

Socio-political radicalization of the Polish province during the Great Depression and its consequences. The case of Greater Poland (Wielkopolska) against the comparative background (1929-1939).

The aim of the project is to analyse the course of the Great Depression in the 1930s and its impact on the radicalization of political attitudes and practices in the *Wielkopolska* province against the background of processes occurring in other parts of interwar Poland. The basic research question for us remains the estimation of the impact of the Great Depression on the social and political transformation of the Polish province after the collapse of the elementary conditions for the functioning of communities. The central hypothesis for us is therefore the recognition that this transformation led to a ‘radical shift’ within all political groupings of the time.

Wielkopolska, as the region with the highest level of civilizational development, is treated here as a pioneer and, at the same time, as a laboratory for the changes that will take place in the social structure of the whole of Poland. It is assumed here that in order to perceive the scale of changes, the scope and dynamics of this transformation and its far-reaching socio-cultural consequences, it is necessary to go beyond the territorial area of this district. This comparative aspect can be achieved, firstly, by including parts of the region that were under Russian partition and had different historical experiences as well as a different social and ethnic composition. Secondly, by studying other, more ‘inflamed’ regions of the Second Polish Republic; the Kielce region and Podlasie on the border of Białystok.

The basis for the study will be the district (*powiat*). We assume that the study of small spaces, concrete groups and individuals can give more in-depth answers to questions concerning whole communities, societies or countries. Apart from all the sources characteristic for the historical research of the 20th century (including state archives, documentation of political groups, comprehensive press, etc.) in our research approach we want to focus on how that time was experienced and how it was told, i.e. on personal accounts.

The project focuses on the dynamics and peculiarities of local public life, with an emphasis on the relationship between the greatest economic and social crisis of the 20th century and the radicalization of the entire political scene. We will analyze what role links with the centre played in these processes in the provinces: for example, what was the role of the university in the dissemination of extreme attitudes, and what was the contribution of civic life institutions? To what extent did modern mass parties dominate extended local lives? We are also interested in the level and intensity of anti-Semitism in those parts of Poland where there were in fact no Jews compared to those regions where they played a middle class role.

In examining the ‘radicalization’ of public life, we want to look at the largest grouping in the region, National Democracy (*Narodowa Demokracja, ND*), as well as other groupings and political forces and national groups and their differentiation.

The effect of the project will be to pave the way for the development of research on the Polish province and its socio-political modernization. We consider it most innovative to combine the study of a global problem with a maximum ‘from below’ approach. The project will show the consequences of the economic collapse, and above all the social and cultural effects of the crisis of confidence in public institutions and the dynamic growth of various types of extremist attitudes on the eve of the outbreak of World War II, using the example of small groups, families and even individuals.