

« THEY HANDLE WITH BLACKS JUST AS WITH US » : GERMAN COLONIALISM IN CAMEROON IN THE EYES OF POLES (1885-1914)

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In recent years, scholars have begun to examine Germany's relationship with Poland in (post-)colonial perspective. Analyzing the structures of power and control, racism and cultural chauvinism, they pointed out many similarities between « colonial » practices in Prussian Poland and in the « overseas » colonies¹. Yet, most of these studies refer to German sources, focusing on the German colonial conception and imagination about Poland, not about how Poles considered and experienced it². This paper tries to research in this direction by questioning the Polish point of view about German colonialism in Africa in relation to the perception of Prussian rule « at home ». From the mid-1880's, many Poles living in the Prussian Partition observed with interest the progress of the German colonial expansion in Cameroon, Togo and the other colonies of the German Empire in Africa. As pointed out by Piotr Szlanta in a paper published in 2012, the Polish press as well as the Polish party (*Koło Polskie*), representing the Polish population of the German Empire in the Reichstag, played an important role for introducing colonial questions in the Polish public debate³. To what extent did the Prussian Poles compare their own situation to the one of Africans under German rule? How did they react to the comparisons made by the Germans themselves? In order to answer these questions, the paper focuses on German Cameroon. Located in Central Africa and bordered by British Nigeria to the west and French Equatorial Africa to the east and the south, this territory was probably the African colony that interested the Polish public opinion the most. In the early 1880s, a Polish explorer of Africa, Stefan Szolc-Rogoziński, travelled to Cameroon in

¹ Kristin KOPP, « Constructing Racial Difference in Colonial Poland », in Eric AMES (dir.), *Germany's Colonial Pasts*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2005, p. 76-96 ; Kristin KOPP, « Arguing the Case for a Colonial Poland », in Volker LANGBEHN et Mohammad SALAM (dir.), *German Colonialism : Race, the Holocaust and Postwar Germany*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2011, p. 146-163 ; Kristin KOPP, *Germany's Wild East Constructing Poland as Colonial Space*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2012 ; Róisín HEALY, « From Commonwealth to Colony? Poland under Prussia », in Róisín HEALY et Enrico DAL LAGO (dir.), *The Shadow of Colonialism on Europe's Modern Past*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 109-125.

² About the Polish responses to the strategy of exoticization/orientalizing « Polishness » (especially through the comparisons between Poles and Indians) by Prussian publicists in the second half of the nineteenth century, see Izabela SURYNT, « Postcolonial Studies and the 'Second World': Twentieth-Century German Nationalist-Colonial Constructs », *Werkwinkel*, 2008, vol. 3, n° 1, p. 61-87.

³ Piotr SZLANTA, « Polacy poddani Wilhelma II wobec Weltpolitik 1888-1914 », *Przegląd Historyczny*, 2012, vol. 103, n° 1, p. 81-94.

a sailboat called *Łucja Małgorzata*⁴. Rogoziński was born in Kalisz, Russian partition of Poland. After a career in the Russian Imperial Fleet, he organized from 1882 to 1884 an expedition to Africa with Klemens Tomczek and Leopold Janikowski. Officially that was an exploration expedition, but unofficially the expedition was looking for a place where a Polish colony could be founded. He had no support from the Russian Empire, but was backed by a number of influential Poles such as Henryk Sienkiewicz and Bolesław Prus. Rogoziński signed an agreement with a British representative, who was to provide protection to his settlement. Meanwhile, Gustav Nachtigal, the plenipotentiary of German Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck, signed a treaty with Kings Bell and Akwa of Douala establishing German rule over the country. On the 14 July 1884 he hoisted the German flag in Douala, making Kamerun a protectorate of the Reich⁵. Under these circumstances, Rogoziński became a persona non-grata in Cameroon and even was the target of a verbal attack by the German Chancellor Bismarck in the Reichstag. From this point on, many Poles tended to look at the German colonialism in Africa with a very critical eye and expressed hostility to the political, cultural, and economic domination of Cameroon by the Germans. This was linked to the fact that Poles and Cameroonians had to face a number of brutal policies and measures imposed by the German government. The main used instruments were the germanization of culture, especially through the school policy, and the dispossession of land.

