

POLISH POLITICAL THOUGHT ON GERMANY DURING WORLD WAR II

SUMMARY

1. The war and the Nazi occupation are usually associated in people's minds with the martyrdom and armed struggle of nations. Not enough stress has been laid so far on the activity developed in planning the future of states, nations and entire continents. The war released a flood of ideas about the future among professional politicians, i. e., representatives of political parties, diplomats, publicists, scholars and army personnel as well as among men in the street. They all hoped and waited for a victorious conclusion of the war, for the defeat of the aggressor and the arrangement of a world that would know no wars, violence and injustice. Researchers, chroniclers and observers of the occupied European countries agree that this was a constant theme. Analysis of the past, combined with thoughts about the future, was the mental pabulum of millions of people living under the yoke of the occupation and in the countries unengulfed by the war. This was also the preoccupation of the Poles, of their various ideological centres. Fate had decreed Poland's place between two powerful neighbours, the USSR and Germany, and this question has always preoccupied the attention of Polish politics and of wide circles of the politically minded Polish society.

It was in particular the history of Polish-German relations and the good and bad experiences gathered in its course, especially those connected with the Nazi aggression, that seemed to shape the Poles' understanding of the German question, their view of Germany, the German state and nation. They realized that this powerful neighbour and the policy of its ruling circles had posed a constant threat to the Polish state and nation throughout the centuries. The interest in Germany, its place in Europe, its relations with its neighbours and other states, its policy, philosophy and culture, its way of government and rule, is not therefore surprising.

From the first days of the 1939 defensive war, Polish political thinkers began to look for the most effective solutions that would protect Poland from the aggressiveness and the economic, cultural and political expansionism of her strong neighbour. It is astounding and surprising that during the years of brute force, violence and lawlessness the Polish nation, almost all its ideological and political currents, took up the enormous effort of rethinking the past and formulating new and lasting concepts of how to arrange its own country, Europe and the world. Such concepts were formulated both in Poland and in exile. In this stream of the various sanitizing proposals which flowed in from various sides, being inspired by various ideologies, classes and groups and frequently put forward on the spur of the moment, there were many well considered ideas calling for sound thinking and acting. The principal idea was that Poland's place in Europe

and the durability and security of her frontiers would be determined by her participation in the struggle against Nazi Germany on the side of the anti-fascist coalition.

This is the theme of the author's reflections on Polish war-time political thought concerning the future of Germany as a state and nation.

2. Political thought, writes Professor H. Zieliński, means the discovery, indication and a critical description of political concepts, that is, of „statements or indications of a general character which determine the fundamental directions of a nation's and a state's development and are in a relatively permanent and stubborn way evident in political activity”. During the war and the occupation, political thought understood in this sense came into being and developed in the traditional way, mainly through its creators, disseminators and recipients (political parties and camps, leaders, theoreticians), i. e., the organizers of political life and the institutions engaged in the dissemination of political thought. The practical political activity of the individual groups, parties and leaders was outside our interest, unless it was connected with a theoretical inspiration, with the working out of a definite political concept.

It has been customary to divide and classify the centres of political thought into right-wing, left-wing and centrist, which, of course, is not the only classification or an adequate one. As far as the period of the war and the occupation is concerned, one can distinguish a coherent series of definite political concepts as well as general opinions and programmes for solving the future of Germany, which were manifest in political life in a permanent and persistent way. From the point of view of substance, at least eight centres of Polish political thought can be distinguished:

a) The national camp in all its complexity, from the extreme right, i. e., the National Radical Camp, the National Armed Forces, Szaniec (Entrenchment), the Confederation of the Nation, Pobudka (Reveille) to the National Party. As far as the German question was concerned, this was a leading political camp which could be regarded as an expert in this problem.

b) The pre-September camp, i. e., Pilsudski's followers, the Sanacja regime, a camp which was also very active as regards the German question, in particular the Camp of Fighting Poland and the Confederation of Independence Organization.

c) Christian Democracy, another centre of political thought, also rallied various groupings, from the Union to the Labour Party.

d) The Socialist camp with its great traditions and achievements and trained theoreticians and practitioners also had large possibilities in this respect.

e) The peasant camp, headed by the most numerous party, the "Roch" Peasant Party, was active in political life, although as regards plans for solving the German question, it did not come to the fore, but its reflections are worthy of attention.

f) The camp of democratic Left consisting of various ideological currents headed by the Democratic Party. It included such conspiratorial groups and organizations as the Union for the Defence of the Republic, the Union of Struggle and Independent Work, the Polish People's Independence Action, the Union of Polish Syndicalists and the Front of Poland's Rebirth.

g) Left to the last-named centre was the camp of revolutionary Left headed by the communists, who in January 1942 set up the Polish Workers' Party. This camp played an especially vital role in the last phase of the war, influencing by its concepts the final solution of the German question. This was the camp which was to put this solution into effect.

h) The main centre of political thought was the government centre and all the representative institutions connected with it, such as the National Council of the Polish Republic, the Government's Delegate's Office in Poland, the Political Representation,

the Council of National Unity, the Supreme Command of the Home Army as well as the National Home Council, the Polish Committee of National Liberation, the Provisional Government, the Provisional Government of National Unity, the People's Army.

It is debatable whether this gradation of the individual centres is correct and whether it reflects all Polish opinions, but it is certainly representative, which does not mean that it presents all the shades of opinion or even all currents. There are many more possibilities of presenting the different Polish opinions. This is just a proposal and not the only one, a fact of which the author is aware.

