

Polish Germans in the Stutthof Concentration Camp.

Prewar Polish Citizens of German Origin from the Former Pomeranian Voivodeship Incarcerated in KL Stutthof in 1942–1945 due to Disloyalty to the Authorities of the German Reich

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Abstract

The paper explores the fates of ethnic Germans who were Polish citizens from the Pomeranian Voivodeship prior to the Second World War and who were incarcerated in KL Stutthof due to their pro-Polish and anti-German attitudes. They represented a small percentage of the group of camp inmates described as *Volksdeutsche*. These were people who were entered in the second category of the German People's List (*Deutsche Volksliste*, DVL). It has been determined that members of the group of *Volksdeutsche* under consideration were sent to KL Stutthof for the following reasons: on suspicion of involvement in the resistance or providing help to partisan units, as well as having knowledge about such activities and failing to report it to the German police, obtaining entry in the second category of the DVL by means of deception and slandering German police forces. Attention is drawn to the possible correlation between the pro-Polish attitudes of inmates from the second category of the DVL and the intensity of their sense of Germanness, as well as their religion. The need for in-depth research on the national identity of both the prewar German minority and the people entered in the DVL during the war has been emphasized. In order to facilitate understanding, the situation and attitudes of the German minority both before and after 1 September 1939 were analyzed in addition to the German People's List in Pomerania and the KL Stutthof camp as a site of repression against Germans.

After 1 September 1939, the vast majority of *Volksdeutsche* who lived in the prewar Pomeranian Voivodeship showed hostility towards the Poles, either approving of the criminal policies or taking part in German crimes. Recent studies suggest, however, that not all ethnic Germans in Gdańsk Pomerania accepted or participated in the terror against the Polish populace (Ceran, 2019; Paczoska-Hauke & Rabant, 2009; Rabant, 2014). Among the host of attitudes adopted by representatives of the German minority there were also cases of friendly behavior towards Polish neighbors. From the cognitive point of view, the acknowledgment of this part of the historical reality is as interesting as researching negative sentiments.

There were approx. 5,000–7,000 German inmates at the Stutthof camp, and one group of them was known as *Volksdeutsche*.¹ What were the reasons for their incarceration at one of Germany's concentration camps? Did this group comprise people who were imprisoned for choosing loyalty to the Second Polish Republic over loyalty to the Third Reich? Is such a research hypothesis valid and verifiable? Or should the category of "allegiance to the Polish state" be replaced with the expression "propriety towards Poles (Polish neighbors)"? Is it possible to reconstruct the attitudes of ethnic Germans from the prewar Pomeranian Voivodeship concerning German policies in territories annexed into the Reich, this on the basis of surviving and available source material? What can we learn about the motives behind such pro-Polish behavior, as well as about the scale and dynamics of this phenomenon? From an academic perspective, an attempt at answering these questions seems intriguing, and as such serves as the point of departure for research described in the present paper.

The Stutthof inmates who were described as *Volksdeutsche* (VD) in the camp documentation could be either members of the German minority prior to 1 September 1939 (who were assigned to the first or second category of the DVL) or Poles who were entered in the German People's List (third category) during the occupation, because even though they did not belong to the prewar German minority, they had the "right" origin, i.e. family roots in Pomerania from before the First World War. While the term "Polish Germans" or "ethnic Germans" (*Volksdeutsche*) seems adequate in reference to the first group, the second group can be more aptly described as "Germanized Poles" (*Eingedeutsche*).

The paper explores the cases of people who can be called Germans in either an ethnic or a cultural sense and who constituted the German

1 In the literature, the number of all Germans in KL Stutthof is estimated at 5,000 (Orski, 1992, p. 54). Data from the Archives of the Stutthof Museum in Sztutowo (AMS) suggest that the number was higher, approx. 5,000–7,000. This includes both the prisoners whose camp personal files have survived (approx. 4,000) and the inmates whose only traces can be found in the transport lists, the record books or the camp hospital files. This number comprises both Germans from the Reich (*Reichsdeutsche*), including Jews from Germany, and people entered in the DVL.

minority in the prewar Polish state. To this end, the camp documentation was examined in order to determine the surnames of people assigned to the first and second category of the DVL who were incarcerated at KL Stutthof for lack of loyalty to the German state.

The broad notion of disloyalty is taken to mean non-compliance with the policies of the German Reich. Such behavior included contesting the legal order introduced by the German authorities and failure to perform duties imposed by the occupier compounded with loyalty to the prewar Polish state. These actions involved participation in active resistance.

The timeframe selected for the purposes of exploring the fates of ethnic Germans incarcerated at KL Stutthof is the years 1942–1945. The starting date is connected with Stutthof becoming a concentration camp and the beginning of entering information about the prisoner's nationality in the camp documentation, while the ending date is related to the liquidation of the camp. The *Volksdeutsche* under study either came from the prewar Pomeranian Voivodeship or found themselves within its boundaries at the time of their arrest.

The primary source for research into the history of KL Stutthof is the camp documentation, comprising the record book (*Einlieferungsbuch*),² in which every inmate was registered, and prisoner personal files (*Häftlingsakte*).³ The original documents are kept in the Archives of the Stutthof Museum in Sztutowo, while their scans are held by the Arolsen Archives and are available online (<https://arolsen-archives.org/pl>). Other documents produced by the German authorities with regard to the Stutthof inmates can be found in state archives. For the purposes of the present paper, materials from the State Archives in Bydgoszcz and the State Archives in Gdańsk were used.

Researching the history of KL Stutthof has a long tradition. The first monograph of the camp, which saw several reprints, was published more than 50 years ago (Dunin-Wąsowicz, 1970). Research findings concerning

2 Unfortunately it has not survived in its entirety (almost all books for the period between 3 October 1941 and 17 April 1943, as well as fragments from 1939 and 1944–1945 have been preserved). The data was entered by hand in 13 fields (columns). The last field, “remarks” (*Bemerkungen*), usually contained the nationality of the inmate.

3 They contained basic information about the prisoner: date of entry and release, date of re-entry and re-release, name and surname, date and place of birth. All the above data were handwritten on the file. A prisoner category stamp was placed in a separate field in the right top corner, and a nationality stamp was placed below. In some cases there are no markings at all. Apart from the above information, the prisoner file contained various other documents, produced both by the camp administration (e.g. the personal record card which was filled in immediately upon the prisoner's arrival at KL Stutthof and contained his camp number) and – to a lesser extent – by local police posts (e.g. correspondence between the Gestapo post and the KL Stutthof camp headquarters).

inmates of various nationalities⁴ were also systematically published, while a topic-based and comparative study on the state structure and national composition of the camp appeared in print in the 1990s. The study provided approximate numbers of prisoners in each of these groups (Orski, 1992).

In the following years, a monograph devoted to Polish political prisoners was published (Owsiński, 2001), which detailed the fates of those who either refused to accept the third category of the DVL or accepted it but later deserted from the Wehrmacht, as well as those who obtained inclusion in the DVL by means of deception. The issue of the German People's List in Stutthof was discussed in a separate academic paper (Grot, 2007), which detailed various problems connected with nationality changes that camp prisoners also had to face. Another academic work was devoted to the families of Stutthof inmates (Drywa, 2012) who, even though they were entered in the third category of the DVL, refused military service or deserted from the Wehrmacht following enlistment.

A recent academic work comprehensively discusses the issue of police prisoners in KL Stutthof (Gąsiorowski, 2021), who included people described in the camp documentation as either Germans (*Deutsche*) or ethnic Germans (*VD, Volksdeutsche, V. Deutsche*). Also worthy of note is the most recent publication devoted to reeducation prisoners at Stutthof (Drywa, 2020; 2021), among whom there were people of German descent who were classified as *Reichsdeutsche* (Germans with citizenship of the Reich) and *Volksdeutsche* (ethnic Germans entered in the second or third categories of the DVL).

A separate work devoted to Stutthof inmates of German nationality has not appeared in print to date.⁵ A comprehensive study on ethnic Germans in KL Stutthof who were citizens of the Polish state before the war has also not been published.

The present paper adopts a comprehensive and comparative approach to the subject under study. Facts were first established on the basis of available source material, and then interpreted and analyzed with the use of both inductive and deductive methods (non-source knowledge was applied primarily in cases where the surviving documents are incomplete). Broader questions – such as the situation and attitudes of the German minority prior to and after 1 September 1939, the German

4 Among the groups of prisoners who have separate articles devoted to them are Jews, the French (Orski, 1984), Belgians (Orski, 1987) and Scandinavians (Denkiewicz-Szczepaniak, 1977; Kłys, 2016).

5 It is known, however, that a doctoral dissertation “Niemieccy więźniowie obozu koncentracyjnego Stutthof (1939–1945)” [“German prisoners in the Stutthof concentration camp (1939–1945)”] is being prepared by Piotr Chruścielski, a Germanist and employee of the Scientific Department of the Stutthof Museum in Sztutowo. His doctoral advisor is Prof. Grzegorz Berendt. The registration and conferment procedure for a doctoral degree was started on 15 March 2019 at the University of Gdańsk ([Information about the doctoral dissertation of Piotr Chruścielski], 2019).

People's List in Pomerania and the KL Stutthof camp as the site of repression against Germans – were also analyzed, this with the aim of providing a full explanation of the issue.

The German minority in Pomerania: numbers, distribution, situation and attitudes prior to 1 September 1939 and following the outbreak of the war

According to the official census of 1931, 741,000 ethnic Germans lived in Poland before the war, which amounted to 2.3% of all citizens. In the Pomeranian Voivodeship, the German minority numbered 105,400 people, i.e. 9.5% of all residents. Following the administrative reform in April 1938, several counties from the Poznań and Warsaw Voivodeships, which were inhabited by the German minority, were incorporated into the Pomeranian Voivodeship. As a result, on the eve of the war the number of ethnic Germans in the Polish "Great Pomerania" reached 157,811 people, and their percentage rose to 10.1% of all inhabitants of the voivodeship. Although the number of German inhabitants was higher than the national average, in the ethnic sense the Pomeranian Voivodeship was one of the most Polish voivodeships (more than 90% of inhabitants were Poles). The majority of the German populace lived in the countryside. The main cities where they lived in the voivodeship were Bydgoszcz, Tczew, Grudziądz and Toruń (Waszak, 1959, p. 339; Szklarska-Lohmannowa, 1971, pp. 16–18; Szefer, 1967, pp. 33–35; Dąbrowski, 1977, p. 60; Hauser, 1998, pp. 51 ff.; Olstowski, 2014, p. 65).