Germanization policy at school

One thing common to all German colonies was the introduction of German language education. In Cameroon, the pre-colonial period could be considered as a time of language cohabitation. English, Pidgin English (a grammatically simplified means of communication) and some indigeneous languages enjoyed a relative status as media in schools, language of the administration, lingua franca for trade and evangelization. At the start of German administration, local languages like Duala, Mungaka, Lamnso, Bulu, Basa'a, Ewondo Fulfulde, Bamun were taught in the 24 vernacular and five English medium schools founded by the English Baptists and the American Presbyterians⁶. Language conflict soon set in with the start of the German rule⁷. In 1887, the first German education officer, Theodor Christaller, arrived and opened a government school in Douala. Four more German medium schools were opened over the years in Victoria, Buea, Garoua and Yaoundé⁸. In order to attract german teachers to Cameroon, the government offered salary incentives (5 000 marks) and free housing for those who accepted to stay at least two years. Some teachers from the polish-speaking part of Prussia came to Cameroon, like Schultze, from Upper-Silesia, with wife and children, in 1885, or Skórzewski, a teacher from Gogolin (Silesia) who signed a contract for 3 years in 1891⁹. Just a few month after

⁴ Jan Andrzej BETLEY, *Stefan Szolc Rogozinski and the Anglo-German rivalry in the Cameroons*, Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1970 ; Michał JARNECKI et KALISKIE TOWARZYSTWO PRZYJACIÓŁ NAUK, *Stefan Szolc Rogoziński (1861-1896): z Kalisza do Kamerunu*, Kalisz, Kaliskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk, 2013.

⁵ See also : Jacek KNOPEK, « Stosunki polsko-kameruńskie: geneza, struktury, funkcjonowanie », *Wrocławskie Studia Politologiczne*, 2013, vol. 14, p. 20-42.

⁶ Genevoix NANA, « Language Ideology and the Colonial Legacy in Cameroon Schools: A Historical Perspective », *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 2016, vol. 4, n° 4, p. 168-196, p. 173.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁹ *Goniec Wielkopolski*, No261, 14/11/1886 ; *Katolik*, No25, 27/03/1891.

Germany had taken over administration of Cameroon, the *Goniec Wielkopolski* foresaw the introduction of German as the language of education, as it already happened in the other non-German speaking parts of the German Empire :

Rejoice, polish children ! Not only you are learning « Normalwörter », not only you are learning to sing « Ich bin ein Preusse » ; today, apart from Lithuanians, Poles, Moravians, Sorbs, Frenchs, Walloons, Dutchs and Danes, even small Blacks are taken to this pedagogy ; because you need you to know that Blakcs from Cameroon are already our fellow citizens.¹⁰

As underlined by Kenneth J. Orosz, language policy in colonial Cameroon was linked to the « echos of the Kulturkampf » in Prussian Poland¹¹. In 1887, a major legislative step into germanization of Prussian Poles was taken when Gustav von Gossler, as Prussian Culture Minister, decreed that Polish-language lessons be banned throughout the whole of Prussian Poland¹². In Cameroon the situation was very different, at least at the beginning of the German administration. On arrival in Cameroon in 1887, Christaller immediately began work on learning the Duala language, creating a German-Dula dictionary. Despite the fact that at home German officials were actively trying to promote the spread of the German language in Polish-Speaking provinces, the Governor of Cameroon, Julius von Soden, welcomed Christaller's work with a local vernacular. He was apparently so impressed with his efforts that he toyed with the idea of making Duala the official state language of German Cameroon¹³. This liberal language policy in Cameroon also captivated the Poles who were enduring strong Germanization attempts in the Prussian eastern provinces :

There are in Germany such teachers who stuffed their head with the belief, that the school may educate and raise well polish children with the help of a foreign language. Let those teachers go to study with Mr. Christentaller in Cameroon. This gentleman concluded that teaching Cameroonians in german or english brings nothing and for this reason he learned the language of his pupils and use it to achieve the goals that the school has set for itself. We put the account of this German teacher in front of everyone, who think differently from him and we would be glad to see Upper Silesia's school authorities using the same methods in Upper Silesian schools, that the ones used in Cameroon, that means making teachers teaching our children in our native, polish language.¹⁴

¹⁰ « Poczescie się, dziatki polskie ! Nie tylko wy same uczycie się « Normalwortów », nie wy same uczycie się śpiewać « Ich bin ein Preusse » ; dziś, oprócz Litwinów, Polaków, Morawców, Serbo-Łużyczan, Francusów, Wallonów, Hollendrów i Duńczyków, jeszcze i mali Murzynkowie zabierają się do tej pedagogiki ; bo trzeba wam wiedzieć, że Murzynkowie z Kamerunu są już naszymi współobywatelami. » « Krew Murzyńska », *Goniec Wielkopolski*, No9, 13/01/1885.

