Krzysztof Tarka. *Litwini w Polsce 1944-1997*.

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Prior to the late 1980s Polish historiography paid almost no attention to the history of national minorities. This sphere of research was kind of 'untouchable', since until the middle of the fifties the thinking prevailed that the People's Republic of Poland was a homogeneous state and it had no problems with national minorities. The Khrushchev 'thaw' in the USSR conditioned appropriate changes in Poland as well, which in their turn affected the political attitude of the state towards national minorities. The existence of national minorities was acknowledged, they were somehow 'discovered'.

However, the state policy of Poland towards national minorities was not uniform. Some of them (Russians, Jews) were given wider rights of activity and their situation in comparison to the others was better; the public life of some others (Slovaks, Lithuanians, Belorussians) was more restricted, while the state policy towards the Germans and Ukrainians was simply repressive. It was only after the democratic reconstruction in Poland in the late eighties that the historians, sociologists and lawyers started paying attention to national communities. Among the recent publications the following could be mentioned: *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce*, Wrocław, 1997; *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce: państwo i społeczeństwo polskie a mniejszości narodowe w okresie przełomów politycznych (1944-1989)*, Warszawa, 1998; *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce: praktyka po 1989 roku*, Warszawa, 1998, et al. More numerous national minorities, such as the Germans, Ukrainians, Belorussians and the emotionally charged issue of the Jews received correspondingly greater attention. A monograph devoted to the history (covering the second half of the twentieth century) of the Lithuanian community in Poland appeared in 1998. It was the second major study (after *Vilnijos lietuviai 1920-1939* by Bronius Makauskas, Vilnius, 1991) to be published on the aforementioned problem.

The monograph consists of an introduction, five chapters, bibliography and an index of personal names. The structure of the work was conditioned by the author's method of examining the activity

of the Lithuanians in the fields of culture, education and religion through the more significant stages of the state policy and relations with the Polish Catholic Church with regard to national minorities. The author defines the purpose of his study by the following phrase: to show the activities of the Lithuanians in Poland from the Second World War up to the present time (p. 12).

In his work the author used mainly the materials of Polish archives and the works of Polish researchers, and only a few publications by Polish Lithuanians. The archival materials, accumulated by the Lithuanians living in diaspora could have enabled the author to reveal more vividly the Lithuanian activities, which were quite varied and manifold. It must be stressed at the outset that Tarka focused his attention on the life of the Lithuanians of the region of Puńsk (Punskas) and Sejny (Seinai). The use of almost exceptionally Polish sources probably conditioned the Polish point of view in the analysis of the issues in question. However it must be stated that the author tried to remain unbiased in showing both sides – the different positions of the Polish Lithuanians and the Poles.

In the Introduction (pp. 9-14) the author reviews the character of Polish state policy in regard to national minorities, statistics and defines the subject and the sources of his study.

The first chapter 'A Single-Nation State (1944-1950)' (pp. 15-56) deals with various related issues. Tarka analyses the future visions of a single-nation state fostered by the Polish political forces in the Second World War, the repatriation processes of 1944-1946, noting correctly that the pressure exerted on Lithuanians to go to the Soviet-occupied Lithuania made them change their nationality (p. 23). He also throws light on the contacts between Polish Lithuanians and Lithuanian partisans, on the numbers and geographical distribution of Lithuanians in Poland and about the first Lithuanian postwar schools and church services. According to the author, the first postwar schools started functioning in the autumn of 1944. In three localities Lithuanian was taught as a discipline (pp. 48-49). However, that lasted only one school year. Speaking about the church services conducted in Puńsk, Sejny and Smolany (Smalėnai) in the native tongue after the war, Tarka notes that they were gradually abolished and were retained only in Puńsk. Lithuanian attempts to have Lithuanian church services in other places were unsuccessful.