Ethnic Germans who lived in the Pomeranian, Poznań and Silesian Voivodeships received particular interest and support from the Reich. Berlin treated them as former citizens of the German state who, as a result of the Treaty of Versailles, were separated from their homeland and subjected to intense de-Germanization by the Polish authorities. As a matter of fact, in pursuing assimilation policies with regard to the German minority in the westernmost voivodeships, the Polish authorities were guided first and foremost by safety reasons (Chinciński, 2010, pp. 83–84).

In the years 1934–1938, a period of the easing of tensions between Poland and Germany, the issue of the German minority in Poland disappeared from the official foreign policy of the Reich. Nevertheless, unofficial efforts aimed at fostering the national consciousness of Germans living in the Polish border areas were not abandoned (Jacobsen, 1968, p. 593). A change of approach came with the cooling of Polish-German relations. German authorities began to talk about the "unacceptable" situation of *Volksdeutsche* in Poland. Following the escalation of the political crisis in Polish-German relations, they started to play the role of "victims", which the Reich needed to justify the commencement of war, its main propaganda purpose being the "liberation of *Volksdeutsche*", and to

breed resentment towards Poland in Western societies (Chinciński, 2010, pp. 67–105, 336 ff.).

In 1939, the German minority came under the strong influence of the Reich's propaganda and was subjected to surveillance by the German secret services who sought to recruit members for organizations specializing in sabotage and subversion. These actions affected the attitudes of ethnic Germans in Poland, rekindling hopes for redrawing the border at the 1914 line of the Prussian partition. It was repeated in Pomerania that "following his success, Hitler will not rest on his laurels, but will claim other territories inhabited by the Germans" (Wrzesiński, 1997, p. 256). The Polish authorities noted that local Germans awaited "the return of Pomerania to the Reich" (Situation report on the German minority..., 1938a, p. 435; Situation report on the German minority..., 1938b, pp. 370–371).

Volksdeutsche from western parts of Poland supported German territorial expansion and were even ready to cooperate with their homeland, hoping that the regions where they lived would again be incorporated into the Reich (Kotowski, 1992, pp. 61–63). A small group, about 1% of the entire German minority in Poland, was recruited by the German secret services for strictly subversive activities. This "fifth column" operated on a large scale in the Silesian and Poznań Voivodeships, while Pomerania witnessed events which the German propaganda dubbed the "bloody Sunday in Bydgoszcz."

German subversives are said to have opened fire on Polish army units retreating through Bydgoszcz on 3 and 4 September 1939. During the fighting, retaliation against and lynching of the local Germans supposedly took place. Denying any subversive activities, the Germans portrayed these events as a massacre of the Bydgoszcz *Volksdeutsche*.⁶ The propaganda depiction of the occurrence aroused hostility of a considerable part of the prewar German minority against the Polish populace in the territories of Polish Pomerania that had been occupied and annexed by Germany. The German authorities used the "bloody Sunday in Bydgoszcz" to incite hatred against the Poles, who were portrayed as insidious and treacherous, and to justify their crimes against the civilians. The propaganda message proved to be so convincing that a considerable number of the local *Volksdeutsche* joined the *Selbstschutz*⁷ and took part in the extermination of their Polish neighbors, mostly members of the intelligentsia and the leadership (Chinciński, 2021, pp. 314–327).

6 The course of events in Bydgoszcz was presented differently by Poles and Germans, and to this day remains a source of controversy between historians (Chinciński & Machcewicz, 2008; Olstowski, 2009).

7 It is estimated that as many as 80% of German men capable of bearing arms from the territory where the Reichsgau Danzig-West Prussia was established could have joined the *Selbstschutz* (Bömelburg & Musiał, 2000, p. 58; Góra, 2016, p. 26; Hauser, 1998, p. 53).

These hostile attitudes and behaviors were not exhibited by all members of the German national group in Pomerania. In the prewar minority from the Pomeranian Voivodeship there were also Germans who were not susceptible to the propaganda and did not engage in murdering Poles. Some *Volksdeutsche* showed empathy for the victims of the German terror, sought to help them and had the courage to condemn the crimes (Paczoska-Hauke & Rabant, 2009; Rabant, 2014; Ceran, 2019).

Examples of friendly behavior of ethnic Germans from Pomerania towards the Poles

Such examples can be found in at least several counties of the prewar Pomeranian Voivodeship. In the autumn of 1939, individual people were often saved from death, and there were even cases of prisoners being saved just before their execution. A German pastor Helmut Boecker from Górna Grupa in the Świecie county saved the lives of a Polish priest Alojzy Liguda, the Rector of the Mission House in the same village, and of 15-year-old middle school student Jan Dutka, by intervening on their behalf with the Selbstschutz commander just before their execution. Similarly, the head of the Starogard county contributed to the last-minute cancellation of one of the executions in the Szpegawsk Forest. Another example is the behavior of Benon Schulz, the German village leader from Jaroszewy in the Kościerzyna county, who crossed off the name of a Pole he knew personally, Paweł Linda, from the list of people designated for execution by shooting. Alwina Wenzel, the daughter of a German baker and pastry chef from Skarszewy in the Kościerzyna county, rescued Paweł Szczeciński, an apprentice to her father, from a truck transporting Poles for execution (Paczoska-Hauke & Rabant, 2009, pp. 384–385; Rabant, 2014; Ceran, 2019, pp. 292–293).

Poles also received help in escaping camps and prisons. Gerd Heinrich, a German from the Więcbork county, showed heroic courage, negotiating with a drunk commandant of the Selbstschutz camp in Karolewo and blackmailing him into releasing a Polish blacksmith, Józef Kowalewski. Thanks to the intervention of Radtke, a German from Płosków in the Sępólno county, a Pole, Marian Bethke, was released from the camp in Karolewo. In Skarszewy, local Germans contributed to the release from prison of several people who could have faced death (Paczoska-Hauke & Rabant, 2009, pp. 385–386; Rabant, 2014; Ceran, 2019, pp. 289–290).

In such cases, the arguments that were most widely used to convince the German authorities to release the Poles were the benefits resulting from their work and their good treatment of the German minority before the war. *Volksdeutsche* were guided in their actions by former neighbor relations or professional ties, perhaps by the feeling of gratitude and probably by the need to behave like a decent human being. Local

Germans helped Poles because they considered them good neighbors or employees.

Personal acquaintance and the resulting positive experiences often played a key role in making the decision to help the persecuted Poles. The best example here might be the case of Agnes Brendel, an ethnic German and brewery owner from Kościerzyna, who repeatedly intervened with the German authorities in the Kościerzyna county on behalf of Poles who were being displaced (Rabant, 2014, p. 120). As she admitted herself, she did it because “I did not think myself a real German even for a moment; I bonded with the local populace to the extent that I considered them all my brothers” (Agnieszka Brendel’s petition to the Magistrates’ Court..., 1945, p. 29).

Open condemnation of crimes committed against the Poles in the autumn of 1939 required much courage from the Polish Germans. An official protest against the murdering of civilians was filed with the Gau-leiter of Danzig-West Prussia, Albert Forster, by the German Director of the District Court in Starogard (Ceran, 2019, p. 295). On 6 December 1939, Lily Jungblut – a landowner from the Inowrocław county and member of the NSDAP since 1930 – sent a letter to Hermann Göring, in which she condemned the crimes against Poles (Broszat, 1961, pp. 42–43; Schubert, 2003, p. 181; Zarzycki, 1976, p. 24).

There were also cases of *Volksdeutsche* suffering severe consequences for their pro-Polish attitudes. Adolf Beier, the German village leader from Kleszczewo in the Kościerzyna county, lost his position and was beaten for refusing to sign a list ordering an execution of 18 Poles and for warning the intended victims about the impending danger. Another example is the case of Herman Braatz, who was entered in the second category of the DVL but considered himself a Pole, for which his son Maksymilian was incarcerated first at KL Sachsenhausen, and then at KL Lublin, where he was murdered (Paczoska-Hauke & Rabant, 2009, pp. 386–387, 393).

There were also cases of local *Volksdeutsche* helping Poles and performing acts of kindness towards them after the Pomeranian crime committed by the Germans in the autumn of 1939. Assistance was often provided to Poles who were active in the underground. Thanks to the intervention of Ernst Laaser, the mayor of Kościerzyna, Jadwiga Kosznik (Prokop) was released from investigative jail, where she was incarcerated in the summer of 1944 on charges of cooperating with partisans. Laaser is said to have helped Kosznik because she went to school with his children before the war and came to their defense in conflicts between students of various nationalities (Gašiorowski, 2009, pp. 367–368; Paczoska-Hauke & Rabant, 2009, p. 396).

Otto Piper (Pipper), the German mayor of Kowal in the Włocławek county – a town in the Pomeranian Voivodeship that was incorporated into Reichsgau Wartheland following the German aggression – became

personally engaged in the underground resistance. He was a member of the prewar German minority. As early as in 1939, he began cooperating with the “Grunwald” organization, and in 1940 he was introduced into the Union of Armed Struggle. His main tasks included legalizing (issuing identity documents with fictitious names) and smuggling people threatened with arrest to the General Government. In 1943 he was arrested by the Gestapo. The underground activities of which he was suspected were not proved. Nevertheless, the German court sentenced him to three years of imprisonment on charges of maintaining improper relations with Poles and smuggling goods to the General Government. He served his sentence in the prison in Sztum. In December 1944, he was granted a leave of three days, and did not return to prison – he was hiding in Kowal until the end of the war (Account of Alicja Nowacka née Piper..., 2005; Biographical note – an account by Jerzy Giergielewicz and Bogdan Ziółkowski, 2006).

