznań, henceforth APP), APP, file: Urząd Wojewódzki Poznański (Province Office in Poznań), shelf mark: 1263, „*Deutschtumsbund*” 1923-1924, APP, file: Polski Związek Zachodni (Polish Western Association), shelf mark: 59, *Działalność społeczno-polityczna Deutschtumsbundu i inne organizacje niemieckie w Polsce*, and APP, file: Province Office in Poznań, shelf mark: 1262, *Rozwiązanie niemieckiej organizacji „Deutschtumsbund”* – the aforementioned files contain extensive documentation of the police and government offices gathering information on German activities within the *Deutschtumsbund* and other national associations.