The book presents not only the programmatic solutions proposed by the individual centres but also the ways in which these centres arrived at their concepts, and takes into account the differentiated views and attitudes of the disseminators of political thought.

3. The Polish political thought concerning the German question has been analysed on the basis of rich, variegated and extensive sources, mainly the materials produced by governmental institutions, in particular the Ministry of Congress Works of the Polish government in exile. These materials are of different value and concern various stages of work. They make it possible to perceive the transition from a concept to a fully worked out principle.

Another source, documents of the Ministry of Information and Documentation of the government in exile, consisted of reports, bulletins and reviews of the world press and literature dealing with the German question.

Yet another source, amply represented in the book, were conspiratorial pamphlets and other propaganda publications as well as the conspiratorial and emigré press. This enormous material, very variegated as far as its content and form is concerned, had to be scrupulously analysed. Press articles require particular caution and criticism, but they are irreplaceable in research into political thought. Published sources as well as memoirs and accounts by leading Polish political personages have also been used to portray the achievements of Polish political thought. In addition to archival and published sources, use has also been made of a vast literature on this subject, Polish as well as foreign. This applies to selected aspects of Polish political thought as well as to the German question in the broad sense of the term, its history, diplomatic relations, etc. All this has allowed the author to formulate the basic conclusions.

4. The source material and literature has allowed me to draw up the following set of problems. I started with the opinions of Polish centres of political thought on what was termed a victorious exit from the war, in particular the Polish aims and dilemmas (Chapter I). I have dealt at large with Polish opinions on what is known as the Polish dilemma, i.e., the role and place of Poland's two powerful neighbours, the USSR and Germany (Chapter II).

Next I have analysed the concepts directly concerning the future of Germany, including such detailed questions as the defeat and unconditional surrender of Germany as well as the occupation and decentralization of the territory of the Third Reich. This is the subject of Chapter III.

Chapter IV deals with the proposals concerning the price to be exacted from Germany for the aggression. They provided for disarmament, reparations, the establishment of the new frontiers of defeated Germany and the settlement of the fate of the German population.

The next chapter discusses the proposed re-education of defeated Germany, including such detailed questions as the crime-punishment issue, the responsibility of the German state and nation, and the measures and methods for a democratic transformation of the German state and society.

The final, most extensive, chapter deals with the concepts advanced by the centres of Polish political thought on such crucial European problems as the future of Europe, its peaceful development, various concepts of its organization and the place of small, medium-sized and large states. All the discussions on the future of defeated Germany were pointless without the assuring of enduring security in Europe. It is not surprising therefore that this question occupied such an important place in Polish political thought.

The book ends with a presentation of the settlements adopted by the great powers of the victorious anti-Nazi coalition on all the issues concerning Germany, i.e., its defeat and unconditional surrender, occupation and decentralization, disarmament, reparations, frontiers, the population, the questions of guilt, punishment and responsibility, and the methods of re-educating that state and nation.

Unfortunately, the material is not evenly covered as regards the individual subjects and, especially, chronology. Chronology is not, of course, the decisive determinant in a presentation based on subject-matter, but nonetheless it is important. The reader will notice at once that the period from mid-1944 to August 1945 has been dealt with the most briefly. In the history of World War II and of Poland this was already a different period, a period of the struggle for power and for its social and political content. The German question became then a function rather than a subject of reflections and these were cautious, in anticipation of the settlements to be made by the great powers. Lack of space was another reason for the brevity of this section.

As to the account I have given of the political thought of both the emigration and domestic centres, I have been able to present, though not fully, two centres of political emigration: the British and the Soviet one. An analysis of all the emigration centres in their complexity is still a research postulate.

The main conclusion of the work, based on sources and literature, are neither sensational nor innovative. During the war, after the breakdown of their state, brought about by the Nazi aggression and the military defeat, the Poles never stopped thinking of the future of their state, its sovereign existence, of assuring it a proper and secure place in Europe. This is why they took up a heroic armed effort on all the fronts of the war and fought tenaciously and unceasingly. This is an indisputable fact unquestioned even by our enemies. This was a part of the nation's effort, to say nothing of the enormous losses and humiliation brought by the war. The world must be constantly reminded of this for public opinion has a very short memory.

Another current connected with Poland's victorious exit from the war was the intellectual effort. All the spheres of the nation's spiritual life recorded achievements during the war and the occupation. Spiritual life — the underground schools, religious life, the theatre, music, literature — was what allowed the nation to survive. It continued to develop during the war, both in Poland and in exile. This current also included Polish political thought concerning the future of Germany as a state and nation. During the war and the occupation Poland, already tried out in the past, once again faced the traditional dilemma: what to do with the perpetual aggressor, Germany, to prevent it from launching another war. This was the central question. What should postwar Germany be like, what should be its place in Europe, how to organize its internal life to ensure that for several generations Europe and the world would be free of wars. This question was neither original nor isolated. It was the one being asked by all who thought about victory. Poland made her own original contribution to the concepts and plans for solving the question of Germany as a state and nation, a contribution which deserves to be recalled. The significance of this contribution lay in the fact that Poland not only took part in the conceptual work concerning Germany's future, but also put the adopted solutions into effect, having been entrusted this task by the victorious Allies. As a result,

the frontier guaranteeing Poland's security was shifted to the Elbe, and this must be recognized as the greatest achievement of Polish political thought and of Polish diplomacy and policy, which had helped to create this concept.

These are the leading basic ideas of the book. On the basis of hitherto unused sources and literature the author has brought to light many concepts and solutions which have not been known so far, acquainting the reader with the intellectual effort which the Poles made in the most difficult period of their history to solve the most complicated problem of those times.