The example of Otto Piper shows that *Volksdeutsche* were not always guided by material gain or personal gratitude towards individual Poles in their pro-Polish attitudes. In the case of Piper it was rather far-reaching sympathy for the Polish nation or even self-identification with Polishness. A question arises as to the intensity of his sense of Germanness. Did he consider himself more a German or a Pole? Piper’s behavior is an example of disloyalty towards the authorities of the German Reich coupled with loyalty towards the Second Polish Republic. The doings of Agnes Brendel, who – as described above – clearly sympathized with the Polish populace, can be interpreted in the same vein; some Poles saw her rather as a Polish than a German woman.

“Who is German?” – selection and entry in the German People’s List in Pomerania

How were the authorities of the Reich to distinguish Germans from Poles? Guidelines for the treatment of the populace in the annexed territories “from a racial-political point of view” were given in a secret memorial drafted on 25 November 1939 by the NSDAP Office of Racial Policy (Rassenpolitisches Amt). The document reads:

Who is German? A German is a person who, in terms of nationality, customs and the family community, lives like a German, provided that they are of German or related blood. Those Germans will be entered in the German People’s List (Memoriał Urzędu Polityki Rasowej NSDAP..., 1939, p. 99, see also the German original on pp. 401-402).

It was further specified that the above applied to people who were active in German organizations prior to 1 September 1939 or whose ancestors

were all German. The latter category did not include, however, those who spoke Polish at home.

Censuses were seen as a tool for determining the numbers of *Volksdeutsche* and Poles. The results of the first census conducted on 3–6 December 1939 showed growth in the German population of Pomerania – from 158,000 people in 1931 (12%) to 243,000 people (21%). This number included also German immigrants. There are, however, no data for the residents of Gdynia. It should also be noted that the census was taken after the particularly brutal bout of German terror in Pomerania in the autumn of 1939. Another census was conducted on 1–9 December 1940. It again showed a slight increase in the number of German people. German nationality was declared by 265,000 inhabitants of Pomerania, of which number 190,155 were the local *Volksdeutsche*, 59,734 – Germans from the Reich and from Gdańsk, while 14,876 – Germans resettled from the East. Local ethnic Germans accounted for 14% of the total populace of the Polish Pomerania, that is 17% higher than the number of *Volksdeutsche* recorded in the Polish census of 1931. This growth could result from decisions made by some people of uncertain national identity, who under the circumstances of the German occupation declared German nationality (Waszak, 1959, p. 339; Madajczyk, 2019, pp. 460–462; Jastrzębski & Sziling, 1979, p. 264).

A few days after the second census, on 14 December 1940, Albert Forster – in cooperation with Wilhelm Löbsack, the officer for nationality matters in Pomerania – developed the first detailed program for the Germanization of Poles. It was characterized by a strictly pragmatic approach, as the first group to be Germanized were people indispensable to the German economy, i.e. factory workers, agricultural laborers, craftsmen and petty farmers. During the verification procedure, knowledge of German language was less important than professional qualifications and technical skills, as well as orderliness and neat appearance (Broszat, 1961, p. 127; Madajczyk, 2019, p. 465; Jastrzębski & Sziling, 1979, p. 166; Bykowska, 2014, pp. 61–62).

Forster's program referred to the notion of the "German-Polish intermediate stratum", which was defined and explained in the memorial of the NSDAP Office of Racial Policy of 25 November 1939:

This refers to persons who are either completely or partially of German origin or who live in nationally mixed marriages with Poles, if they do not meet the conditions for entry in the German People's List (Memoriał Urzędu Polityki Rasowej NSDAP..., 1939, p. 100, see also the German original on pp. 402–403).

Forster's approach slightly differed from the mode of Germanization adopted by Josef Wagner, the Oberpräsident of Provinz Schlesien, and was totally dissimilar to the concept of a Germanization policy that

was promoted by Arthur Greiser, the Gauleiter of Reichsgau Wartheland. In their Germanization programs, both Forster and Wagner placed great emphasis on the economic value of the incorporated territories, considering the so-called intermediate stratum, i.e. the majority of residents of Gdańsk Pomerania and the Polish part of Upper Silesia, as a social group susceptible to Germanization. The difference between their approaches lay chiefly in the amount of time needed for achieving the Germanization of the “intermediate stratum”. Unlike Wagner, Forster did not implement immediate Germanization of the subjugated Polish territories, assuming that longer observation of the attitudes of the local populace towards Germanness was required. Greiser, in turn, favored Germanization of the land by means of German settlement, at the same time opposing Germanization of the local Polish populace. The granting of the German state affiliation in Wartheland was to be a special privilege enjoyed only by those inhabitants who could prove their Germanness or German origin (Madajczyk, 2019, pp. 462–465, 494; Jastrzębski & Sziling, 1979, p. 166; Pospieszalski, 1948, pp. 508–512).

The Germanization policies were to be harmonized under the Decree of 4 March 1941 concerning German People’s List and German state affiliation in the incorporated Eastern Territories together with secondary legislation in the form of the Regulation of 13 March 1941 concerning the adoption of German citizenship. The new law introduced solutions based on the experiences and ideas gathered by Greiser in Wartheland. This could have been the reason for opposition from Forster, who did not approve of the Poznań model and who, wishing to retain freedom of action, did not publish the decree.

Four categories of *Volksdeutsche* were introduced. The first category of the DVL comprised people of German nationality who “actively participated in the fight for Germanness” before the outbreak of the war (Zarządzenie ministra spraw wewnętrznych Rzeszy, 1941, p. 257). The second category of the DVL was intended for people of German nationality who “did not actively work for the German cause, but who retained their Germanness in a way that can be proved” (Zarządzenie ministra spraw wewnętrznych Rzeszy, 1941, p. 257). In other words, the first and second categories of the DVL comprised members of the prewar German minority. They were all issued blue IDs, as well as granted citizenship of the Third Reich and German state affiliation (Ziuziakowska, 2016, pp. 337 ff.).

The third category of the DVL was for “people of German origin who developed ties to Polishness over the course of time, but whose behavior indicates that they will again become valuable members of the German national community” (Zarządzenie ministra spraw wewnętrznych Rzeszy, 1941, pp. 259–260). In other words, these were “people mostly of Polish origin of whom, given their political indifference to date, it can be hoped that in time they will become Germanized” (Izdebski, 1946, p. 57). “Poles fit for Germanization” (*Eindeutschungsfähige Polen*) from the third

category were also colloquially called *Eingedeutschte* – in contrast to *Volksdeutsche* from the first and second categories of the DVL – and the process of Germanization was referred to as *Eindeutschung* (Bykowska, 2013, pp. 422–423). People in the third category received green IDs and were granted German state affiliation (Ziuziakowska, 2016, p. 338).

The fourth category of the DVL was intended for people of German origin “who were engaged in political work for the Polish cause” and “were members of Polish organizations or political parties hostile to Germanness or hampered the German cause in any other way” (Zarządzenie ministra spraw wewnętrznych Rzeszy, 1941, p. 261). These people were completely Polonized and manifested their ties with the Polish nation. They were contemptuously referred to as “renegades”. They received red IDs and were not granted German state affiliation (Ziuziakowska, 2016, p. 339).

The operation of citizenship change in Pomerania began with entering local Germans – prewar Polish citizens of German nationality – in the DVL. Proceedings aimed at confirming their German national identity were held in 1940, before the decree on the DVL was issued. The next step consisted in preliminary racial selection among Poles susceptible to Germanization. It was first applied to people from the so-called intermediate stratum (Madajczyk, 2019, p. 466; Jastrzębski & Sziling, 1979, pp. 174–183).

The Germanization of Poles in Pomerania initially proceeded at a sluggish pace.⁸ A significant increase in the number of entries in the third category of the DVL occurred in 1942. Firstly, Himmler issued a decree (of 10 February 1942) acknowledging all inhabitants of the incorporated territories as Germans and obliging them to apply for entry in the DVL. Secondly, Forster issued a proclamation (of 22 February 1942) calling all inhabitants of Reichsgau Danzig-West Prussia to sign the German People’s List. The proclamation was published in “Deutsche Rundschau” and placed on advertising columns. It informed the populace about the consequences of failure to apply for entry in the DVL by no later than 31 March 1942.

Forster’s proclamation was based on the assumption that all inhabitants of Pomerania were candidates for Germans:

When German armed forces recaptured the old West Prussia in 1939, we did not know how many Germans or people of German origin remained in the liberated territory of the Reichsgau Danzig-West Prussia after twenty years of Polish

⁸ A report on the political situation in *Regierungsbezirk Bromberg* stated that out of approx. 600,000 residents, 24,000 people (approx. 4%) were entered in the DVL by mid-November 1941, including 18,000 in the first and second categories and 6,000 in the third category. This means that the number of German and allegedly German people in this *Regierungsbezirk* increased to 110,000. It is probable that the numbers for other provinces were similar (Madajczyk, 2019, p. 469).

rule. For this reason, we spent the last two and a half years thoroughly verifying and sifting the populace. [...]

We selected people who can be considered Germans due to their behavior and origin. This is why those who, for various reasons, could not publicly appear as Germans for the past twenty years, but whose good morality was attested by other Germans, are also considered by us as Germans and are thus included in the German national community [...]

No person who has hitherto not been noticed but wishes to return to the German national community should be wronged [...] (Odezwa namiestnika i gauleitera Alberta Forstera..., 1942, pp. 288–289).

Fear and panic caused vast numbers of Pomeranians to sign the German People's List. By mid-1942, 681,000 people in total were added to the DVL, the majority of whom were entered in the third category, and only a small percentage in the fourth. The following years also saw a marked increase in the number of people choosing the German national group. By January 1944, approx. 54.5% Poles from Reichsgau Danzig-West Prussia were entered in the third category of the DVL (Broszat, 1961, p. 134).