¹¹ Kenneth J. OROSZ, *Religious Conflict and the Evolution of Language Policy in German and French Cameroon, 1885-1939*, New York, Peter Lang, 2008, p. 68.

¹² Mark TILSE, *Transnationalism in the Prussian East: From National Conflict to Synthesis, 1871-1914*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 80.

¹³ OROSZ, p. 62-63.

¹⁴ « Są w państwie niemieckiem tacy nauczyciele, którzy wbili sobie w głowę przekonanie, iż dzieci polskie może szkoła dobrze wykształcić i wychować za pomocą obcego języka. Ci nauczyciele niech się idą uczyć do p. Christentallera w Kamerunie. Ten pan uznał, że nauka po niemiecku lub angielsku Kameruńczykom na nic się nie zda, i dla tego nauczył się języka swych uczniów i za jego pomocą osiąga cel, jaki ma szkoła. Świadectwo tego nauczyciela Niemca stawiamy przed oczy wszystkim, którzy myślą inaczej jak on i chętniebyśmy widzieli, aby władze szkolne na Górnym Szląsku taką samą metodę w szkołach

Those hope were partially fulfilled after the appointment of Leo von Caprivi as chancellor in 1890, which marked a turning point in German-Polish affairs characterized by a mood of reconciliation on the part of the Prussian government towards the Polish population. In order to satisfy religious objections, the new government took notice of the voices who stressed the importance of Catholic children being able to read Polish hymns and catechisms¹⁵. In 1894, the Prussian Culture Minister Robert Bosse reintroduced Polish language lessons to the curriculum in Poznań on a voluntary basis. Caprivi's school concessions provoked various national-political critiques. The Pan-German League, the Eastern Marches Associations and the Allgemeinen Deutschen Sprachvereins attacked Caprivi for tolerating the resurgence of Polish nationalism. As a result, when the Hohenlohe government came to power in late October 1894, it unleashed a series of policies to try and promote the spread of the German language in Prussian Poland. These policies included subsidizing German schools, providing bonuses to teachers whose pupils tested well in German¹⁶. A year after, Jesko von Puttkamer was appointed as Governor of Cameroon. At the same time, metropolitan interest groups put pressure for the spread of the German language in Cameroon¹⁷. The head of the Pallottines missionaries in Cameroon around that time, Mgr Vieter, considered educating Cameroonians in German to the German way of life as a debt he owed his country¹⁸. In 1897, Governor Von Puttkammer banned the use of indigenous languages in schools and emphasized the sole use of German as medium of instruction. Instruction in German was encouraged by financial grants-in-aid to mission schools. In 1900, a Protectorate Act limited the use of local languages by missionaries to evangelization. With the German administration's subsidies to mission schools, English was supplanted by German which became the predominant language of instruction¹⁹. With time, education in the vernacular was interrupted and German became the only instructional language.

This evolution comes along with a tightening of the language policy in the Polish provinces in Eastern Prussia. Facing difficulties to achieve the desired level of German practice at school, the government opted in 1900 to ban the use of Polish in favor of German as the medium of instruction in religion classes. This measure unleashed a wave of protests among the Polish population of Poznań. In the years 1901–1904, strikes of Polish children and their parents occurred in the small city of Września²⁰. As pupils refused to accept new German textbooks and to participate in the class activities, the teachers responded with detention and corporal punishment. Adults involved in the protests were put on trial for public disturbance, preventing the officials from carrying out their duties, trespassing, and similar crimes. 26 people were officially charged, and on 19 November 1901 20 individuals were sentenced to imprisonment from several weeks to over two years. Polish activists formed two committees to support families whose members were imprisoned. The German administration soon disbanded the committees, and in turn charged the activists. Despite the trial, the protests continued. Use of Polish

górnoszląskich zaprowadziły, jaka jest w Kamerunie, tj. aby nauczyciele uczyli nasze dzieci za pomocą naszego ojczystego, polskiego języka. » *Katolik*, No92, 15/11/1889.