In the investigation of the history of Polish Lithuanians a most important and at the same time most difficult problem is the determination of their number. The point is that in none of the censuses (except that of 1946) contained the indication of nationality (nationality and citizenship were identical concepts). Therefore the estimate of

the size of non-Polish communities can be determined only very approximately, and it is no surprise that it varies in the works of the writers on this subject. In his attempts to arrive at a more precise number Tarka exploited various sources and in their basis he indicated several approximate figures of the total number of Lithuanians in various places in his book: 20,000 (p. 11), 10,000, 20,000-25,000 and even 30,000 (p. 193). For the sake of objectivity he presented the estimates of Polish Lithuanians themselves and the official opinion of the Polish state authorities (p. 194). The former indicated 20,000-25,000, the latter about 20,000. According to the estimates of the author the number of Lithuanians in Poland must be about 10,000. In the opinion of the reviewer this number is greatly reduced, since it encompasses only those Lithuanians who are actively engaged in public life. Tarka considers that in Suwałki (Suwalkai) there are about 500 Lithuanians (p. 196), while in actual fact that number should be doubled - there are about 200 active members only in the Suwałki branch of the Society of Polish Lithuanians. The same could be said about the Lithuanians in Wrocław.

Tarka notes more than once that the representatives of Polish Lithuanians are inclined to exaggerate the numbers of the Lithuanians living in Poland. Such an opinion can not be discarded outright. However, he himself, writing about the Poles in Lithuania, does not refrain from overestimating their number to 300,000 (p. 212).

Chapter 2 is entitled 'Changes in Nationality Policy (1951-1955)'. In the subchapters 'Number of Lithuanians', 'Beginning of the Schools', 'The First Amateur Ensembles' and 'The Lithuanian Language in the Church' the author characterizes the policy of the ruling Polish United Workers' Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, henceforth PZPR) in regard to the national minorities and the number of Lithuanians in that period, the attention being focused on education and amateur activities. According to the author, the system of Lithuanian schools had been established in the fifties and has not undergone any major changes up to the present time (p. 64). He states that in addition to the four Lithuanian schools, Lithuanian as a discipline was introduced in fifteen more schools in that period. In the reviewer's opinion, a more detailed analysis of the work of the schools, their teachers and the extra-curricular activities would have been desirable. Speaking about the organization of the postwar amateur ensembles, the author presents an outline of the traditions of these activities in Suwalkija (southern Lithuania) at the beginning of the twentieth century, political factors, which influenced this movement after the Second World War and the contemporary ensembles 'Sūduva' (village of Krevėnai), 'Rūta' (Vidugiriai), the ensemble of

Šlynakiemis, the church choir of the village of Valinčiai and their repertoires (p. 68). The last subchapter briefly deals with the Lithuanian church services in Puńsk, and Lithuanian attempts to obtain permission for such services in Sejny and Smolany.

The third chapter, covering the period between 1956 and 1959 (pp. 71-121), is related to the activity of the Puńsk House of Lithuanian Culture of the Lithuanian Social Cultural Association (Lietuvių Visuomeninė Kultūrinė Draugija, henceforth LVKD), the foundation of a Lithuanian college and the controversy concerning a Lithuanian priest. Tarka indicates that the initiator of the LVKD was Bronius Mickevičius from Warsaw (p. 75). The names of other Lithuanian leaders – Juozas Jakimavičius, Viktoras Jankauskas, Antanas Judickas, Juozas Maksimavičius, Antanas Moliušis, Jonas Stoskeliūnas, Jonas Šliaužys, Juozas Vaina and Vincas Valinčius et al. might have been mentioned as well. The author notes that the first board of the Association was independent, it refused to give in to the diktat of the PZPR. It is understandable that it was soon replaced by people more acceptable to Communist rule. Writing about the LVKD, the author paid particular attention to its relations with the Polish authorities. Among the major achievements of the Lithuanian movement the author rightly stresses the activity of the Puńsk house of Lithuanian culture, the intensive work of the ensembles and the opening of the Puńsk college in 1956. In the autumn of the same year there were 26 students in the first grade and 9 in the second (p. 106) [there were seven grades in the basic school, grade 8 being the first college (*lycée*) grade and grade 2 the second]. Lithuanian attempts to be served by a priest, acceptable to them, are also analyzed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 deals with the issues of culture, education and faith in the period between 1960 and 1989 (pp. 121-187). Writing about the cultural activity, Tarka again analyzes the role of the LVKD in the Lithuanian public life (pp. 124-125), about its circles, afterwards reorganized into branches in Warsaw, Wrocław, Słupsk and mentions the Szczecin circle (pp. 126-127). In the opinion of the reviewer, the author's treatment of these issues is rather superficial. The activity of the branches was varied, and in some periods very intensive. Due to the efforts of scores of active members of the branches, the Lithuanian language is still alive in those places. Recourse to the archival material of the branches would have revealed more fully the life of the Lithuanians spread in diaspora in various parts of Poland, which differed in some respects from the activity of the compact Lithuanian community of the Puńsk-Sejny region. The relationship between the Association and the local and central authorities of the PZPR are analyzed in great detail. Tarka shows the activity of the