In Pomerania, as in Upper Silesia, Poles were forcibly entered in the German People's List, and it was quite a widespread phenomenon. Refusal led to arrest and deportation to a concentration camp. There are indications that pressure exerted by employers played a major role. In Pomerania, if the employee neglected the duty to apply for entry in the DVL, their employer could dismiss them and notify the labor office, which in turn could send them for forced labor. It seems that the massive influx of applications for entry in the list resulted mainly from the described circumstances, while police pressure and restrictions, though obviously in use, played a lesser role (Romaniuk, 2007, p. 105).

In the remaining territories of occupied Poland, mostly in the Wartheland and the General Government, the decision to take German citizenship was voluntary and was often followed by collaboration with the enemy. Such persons were contemptuously referred to as *Volksdeutsche* and strongly condemned (Olejnik, 2006, p. 54).

Poles who were entered in the *Volksliste* in Pomerania acquired German state affiliation with retroactive effect from 1 December 1940 (for Germans in the first and second categories it was from 26 October 1939). They could then receive German food rations and higher wages, as well as find employment in various offices or at previously inaccessible positions. Moreover, they did not have to fear eviction. For men, entry in the first three categories of the German People's List meant liability for military service in the Wehrmacht. It is estimated that approx. 500,000 Poles from Upper Silesia and Pomerania who were entered in the third category of the *Volksliste* were enlisted in the German army.

Apart from prewar *Volksdeutsche*, local Poles whose family roots went back to the Prussian partition were also to become Germans. Nevertheless, Poles from Pomerania who were entered in the third category of the DVL to a large extent became Germans only formally. Many of them cultivated their Polishness, took part in the underground resistance and clandestine teaching, while many drafted soldiers deserted the Wehrmacht and – when possible – went over to the side of the Allies. Local Germans entered in the first and second categories of the DVL treated Poles entered in the third category with suspicion or even outright disdain and contempt. Repression, including the death penalty, was used much more often against the *Eingedeutschte* than against ethnic Germans (Madajczyk, 2019, pp. 486–489; Becker, 2020, pp. 226–233).

KL Stutthof as the site of repression against Germans

The camp in Stutthof was established on 2 September 1939 in the territory of the former Free City of Danzig. It functioned without interruption until 9 May 1945. Initially it was the “Stutthof Camp for Civilian Prisoners of War” (*Zivilgefangenenlager Stutthof*) under the German police and ss authorities in Gdańsk. At the time, the majority of inmates were Polish arrestees from Reichsgau Danzig-West Prussia. For several months, in autumn 1941, the camp also served as a reeducation camp for persons avoiding or abandoning work for the benefit of the German Reich, functioning at the time as Stutthof Special Camp (*Sonderlager Stutthof*). On 7 January 1942, it became the German state concentration camp (*Konzentrationslager Stutthof*) under the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps in Oranienburg. Prisoners from almost all of German-occupied Europe began to arrive at KL Stutthof (Gliński, 1979, pp. 74–75, 90, 207).

Initially, the Stutthof camp was intended for “politically unreliable Polish elements” and was supposed to function as a “preventive measure”. The first prisoners were “people of Polish nationality, or more broadly citizens of the Free City of Danzig, including Jews and Germans” (Orski, 1992, p. 12). Poles and Jews formed the majority until the end of 1941. The first German, a Bible Student (Jehovah’s Witness), was admitted on 6 September 1939. In their accounts, former prisoners from a subcamp in Nowy Port mentioned also a few German antifascists who were interned together with the Poles. A bigger group of Germans from Gdańsk was incarcerated at Stutthof in autumn 1941. They were sent to the camp by the Criminal Police Station in Gdańsk, which may indicate that they came to Stutthof in connection with petty crimes. Larger transports of Germans from other concentration camps arrived in Stutthof in the years 1942–1943 (Orski, 1992, pp. 13–15). The recognition of German inmates can be problematic because of a group of Polish citizens who either declared German nationality before the war or adopted it following the incorporation of Polish

territories into the Reich. In the camp jargon, both categories of prisoners were labeled as *Volksdeutsche*.

Stutthof inmates were assigned various categories, such as police prisoners, political prisoners, reeducation prisoners, professional criminals, asocial prisoners, Jews, Bible Students (Jehovah's Witnesses) and others. Police prisoners were persons whose cases were still under investigation, and who thus remained at the disposal of a Gestapo post. Stutthof functioned as "a kind of investigative jail of the Gdańsk Gestapo", especially since the latter half of 1942 (Grabowska, 1988, p. 119). In the case of Germans and people entered in the DVL, the decision concerning incarceration at the camp as police prisoners was made by the head of the Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt, RSHA) in Berlin. Following "protective custody" (*Schutzhaft*) order, this category was changed to protective custody prisoner (*Schutzhäftling*). Such a prisoner additionally gained the status of a political prisoner (*politisch*) and was fully subordinated to the Stutthof concentration camp headquarters, though they still remained at the disposal of the Gestapo (thanks to which the camp personnel did not have the right to kill them, because they could be needed in the investigation). Some police prisoners retained their status until the end of their incarceration at Stutthof (Gašiorowski, 2021, p. 11). It can be hypothesized that the majority of prisoners in this category were prewar Polish citizens of German origin, whose refusal of loyalty to the Third Reich was associated with their loyalty towards the Second Polish Republic.

Also worthy of mention is the category of reeducation prisoners (*Erziehungshäftlinge*), who were sent to Stuthoff after 1 October 1941, mostly for 56 days, for fleeing the workplace, acts of sabotage etc. Recent studies show that so-called reeducation could be applied without a cause, as a preventive and intimidating measure. Prewar Polish citizens of German nationality, who were entered in the second or third category of the DVL, can definitely be found among reeducation prisoners (Drywa, 2020).

While discussing the state and national structure of the camp, it must be noted that *Volksdeutsche* were both prisoners and members of the guard staff at KL Stutthof. In September 1941, the camp personnel was joined among others by *Volksdeutsche* and *Selbstschutz* members from Bydgoszcz, Wyrzysk, Rypin, Wąbrzeźno and Grudziądz and so-called *Baltendeutsche*, i.e. ethnic Germans from Latvia and Estonia (Gliński, 1977, pp. 205–206). It can be safely assumed that these people were entered in the second category of the DVL.

Volksdeutsche in Stutthof – ethnic Germans or Germanized Poles?

Stutthof inmates whose nationality was given as *Volksdeutsche* in the camp files could be both ethnic Germans and Poles entered in the third category

of the German People's List. However, the ways of recording nationality in the *Bemerkungen* section of the camp record book, which from April 1942 included information on national origin, were characterized by far-reaching freedom and variation in nomenclature. For instance, as regards former Polish citizens, "all possible terms were used, such as *VD* (*Volksdeutscher* plus category), *Pole*, *Polin* (Polish man or woman), *Polen*, *ehem. Polen* (former Polish territory), *polnische Minderheit* (Polish national minority), *Danzig* (citizenship of the Free City of Danzig), as well as *Kaschube* (Kashubian nationality)" (Orski, 1992, p. 8).

Poles entered in the third category of the *DVL* figure as prisoners with German state affiliation in the camp files. Germans from the Reich were marked as *RD* (*Reichsdeutsche*), while the entry *VD*, meaning *Volksdeutscher*, indicated rather that the prisoner was entered in the second or third category of the *DVL*. Sometimes the record book and personal file feature the following entries: *VD DVL III*, *VD III Abt.* or *DVL III*, which clearly points to Poles entered in the third category of the *DVL*. There are also a few entries like *Pole VD* or *VD Pole*, which concern those prisoners who had their *DVL* documents revoked. More precise information about state affiliation was given in the protective custody order (*Schutzhaftbefehl*), but this document was not preserved in the files of all prisoners. Thus in many cases it is impossible to determine whether a given prisoner was entered in the second or third category of the *DVL* (Gašiorowski, 2021, p. 295).

Among police prisoners at KL Stutthof, almost 340 people were classified as *Volksdeutsche* (Gašiorowski, 2021, pp. 302–469: Table. The list of police prisoners at KL Stutthof). The majority of them were imprisoned due to their involvement in the resistance or support for underground organizations. There were also a few cases of suspected sabotage. Some people who were entered in the *DVL* did not have the reasons for incarceration at KL Stutthof stated in their documents or their surviving camp files are incomplete and thus it is impossible to determine why they had been sent to the camp (e.g., only the prisoner's account sheet has been preserved).

Since mid-1943, families of deserters from the Wehrmacht were also incarcerated at KL Stutthof – as hostages. These were usually parents or siblings, who had a note in their camp files stating *Geisel für ihren Sohn* (hostage for their son) or *Geisel für ihren Bruder* (hostage for their brother), and whose state affiliation was marked as *VD* or *V-Deutsch*. Among Stutthof prisoners were also those who refused to sign the *DVL* but who, according to the German administrative authorities, "were members of the German nation" like Edmund Duszyński (Drywa, 2012, p. 68) or "were at least in 50% of German blood" like Stanisław Müller (Owsiński, 2001, p. 106).

A German-sounding name and surname does not always mean that a given prisoner was a representative of the prewar German minority. An example here can be Heinrich Letzerberger from Tczew, who was incarcerated at KL Stutthof on 5 May 1943 because the German police accused him of involvement in a Polish resistance organization. On his personal

card, his state affiliation (*Staatsangehörige*) is given as *VD*, which – taking into account his German-sounding surname – could suggest that he was an ethnic German. In his protective custody order, however, it is stated that he was entered in the third category of the *DVL* (Personal record card, Letzerberger Heinrich, 1943, p. 1; Protective custody order, Letzerberger Heinrich, 1943, p. 5).

In the camp documentation, the term *Eingedeutsch* was rarely used to describe people entered in the third category of the *DVL*. Such a case can be found in the personal file of Halina Bauman from Starogard, who was imprisoned at KL Stutthof on 19 July 1943 for active participation in a “Polish resistance organization.” In her protective custody order, the section concerning state affiliation reads *eingedeutsch Abt. 3* (Protective custody order, Bauman Halina, 1943, p. 4).

The source material of the camp documentation often provides only fragmentary knowledge about the fates of people entered in the German People’s List and incarcerated at KL Stutthof. These are police-administrative sources, and information about prisoners contained therein is sometimes incomplete or inaccurate. It is therefore highly advisable to verify and confront this documentation with source material of other types.

The highest number of prisoners were classified simply as *Volksdeutsche* in their camp personal files, and there is no information about their *DVL* category. The “state affiliation” section of the personal record card,⁹ which was completed upon admission to the camp, almost always reads *VD* or *V-Deutsch*, which can mean either the second or the third category. Out of more than 640 personal files of *Volksdeutsche*¹⁰ that were selected and analyzed for the purposes of the present study, in 535 cases it was impossible to determine the *DVL* category. At least 69 people from the latter group were incarcerated for political reasons. A considerable number of imprisoned *Volksdeutsche* were entered in the third category of the *DVL*. In the course of research, it was determined that 121 *Volksdeutsche* were assigned to the third category of the *DVL*. These were mostly prisoners whose protective custody orders have survived in their camp documentation. In the “state affiliation” section of this document, *Abt. 3 der DVL*, or sometimes *DVL Abt. II*, was entered in the majority of cases. The second category of the *DVL* was determined in 12 cases. An ethnic German entered in the first category of the *DVL* was also discovered, but that person was not an inhabitant of the prewar Pomeranian Voivodeship, but

9 The heading of the document read *Konzentrationslager Stutthof*, and *Art. der Haft* was written next to the name of the camp. Police prisoners had *Polizeih.* (abbreviation for *Polizeihäftling*) written next to it, followed in the same line by their prisoner number (*Gef. Nr.* – abbreviation for *Gefangenen Nr.*).

10 The number was determined in the course of research on the basis of prisoner camp files preserved in the *AMS*.

came from that part of the Warsaw Voivodeship that became the *Regierungsbezirk Zichenau* in 1939.

It seems probable that from among the *Volksdeutsche* imprisoned at KL Stutthof whose DVL category cannot be determined, the vast majority were entered in the third category. These were people who took German nationality as a result of the decree concerning the German People's List. A smaller number of those who were entered in the second category may suggest that at the camp, such cases were in the minority also among those prisoners whose DVL category was not specified. These people formed the German minority before the war. There are also indications that a sizable group of Stutthof inmates were members or supporters of underground organizations, who accepted the third category of the DVL in order to facilitate their clandestine activities.

Cases of KL Stutthof prisoners entered in the second category of the DVL

Bernard Papke (Papka). One such prisoner of German nationality who was entered in the second category of the DVL was Bernard Papke (Papka), a mason by trade. His camp file, however, does not contain information about his category of the DVL. He was incarcerated at KL Stutthof on 1 December 1942 for "aiding Poles/the resistance" and released from the camp on 23 February 1943. He was a police prisoner. In his personal record card, in the state affiliation section, there is only one word: *Deutsch* (Personal record card, Papke Bernhard, 1942). There are no other surviving documents in his camp file (e.g. protective custody order) that could help determine whether he was a German from the Reich or a person entered in the DVL. For Germans from the Reich, state affiliation was usually given as *RD* or *Reichsdeutsche*. That he was entered in the DVL can be inferred from other information in the personal record card, e.g. *polnisch + deutsch* was given in the section "foreign language" (*Fremdsprache*) (Personal record card, Papke Bernhard, 1942; Release of prisoner from the camp, Papke Bernhard, 1943). His knowledge of both Polish and German suggests that he came from the incorporated territories rather than the Reich. Moreover, it was stated that he was arrested in Bydgoszcz, where he lived with his family.

It is in the files of the city of Bydgoszcz where we can find confirmation of Papke's entry in the second category of the DVL, which took place on 7 April 1942 (Questionnaire, Papke Bernhard, 1942). It was a mere formality, because in December 1940 Papke had already received a *Volksdeutscher's* ID confirming his German state affiliation (*Volksdeutscher's* ID, Papke Bernhard, 1940). This procedure applied mainly to the prewar German minority. Papke was its active representative, as he was a member of the prewar organizations of ethnic Germans in Poland: *Jungdeutsche Partei* and *Deutsche Vereinigung* (Questionnaire, Papke Bernhard, 1939).

Another piece of information from his personal record card held in his camp file can point to the high standing of Bernard Papke and his family in the German minority in Bydgoszcz. As we learn from the “relatives” (*Angehörige*) section, his father Paul Papke died in 1939 (Personal record card, Papke Bernhard, 1942). A person by the name and surname of Paweł Papka figures on the list of people who were killed in the streets of Bydgoszcz on 3 and 4 September 1939 (Kosiński, 2008, p. 322). Before the war, both Paweł Papka and Bernard Papka lived at Szubińska Street 53/1 in Bydgoszcz (*Księga adresowa miasta Bydgoszczy...*, 1936). This can indicate that they were indeed family, as well as that a mistake was later introduced in their surname or its spelling was changed.

Paweł and Bernard Papke (Papka), who before the war were Polish citizens, must have acknowledged their German nationality. This is evidenced both by the documentation concerning Bernard’s entry in the German People’s List and by Paweł’s death in the streets of Bydgoszcz in the first days of September 1939. It is worth noting that they were German Catholics, which was rare among Germans in Bydgoszcz. The Roman Catholic religion is given both in the death records for Paweł Papka (Kosiński, 2008, p. 322), and in the camp documentation of Bernard Papke (Personal record card, Papke Bernhard, 1942). Before the war, a vast majority of members of the German minority in Bydgoszcz were Evangelicals (either Lutheran or United). In 1936, people of German nationality constituted barely 2% of Catholics in Bydgoszcz (Aleksandrowicz, 1999, pp. 577–578).

Bernard Papke (Papka) was sent to KL Stutthof for helping Poles and the resistance. His short, only three-month stay at the camp may indicate that it was a minor offense or that the evidence gathered in his case was not compelling. Papke could also have been wrongly accused of supporting the Polish underground. Unfortunately, the surviving camp documentation is not conclusive in this regard.

Edward Kref t. Another example of a KL Stutthof prisoner who was entered in the second category of the DVL is Edward Kref t, a teacher from Parchowo in the Kartuzy county, a Roman Catholic. He was a police prisoner. He was incarcerated at the camp on 5 May 1943, because the Gdańsk Gestapo suspected him of being a long-time “member of a Polish resistance organization who took an active part in anti-state activities” (Letter from the ss..., Kref t Eduard, 1943, p. 8). He was arrested on the night of 3/4 May 1943 as part of a Gestapo operation against the Polish underground (Gdańsk Gestapo to the KL Stutthof camp commandant, Kref t Eduard, 1943, p. 3).

It is impossible to learn from the surviving camp documentation of which organization he was a member. It can be assumed, however, that Kref t’s case was connected with mass arrests of members of the “Gryf Pomorski” Secret Military Organization which were carried out on the same

night. 226 people were then arrested, of whom about a hundred were sent to KL Stutthof on the following day. The arrestees came from the counties of Kartuzy, Kościerzyna, Starogard, Tczew and Wejherowo (Chrzanowski, Gąsiorowski & Steyer, 2005, p. 354). The operation was probably the result of the Gestapo capturing lists with more than 3,000 surnames of "Gryf" members. Lists containing surnames of the conspirators are said to have been abandoned by the partisans during one of the clashes with German gendarmerie in the vicinity of Kartuzy (Hajduk, 2001, p. 183).

It is mainly documents from his camp file that point to the German nationality of Edward Kreft. In his protective custody order, the section concerning state affiliation reads *DVL Abt. II* (Protective custody order, Kreft Eduard, 1943, p. 7). The correspondence preserved in his personal file indicates that after the Polish territories had been incorporated into the Reich in 1939, Kreft joined the NSDAP and was soon admitted to the ss (Letter from the ss..., Kreft Eduard, 1943, p. 8).

Kreft's membership in both the NSDAP and the ss could suggest that he was a zealous German who had actively promoted the German cause in interwar Poland. This could be further corroborated by the NSDAP's admission procedure for *Volksdeutsche* from Pomerania. First they had to complete a worldview course, which was intended to reinforce their National-Socialist outlook on life. Not every *Volksdeutscher* was accepted, however. The privilege of party membership was reserved mainly for ethnic Germans entered in the first category of the *DVL* (Jastrzębski & Sziling, 1979, pp. 264–265).

Nevertheless, the surviving documentation concerning his teaching career in prewar Poland raises many doubts as to his Germanness. In a questionnaire for the prewar School Board in Kartuzy, Edward Kreft declared Polish nationality (Questionnaire concerning Edward Kreft, n.d., p. 40). Similarly no other document in his teacher's personal file mentions German nationality (Collection of personal records concerning Edward Kreft [1920–1939]). A question arises why, following incorporation of the Pomeranian Voivodeship into the Reich, Kreft became a German and what were the reasons behind his entry in the second category of the *DVL* and admission to the NSDAP and the ss.

Perhaps Kreft's life in the period of the Prussian partition was important for the German authorities of Reichsgau Danzig-West Prussia. Born in 1893, Kreft served a little more than three years with the German army during the First World War, leaving the military in the rank of gunnery sergeant on 10 November 1918 (Copy of a certificate issued by the Tax Chamber in Poznań..., 1934, p. 22). Next he completed a course of several months at the then-German Teachers' Training College in Kościerzyna (Copy of the certificate of completion of the Teachers' Training College in Kościerzyna..., p. 15; Copy of the certificate of successful completion of the final exam at the Teachers' Training College..., p. 16). Following completion of the course, Kreft worked for almost four months, until 10 January 1920,

as a teacher at a German school (Copy of a certificate issued by the Verification Commission of the Board of Education..., p. 21). When the Polish Republic was reborn, he most probably had to start learning Polish (Copy of the certificate of participation in a course in Polish studies..., p. 18), which was nothing exceptional, as such was the fate of the majority of Poles from Pomerania.