LKVD through the materials of its congresses, enumerating their participants and rendering rather than analyzing their speeches. All that at least partly reflects the activity of the Association. The author could have dealt with the unofficial aspect of the movement. The accounts, reports and other information sent to Warsaw or Białystok do not reflect all traits of national activity, the celebration of national holidays and the content of the talks with the Lithuanians from the West. Speaking about Lithuanian press, the author reveals persistent efforts of the Lithuanians to make the *Aušra* a periodical publication, he reviews its contents and the problems it discussed. He also presents a brief review of the Lithuanian publications of Warsaw (pp. 144–45, 150).

Chapter 5, the last and the most extensive of all, deals with the events of the period of 1989–1997 (pp. 187–253). It begins with a review of the changes in the official policy of Poland towards national minorities, the number and territorial distribution of the Lithuanians. The author presents a panorama of the organized cultural life and notes that Lithuanians, as well as other national minorities in Poland, began establishing new Lithuanian organizations (pp. 197–98). He discusses in general terms the re-established Lithuanian St Casimir Society (it had functioned in the prewar period), the activity of the Lithuanian Community in Poland and indicates that in 1994 the Union of the Polish Lithuanian Youth was established. The activity of these organizations is discussed chronologically, i.e., year by year. Having discussed the structural changes in the LVKD and its activity in 1990–92 (the ninth–twelfth Congresses) Tarka passes over to the review of other organizations and then comes back to the discussion of the activity of the LKVD in 1995 – the functioning of that organization in 1993 and 1994 is not dealt with at all. Neither does Tarka speak about one more organization – the Society of the Lithuanian Ethnic Culture in Poland, established in 1997 and headed by Aldona Vaiciekaušienė. Chronologically the activity of this Society belongs to the period under consideration.

The author is right in stating that the re-establishment of Lithuania's independence in 1990 marks a new stage in Polish-Lithuanian relations. The relationship between the two states was influenced by the problems of national minorities – the Poles in Lithuania and the Lithuanians in Poland. Tarka notes that in 1990 the Union of Lithuanian Poles (Związek Polaków na Litwie) raised the idea of cultural autonomy (p. 204). Meanwhile a part of its members spoke and began implementing the project of territorial autonomy. Polish Lithuanians were urged by the leader of the Polish Society of Lithuanophiles (Ogólnopolski Klub Miłośników Litwy) Leon Brodawski into a similar course. Nevertheless, they, in contrast to the

Lithuanian Poles, did not support that idea, and that was a good example of the civic loyalty to the state. Regrettably, the same could not be said about a part of the Lithuanian Poles.

Other subchapters deal with the amateurish activities, publication, the state of Lithuanian education and the relations with the Catholic Church in Poland.

Praiseworthy is the author's usage of Lithuanian names in their original form in addition to the Polonized ones.

There are several proof-reading errors (pp. 142, 229), and p. 20 is missing altogether. Several bibliographical items, cited in the text of the book, are not to be found in the bibliographical index (Eugeniusz Mironowicz. *Białorusini w Polsce 1944-1949*, Warsaw, 1993 (p. 23), Wojciech Jaruzelski. *Przemówienia 1981-1982*. Warszawa, 1983 (p. 124).

In summary it can be said that K. Tarka's study is a new attempt in Polish historiography evaluating the situation of the Lithuanians in Poland and their relations with the Poles.

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