Edward Kreft's decision to choose German nationality could have been guided by the following: his professional and social standing, good command of German and family situation. He had been teaching for twenty years. For a few years before the war he had served as the headmaster of the Public Elementary School in Borek-Wydmuchowo. After incorporation of these territories into the Reich, he began teaching in Parchowo. Perhaps joining the local NSDAP and SS structures was the condition for continuing work in his profession in the German school system? He had to provide for his wife, who probably did not work, and five little children, aged from one to ten years at the time of his arrest.

The German identity of Edward Kreft was confirmed by his brother, Johann Kreft, in a letter to the commandant of KL Stutthof. Intervening on behalf of his brother, Johann assured the commandant about Edward's pro-German attitudes, which could be testified to by local Germans named in the letter (including a policeman from Parchowo). According to Johann, Edward was a "semi-German" who despite many sufferings "survived" the period of Polish statehood and preserved his Germanness. In a completely Polonized environment, Edward sought to bring up his children in the German spirit and spoke German at home (J. Kreft to the KL Stutthof camp commandant..., p. 10). The circumstances in which the letter was written suggest cautious approach to the opinions and views expressed therein. Trying to defend his brother, Johann Kreft could only seek to convince the Stutthof commandant that Edward was a good German. The expression "semi-German" (*wenigen Deutschen*) proves that during the interwar period, Edward could have undergone advanced Polonization or gravitated towards Polish national identity. In his letter, Johann Kreft also pointed to his brother's activity during the period of imposing German rule, to his "willing and amicable" fulfillment of duties in the NSDAP and SS structures. Perhaps this public activity contributed to the local community from Parchowo remembering Edward as a German teacher who, however, did not leave behind any bad memories (*Historia szkoły przed II wojną światową*, 2015).

Following his arrest and incarceration at KL Stutthof, Edward Kreft's German origin was not denied, but his disloyalty towards the German state was noted. According to the SS authorities, he remained "internally an opponent of the German Reich" and confirmed his anti-state attitude through his involvement in the Polish resistance. Disciplinary proceedings were opened against Edward Kreft, which resulted in his degradation and dismissal from the SS (Letter from the SS..., Kreft Eduard,

1943, p. 8). The RSHA ordered his transfer to KL Mauthausen in mid-February 1944 (Gdańsk Gestapo to the KL Stutthof camp commandant, Kreft Eduard, 1944, p. 5; Gdańsk Gestapo to the KL Mauthausen camp commandant, Kreft Eduard, 1944, p. 6), but there is no trace that this decision was actually carried out. In the collective memory of the local community, Edward Kreft was killed at KL Stutthof (Historia szkoły przed II wojną światową, 2015). This information, however, is also not corroborated by the surviving camp documentation.

A question arises why Edward Kreft became engaged in underground activities. Was it because of his former social contacts? It is known that one of the members of the Supreme Council of the “Gryf Pomorski” Secret Military Organization was Leon Kleinschmidt, an ethnic Pole and the second school inspector in Kartuzy (Hajduk, 2001, p. 182), who could have known Kreft quite well and could have encouraged him to join the underground movement. Perhaps Kreft was guided by his sympathy for Poles and the Polish state or by his vague sense of nationality?

Did Edward Kreft consider himself a German or a Pole? Or perhaps a Kashubian? Which nationality did he declare in the censuses conducted in the years 1939–1940? These questions will likely remain unanswered, and will form a part of the story of his life that was reconstructed in accordance with the methods of historical research.

Witold Glock. Witold Glock, a resident of Gdańsk from Łubiana in the Kościerzyna county, declaring a Roman Catholic faith, was also entered in the second category of the DVL. He was imprisoned at KL Stutthof on 2 October 1943 as “a member of the Polish resistance” (Personal record card, Glock Witold, 1943, p. 1). He was a police prisoner. His personal record card reads only *V.Deutsch*, but in his protective custody order his state affiliation was specified as *DVL Abt. II* (Protective custody order, Glock Witold, 1943, p. 4). In the camp documentation, there is an order to transfer him to KL Auschwitz (Gdańsk Gestapo to the KL Stutthof camp headquarters, Glock Witold, 1944, p. 2; Gdańsk Gestapo to the KL Auschwitz camp headquarters, Glock Witold, 1944, p. 3). It is unknown whether it was carried out, though in his resume for the Citizens’ Militia, where he applied for work, Glock did not mention his stay at Auschwitz (Resume, Glock Witold, 1945, p. 4).

Between 22 May and 1 October 1945, Witold Glock served in the rank of constable at the Citizens’ Militia County Headquarters in Kościerzyna, where he worked as a warehouseman. There is some information on his wartime fates in his personal records. In a resume written for the purposes of recruitment to the Citizens’ Militia, Glock did not mention that he was entered in the second category of the DVL or that he was involved in the resistance, for which he was supposedly incarcerated at KL Stutthof. Instead, he claimed that in October 1941, “refusing to sign subordination to the Germans”, he left Kościerzyna and went to the General Government,

where after eight months in Siedlce he was captured by the Gestapo and transported to a prison in Gdańsk (Życiorys, Glock Witold, 1945, p. 4).

The story about escape to the General Government in order not to take German nationality (“subordination to the Germans”) is hardly plausible. In 1941, the inhabitants of Pomerania were still entered in the German People’s List on a voluntary basis, and this applied first and foremost to local ethnic Germans, i.e. the prewar German minority. Forced and mass enrollment did not occur until the spring of 1942.

Glock’s attempt to hide both his entry in the German People’s List and his involvement in the Polish underground is hardly surprising. Taking German nationality and participation in a non-communist resistance could make work for the Citizens’ Militia impossible. What is more surprising is that after less than five months, Glock was dismissed from service. Downsizing was given as the official reason (Circular concerning release from the MO, Glock Witold, 1945, p. 8), yet a question remains whether his career in the Citizens’ Militia did not end so quickly, despite positive qualification assessment (Qualification assessment, Glock Witold, 1945, p. 7), due to his hidden membership in the German national group and underground activities. Perhaps the operational departments of the Citizens’ Militia obtained some information in this regard?

More discrepancies can be discovered when comparing data from Witold Glock’s personal camp file and personal records of a functionary of the Citizens’ Militia. According to information from his camp personal record card, Glock was a locksmith by trade and had lived before his arrest in Gdańsk Wrzeszcz at Färberweg Street (now Miszewskiego Street). He was arrested by the Gestapo on 27 October 1943 in Gdańsk, and a month and five days later he was sent to KL Stutthof (Personal record card, Glock Witold, 1943, p. 1). In his resume for the Personnel Department of the Citizens’ Militia, however, Glock wrote that he did not have a trade, that he completed one year of high school and that prior to his incarceration at Stutthof, he had first been at a prison in Gdańsk and then spent half a year in a penal camp (Resume, Glock Witold, 1945, p. 4).

Did Witold Glock attempt to hide his German identity after the war, or was he a Pole who had been entered in the second category of the DVL due to opportunism or by mistake? The discrepancies between the data contained in the materials compiled by the administration of the concentration camp and the narrative derived from documentation prepared for the purposes of recruitment to the Citizens’ Militia do not help find an answer to this question.

Glock’s involvement in the resistance can serve as a clue to his national identity. According to postwar accounts, he was a member of the Polish Insurgent Army (Polska Armia Powstania – PAF), where he served in the Territorial Administration Command as the deputy commander of post and telegraph in the rank of sergeant (Gašiorowski, 1997, pp. 53–54). He came to Stutthof with the entire 20-strong group of arrested PAF

members. This was the result of a Gestapo operation aimed at elimination of PAF structures in Pomerania. The first arrests were made in Gdańsk on 21 August 1943 (Owsiński, 2001, pp. 76–77). Glock was arrested on 27 August 1943 (Personal record card, Glock Withold, 1943, p. 1). Would such underground activity be possible to combine with a strong sense of German identity? It seems to point rather to a weaker German national consciousness and closer ties with Polishness. It has to be borne in mind, however, that among Pomeranian conspirators there were also people who were more inclined towards the German nationality.

The Plińskis. Twenty-year-old Stefania Plińska and her parents – Józefa and Józef Pliński, who owned a farm and a mill in Żur in the Osie commune, Świecie county – were incarcerated at KL Stutthof on 2 August 1944. The Plińskis were sent to the camp following an investigation carried out by the Gdańsk police since 20 May 1944. They were accused of cooperation with the resistance. All family members were assigned the category of police and political prisoners. All of them declared Roman Catholic faith (Personal record card, Plinski Stefania, 1944; Personal record card, Plinski Józef, 1944).

According to the Gestapo, Stefania was a liaison for an underground organization, while her parents supported Polish partisans, among others providing them with shelter or a place for the night in their mill (Gdańsk Security Police Leader to the KL Stutthof camp headquarters, Plinski Stefania, 1944; Gdańsk Security Police Leader to the KL Stutthof camp headquarters, Plinski Józef, 1944; Certified copy of the letter from Chief of the RSHA..., Plinski Stefania, 1944; Certified copy of the letter from Chief of the RSHA..., Plinski Józef, 1944). The Plińskis were considered *Volksdeutsche*, and in protective custody orders for Stefania and Józef it was stated that they were entered in the second category of the DVL (Protective custody order, Plinski Stefania, 1944; Protective custody order, Plinski Józef, 1944).

Confirmation of their entry in the German People's List can be found in documentation gathered by the County Office in Świecie. Józef Pliński, his wife and their four children can be found in a list of people who applied for entry in the second category of the DVL (A form with the surnames of people entered in the second category of the DVL..., 1941). Is this sufficient evidence that the Pliński family were Germans? The post-war written account of Stefania Plińska raises doubts in this regard.

While describing the underground activities of herself and her parents, Stefania does not mention their entry in the German People's List (Account of Stefania Magdalena Lewicka née Plińska..., 1979, pp. 1–4). The desire to hide her entry in the second category of the DVL seems understandable, since after the Second World War, the abandonment of Polish nationality was seen as betrayal by the general public. Moreover, the image of a *Volksdeutscher* entered in the second category was at odds with

participation in the anti-German underground movement. We also do not know whether the then-underage girl had anything to say in the decision about her entry in the DVL.

A popular history book concerning the fates of ethnic Germans in the Osie commune also casts doubt as to the Pliński family being members of the German minority before the war. The text reads: "According to a letter from the head of the office in Osie to the *Landrat*, this dated 22 December 1939, Artur Bohm became the owner of [...] a mill in Żur taken from Józef Pliński" (Mieszała, 2013, p. 19). The letter cited by the author of the book has not been found in the course of research, and no documents were discovered to confirm that the German occupation authorities seized Józef Pliński's mill in the village of Żur in 1939. On the contrary, the list of land register files for 1940 from the surviving documentation of the German Agriculture Office in Bydgoszcz shows that Józef "Plinske" was the owner of the Żur Mill since 5 July 1912 (List of land register files, 1940, p. 25). If we were to assume, however, that in December 1939 the Plińskis lost their property to local Germans, then this could explain why they decided to take the second category of the DVL. Entry in the German People's List could help them regain lost property. The second group could indeed guarantee restitution, as only a handful of people entered in the third category managed to regain their property (Jastrzębski & Sziling, 1979, p. 173).

Such a hypothesis, however, has its weaknesses. The very idea of local Germans taking over the property of a Polish owner as early as in December 1939 raises some doubts, as at the time *Volksdeutsche* in Pomerania mainly occupied farms vacated by Poles who were resettled to the General Government or fell victim to German executions. Those Poles who remained in Pomerania retained ownership of their properties more or less until 1941. It was only then that the total confiscation of agricultural property owned by Polish inhabitants of the former Pomeranian Voivodeship took place (Jastrzębski & Sziling, 1979, pp. 207–208). Moreover, Stefania Plińska wrote in her account that for the entire period of the German annexation of these territories, she lived with her parents at the mill in Żur, where Polish conspirators and people wanted by the police were hiding in the years 1940–1944. Plińska does not mention the loss of her parents' property (Account of Stefania Magdalena Lewicka née Plińska..., 1979, pp. 1–4). In 1941, fear of losing the mill and the farm could have prompted Józef Pliński to make the decision about enrolment in the second category of the DVL. He had acquired his property at the time of the Prussian partition, which the authorities could have regarded as an argument in favor of his Germanness.

Józef and Józefa Pliński must have had a good command of German. This is confirmed in Stefania's account, as she writes about the circumstances of the death of her father, who died at the camp on 15 February 1945 due to exhaustion caused by typhoid fever, and whose body was burned on a pyre. Stefania's mother learned about this from a witness to the event,

who was a German pharmacist from Berlin (Account of Stefania Magdalena Lewicka née Plińska..., 1995, p. 10).

Knowledge of the German language, which was quite common among the native inhabitants of Pomerania, is not conclusive proof of German identity. Could the Plińskis combine a long-term involvement in supporting Polish underground organizations with German national feelings? Do these circumstances, however, unequivocally point to their Polish national identity? It is difficult to answer these questions. If, however, the Plińskis' enrollment in the second category of the DVL was purely opportunistic, it cannot be assumed that the German office entering them in the DVL was guided by the same approach. It cannot be ruled out that the German clerks saw the Plińskis more as Polonized Germans than Poles marked by the experience of life in the Prussian partition.

The fact that the Plińskis carried out underground activities in their mill for four years without raising suspicions can be seen as supporting the thesis that the local Germans considered the Plińskis members of their own community. Their arrest was not the result of a denunciation by German neighbors, but followed the exposure of the underground group which they were helping. What is more, a befriended local German policeman warned them that the Gdańsk Gestapo had taken interest in their activities (Account of Stefania Magdalena Lewicka née Plińska..., 1995, p. 7).

Leon Nadolski. Employee of the County Office in Kościerzyna, Leon Nadolski, was incarcerated in KL Stutthof on 10 June 1944. He was assigned the category of a police and political prisoner at the camp. According to camp documentation, he was 43 years old, was married, was of the Roman Catholic faith and a tailor by trade, and was entered in the second category of the DVL (Personal record card, Nadolski Leon, 1944, p. 1; Protective custody order, Nadolski Leon, 1944, p. 4; Copy of the letter from Chief of the RSHA..., Nadolski Leon, 1944, p. 2).

Nadolski was sent to the camp on suspicion that he remained in contact with collaborators of Jan Szalewski's partisan unit. He was accused of having knowledge about the Polish resistance thanks to these contacts. He was also suspected of stealing blankets of identity documents from the office where he was employed and handing them over to Polish partisans (Gdańsk Security Police Leader to the KL Stutthof camp headquarters, Nadolski Leon, 1944, p. 2).

Nadolski was arrested on 25 May 1944 (Personal record card, Nadolski Leon, 1944, p. 1), a day before a massive manhunt for Szalewski's partisans, which was carried out in the area of Łubiana near Kościerzyna. The German police conducted an extensive operation against partisan units in Kashubia since the beginning of May 1944 (Chrzanowski, Gąsiorowski & Steyer, 2005, p. 486). It seems probable that the German police found out about Nadolski's cooperation with Szalewski's people when preparing the operation against partisans.

Nadolski was accused of taking part in legalizing documents for members of Polish underground organizations. This consisted in issuing original German papers for false surnames used by Polish conspirators. It is known that the acquisition of such documents in Kościerzyna was entrusted to Jan Szalewski (Gąsiorowski, 2009, pp. 312–313). Particulars of cooperation between Leon Nadolski and Szalewski's group remain unknown. Was Nadolski taking the *Ausweis* blankets out of the county office only because of his convictions, or did he have some gain in it?

Józef Guźliński. Józef Guźliński, a resident of Tczew, was a police prisoner at KL Stutthof from 3 December 1942. He was arrested by the German police on 9 November 1942. He was a signaller by profession, a Roman Catholic, and married. He was entered in the second category of the German People's List (Personal record card, Guzłinski Josef, 1942, p. 1; Protective custody order, Guzłinski Josef, 1944, p. 3; Copy of the letter from Chief of the RSHA..., Guzłinski Josef, 1944, p. 2).

According to the Security Police Leader from Gdańsk, Józef Guźliński was imprisoned because "he had knowledge concerning a Polish resistance organization" (Gdańsk Security Police Leader to the KL Stutthof camp headquarters, Guzłinski Josef, 1944, p. 2). The protective custody order, signed by the Chief of the RSHA Ernst Kaltenbrunner, says in turn that "he took active part in high treason through his participation in the Polish resistance" (Protective custody order, Guzłinski Josef, 1944, p. 3).

It is difficult to determine which charge from the documents preserved in Józef Guźliński's personal camp file was true to the facts. Did he simply know about the activities or existence of partisan units and failed to inform the German police authorities, or did he participate in the said activities?

Answers to these questions can be sought in a resume written by Guźliński after the war for the purposes of recruitment to the Volunteer Reserve of the Citizens' Militia. Guźliński stated there that he was a member of the Secret Polish Organization in the years 1941–1942 (Resume, Guźliński Józef, 1963, pp. 1–2; Questionnaire of a member of the OSMO, Guźliński Józef, 1963, p. 3). It seems that he could have made a mistake in the name of the partisan organization and actually could have meant the "Gryf Pomorski" Secret Military Organization.

In Guźliński's resume from the first half of the 1960s there is no mention about his entry in the German People's List (Resume, Guźliński Józef, 1963, pp. 1–2). This is not surprising, however, as confessing that he had taken German citizenship during the war could have prevented his admission to the Volunteer Reserve of the Citizens' Militia. These radical shifts in Guźliński's national identification were probably influenced by dynamic political changes, first connected with the onset of the German occupation, and later with the imposition of the dictatorship of the communist party in Poland. It can be suspected that Guźliński, guided by

desire to survive the war, applied for entry in the DVL, and later joined the Polish Workers' Party and the Volunteer Reserve of the Citizens' Militia.

The Brauns. Joanna and Leon Braun, a married couple from Toruń, were sent to KL Stutthof on 3 March 1944. They were police prisoners. They were imprisoned at the camp in retaliation for the desertion of their son, Alojzy Braun, who during his leave decided not to return to his Wehrmacht unit and instead join a group of partisans in the Tuchola Forest. According to the camp documentation, they were entered in the second category of the DVL (Personal record card, Braun Johanna, 1944, p. 1; Protective custody order, Braun Johanna, 1944, p. 8; Personal record card, Braun Leon, 1944; Letter to the KL Stutthof camp headquarters, Braun Leon, 1944).

The Brauns were hostages for their son. Families of deserters from the Wehrmacht were imprisoned at KL Stutthof as hostages since mid-1943. They were usually parents or siblings. This, however, applied chiefly to people entered in the third category of the DVL, and cases of people from the second category of the DVL are unknown in literature (Drywa, 2012, pp. 68, 74, 77; Owsiniński, 2001, p. 106).

After a little more than two months, on 11 May 1944, Leon Braun was released from the camp (Certificate of release from KL Stutthof, Braun Leon, 1944). His *Volksdeutscher's* ID, confirming his second category, was returned to him (Gdańsk Gestapo to the KL Stutthof camp headquarters, Braun Leon, 1944). Joanna Braun, in turn, remained at Stutthof. What is more, in August 1944, on the order from Chief of the RSHA Ernst Kaltenbrunner, she was moved to KL Ravensbrück. The reason was "her support for the deserter during his escape" and "obstruction of police investigation by making misleading statements" (Copy of the letter from Chief of the RSHA..., Braun Johanna, 1944, p. 7). It was claimed that Joanna Braun "knew about her son's scheming and paid him secret visits in the Tuchola Forest", and "when she was repeatedly questioned about her son by the police, she consciously provided false information" (Gdańsk Gestapo to the KL Ravensbrück camp headquarters..., Braun Johanna, 1944, p. 6). It was assumed that "following her release, she would again act to the detriment of the state" (Copy of the letter from Chief of the RSHA..., Braun Johanna, 1944, p. 7).

The disparate treatment of the couple by the German police authorities may seem surprising. Did the father of Alojzy Braun really not know anything about the mother helping her son escape and hide from the army? Or maybe Leon Braun chose loyalty to the German state over solidarity with his closest family? To what extent was this his informed choice or the result of manipulation or even torture during investigation?

Martin Ittner. An employee of the Social Welfare Office in Gdynia, Martin Ittner, arrived at KL Stutthof on 3 November 1943. He was a political prisoner. He was sent to the camp following his arrest by the Gdańsk

Gestapo and a month of investigation. At the time of his arrest, Ittner was a resident of Gdynia, but he came from Miastko in the Wschowa county (Leszno county before the war). He had a wife and four children and was a tailor and accountant by trade. He was a member of the Catholic Church and was entered in the second category of the DVL (Personal record card, Ittner Martin, 1943, p. 1; Protective custody order, Ittner Martin, 1944, p. 8; Gdańsk Gestapo to the KL Stutthof camp headquarters, Ittner Martin, 1944, p. 4; KL Stutthof camp headquarters to the Gdańsk Gestapo, Ittner Martin, 1944, p. 5).

The reason for his imprisonment at KL Stutthof was that, concealing his membership in a Polish organization, he obtained entry in the second category of the German People's List by means of deception, thus "committing a serious fraud against the German office" (Copy of the letter from Chief of the RSHA..., Ittner Martin, 1944, p. 9). Chief of the RSHA Ernst Kaltenbrunner ordered his transfer to KL Buchenwald. There is no indication that the order was carried out in Ittner's personal file.

The reason for the imprisonment of Martin Ittner suggests that the German police authorities considered him "not German enough" to be entered in the second category of the DVL. His Germanness was tainted by prewar membership in an unspecified Polish organization. Under the regulation of the Reich Interior Minister concerning the acquisition of German citizenship, entry in the second category was made on condition of lack of "ties to Polishness", as this supposedly precluded the preservation of Germanness during the period of Polish rule. It was specified that "these kind of ties can be construed as the very membership in any of Polish organizations" (Zarządzenie ministra spraw wewnętrznych Rzeszy, 1941, p. 258). The charge brought against Ittner did not mean that his origin was put into question, but that he was entered in the wrong category of the German People's List. Pursuant to the regulation concerning the acquisition of German citizenship, people of German origin who had been members of Polish organizations were to be entered in the third category of the DVL (Zarządzenie ministra spraw wewnętrznych Rzeszy, 1941, p. 260).

L u d w i k G ó r n y. Ludwik Górny was sent to KL Stutthof on 10 November 1943. He came from Buk in the Grodzisk Wielkopolski county, which was located in Reichsgau Wartheland. He was arrested on 23 September 1943 in Gdynia, and this was probably the reason for his incarceration at the Stutthof camp. He was a tailor and accountant by profession and was unmarried. He declared Roman Catholic faith and was entered in the second category of the DVL (Personal record card, Gorny Ludwik, 1943, p. 1; Gdańsk Gestapo to the KL Stutthof camp headquarters, Gorny Ludwik, 1944, p. 4).

He was deprived of liberty and incarcerated at the camp because, according to the Gdańsk Gestapo, "during the Polish rule he actively

opposed the German cause and obtained entry in the second group of the German People's List by means of deception. He also slandered the official authorities in anonymous letters to the highest SS and Police posts" (Gdańsk Gestapo to the KL Stutthof camp headquarters, Gorny Ludwik, 1944, p. 4). The latter charge was better explained in a letter from Chief of the RSHA Kaltenbrunner, who specified that in his anonymous letters, Górný "slandered the leadership and officers and accused them of prohibited actions", thus "causing concern and decay in the ranks of the police" and "burdening the office with unnecessary investigative activities, which impeded the implementation of tasks that were important from a military point of view" (Copy of the letter from Chief of the RSHA..., Gorny Ludwik, 1944, p. 5).

The charge of "opposing the German cause" in the interwar period puts Górný's ties to Germanness into question. It does not, however, disqualify him as an ethnic or cultural German. Pursuant to the regulation concerning the acquisition of German citizenship, people who acted to the detriment of the German cause could be entered in the fourth category of the DVL, provided that they gave their consent. Those who should have been entered in the first or second category but were actively engaged in anti-German activities before the war were treated as "unwanted German populace." Such category of people could not obtain entry in the German People's List (Zarządzenie ministra spraw wewnętrznych Rzeszy, 1941, p. 261). In other words, only those people of German origin who acted to the detriment of the German cause because of strong Polonization could receive a second chance, while those who preserved their Germanness and yet actively engaged in anti-German activities were excluded from the possibility of acquiring German citizenship. On the basis of available surviving source material, it is impossible to determine in which group the German authorities placed Józef Górný.

Closing remarks

Among KL Stutthof inmates who were described as *Volksdeutsche* in the camp documentation, prewar Polish citizens of German nationality who were entered in the second category of the DVL constituted a small minority. It seems that the majority of *Volksdeutsche* imprisoned at Stutthof were Germanized Poles from the third category of the DVL. There is also a considerable number of prisoners who were entered in the German People's List, but for whom it is impossible to determine their category on the basis of surviving personal camp files. It can be assumed that this group had a similar ratio between people entered in the second and third categories. Moreover, there is also a number of prisoners of German nationality whose traces are preserved only in transport lists, record books or camp hospital files. Due to limited source material for this group of prisoners,

their DVL category and reasons for their incarceration at the camp cannot be determined.

About a dozen prisoners of the Stutthof camp who were entered in the second category of the DVL and were mostly ethnic or cultural Germans can be identified on the basis of surviving sources. They were sent to the camp predominantly on suspicion of involvement in the resistance, providing assistance to partisan units or having knowledge about such activities and failing to report it to the German police. Undoubtedly, such behavior on the part of *Volksdeutsche* can be seen as disloyalty to the German Reich. It could be combined with loyalty to the prewar Polish state or with a particular sympathy for Polish neighbors.

Among the reasons for imprisonment at the camp there was also obtaining entry in the second category of the DVL by means of deception or slandering German police forces. Such activities were indicative of disloyalty to the German state, but on the basis of available source material it is difficult to determine to what extent this was the result of loyalty towards prewar Poland.

The pro-Polish attitudes of some KL Stutthof inmates who were entered in the second category of the DVL raise questions concerning the intensity of their sense of Germanness. Did they consider themselves Germans or Poles? It is often impossible to answer unequivocally, as arguments can be found in favor of both identities. Even if in some cases the evidence seems to be pointing to the Polish national identity, the Germans' optics cannot be disregarded, and they often perceived strongly Polonized people as having deep German roots. This indicates the need for in-depth research on the national identity of both members of the prewar German minority and people entered in the DVL during the war.

It has to be emphasized that among the KL Stutthof prisoners under study who were entered in the second category of the DVL there were people who, following the end of the German occupation, once again took Polish citizenship and erased from their official life stories and accounts any mention of enrolment in the German People's List. Such behavior, however, is hardly surprising, because after the war those who had abandoned their Polish nationality were widely perceived as "traitors of the nation." After 1945, *Volksdeutsche* entered in the second category of the DVL who had suffered repression at KL Stutthof could either leave for Germany, thus forgiving the cruelty of the Nazi authorities, or remain in Poland, thus erasing their former German identity. Such cases confirm the thesis present in the literature that sometimes it can be difficult to clearly define one's national affiliation and that "nationality is not given once and for all, it can evolve under various external circumstances" or even "completely change in the course of life" (Marszał, 2020, pp. 21-22).

The characteristic feature of the group of prisoners under study who were entered in the second category of the DVL is their religion. All of them were Roman Catholics. Taking into account relations between

religions in the region – the prewar German minority in the Pomeranian Voivodeship was predominantly Evangelical – a question arises as to whether religious affiliation could be related to national identity, to the development of pro-Polish attitudes. To identify religious faith with national identity, however, would be to oversimplify matters, as it could not be proved for all the cases. Nevertheless, the absence of Evangelicals among ethnic Germans imprisoned at Stutthof calls into question the representativeness of this group for the prewar German minority as a whole. Therefore, on the basis of research findings concerning a group of Polish Germans incarcerated at Stutthof, it is impossible to form a hypothesis about the general attitude of *Volksdeutsche* from the prewar Pomeranian Voivodeship towards the German policies in the territories incorporated into the Reich.

Polish Germans entered in the second category of the DVL, who were imprisoned at the concentration camp due to their pro-Polish attitudes, came from a few counties of the prewar Pomeranian Voivodeship. They were members of various social groups: the intelligentsia, clerks, craftsmen, workers and farmers. The majority of them had families. They were both men and women.

The motivations behind the pro-Polish behavior of ethnic Germans from Pomerania and the sources of their disloyalty towards the German state often belong in the realm of speculation and best guesses. The reason is the incompleteness of surviving and available source material and the very nature of camp documentation. Research gaps – encountered also while describing other specific issues connected with the subject under study – make it necessary to rely on circumstantial investigation and use probability as a key category of interpretation.

The research shows that few Germans from the second category of the DVL were incarcerated at KL Stutthof for their pro-Polish, and thus anti-German and anti-state behavior. There are indications that they could constitute a small percentage of the whole group of *Volksdeutsche* imprisoned at Stutthof. Such behavior was decidedly exceptional when compared to the conduct of ethnic Germans who in large numbers participated in crimes against Poles.

People entered in the second category of the DVL were sent to the Stutthof camp in the years 1942–1944. This could be related to such phenomena of the time as the intensification of entries in the German People's List, the development of the Polish resistance movement, and the greater activity of the German police with regard to both the Polish Underground State and people entered in the DVL.

(transl. by Aleksandra Arumińska)

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