¹⁵ TILSE, p. 81.

¹⁶ OROSZ, p. 68

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁸ NANA, p. 173.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ John J. KULCZYCKI, *School Strikes in Prussian Poland, 1901-1907: The Struggle Over Bilingual Education*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1981.

language was banned on the school grounds, and police were charged with enforcing student attendance. After amnesty for children was declared in 1903, the number of children who kept refusing to take the German religion lessons diminished. The last of the striking children gave up by the summer of 1904. The Września strike inspired another large strike of Polish students in West Prussia in 1906-1907²¹. In this context, some German teachers and officials attempted to exploit the success of the German education in Cameroon within the public debate over education in the Polish provinces. In 1908, the head of the German government school Victoria in Cameroon, Emil Sembritzki, published a paper comparing the German school and language policy led in Cameroon and in Poznań. According to him, the government should have been as strong with the Poles as with the Africans. He even quoted a letter he said he had received from one of his Black students : « Landgrave, stay tough ! What goes on in Cameroon must be possible also in Prussia. May the government not waver to maintain the claim of German as language of religious instruction all Prussian schools. »²² Sembritzki also put forward the patriotism and loyalty of Germanized Cameroonians, as opposed to the rebellious spirit of the Poles in Poznań. The Polish press reacted violently against this paper. Because having a Polish sounding name Sembritzki, was called a « renegat » by the *Gazeta Toruńska*. The newspaper also referred to a book published by Karl Bettcher, *Germania im Ausland - Ungemüthliche Wahrheiten*, which was very critical about the real results of the German school policy abroad : « Visiting German colonies, the author pointed out that the natives are familiar with the following words from the language of Goethe and Schiller: Schweinhund, Vorwärts, Bier, besoffen, fauler Kopf, Verboten, Polizei and Rindvieh. Anyway it's a meager loot. »²³ This ironical attack reveals the tension that existed around the school issue as well in Cameroon as in Prussian Poland.

Forced expropriation and the dispossession of land

The most serious consequences of the Government's policies came in Cameroon during the last years of German rule. The Government's desires to prevent speculation in land and to improve the health conditions for the Europeans residing in Duala led to the decision in 1910 to move the natives from the town to a new location separated from the European community by one kilometre. The Reichstag developed an expropriation plan by which the riverain Duala would be moved inland to allow for wholly European riverside settlements. By this act of expropriation the Duala people were to lose their land and the German Government was to become the owner²⁴. The expropriations affected

²¹ Lidia BURZYŃSKA, « Strajki szkolne w Prusach Zachodnich w latach 1906-1907 », *Rocznik Gdański*, 58-1, 1998, p. 95-116.

²² « Landgraf, bleibe hart! Was in Kamerun geht, muss auch in Preussen möglich sein. Möchte die Regierung nicht wanken, die Forderung deutscher Unterrichtssprache auch in der Religion in allen Schulen Preussens aufrecht zu erhalten. » Emil SEMBRITZKI, « Schulsprache in Posen und Kamerun », *Die Umschau*, 1908, vol. 10, No 47, p. 923.

²³ « Autor, zwiedzając kolonie niemieckie skonstatował, że tubylczy z języka Goethego i Schillera znają następujące wyrazy : Schweinhund, Vorwärts, Bier, Besoffen, FAuler Kopf, Verboten, Polizei i Rindvieh. W każdym razie zdobycz nie lada. » « Kwestya szkolna w W. Księstwie Poznańskim i...w Kamerunie », *Gazeta Toruńska*, n°272, 27/11/1906.

²⁴ Ralph A. AUSTEN, « Duala Versus Germans in Cameroon: Dimensions of a Political Conflit », *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, 1977, vol. 64, n° 237, p. 477-497 ; Piotr SZLANTA, « Apartheid po niemiecku. Wywłaszczenia ludu Duala w latach 1906-1914 », in Bronisław NOWAK, Mirosław NAGIELSKI et Jerzy

most of the Douala clans, who were angered and formed a united front behind Manga Bell. Born in 1873 in Douala, he was the eldest son of Manga Ndumbe Bell, king of the Bell lineage of the Duala people. Manga Bell was raised to appreciate both African and European ways of life. After succeeding his father in 1908, he styled himself after European rulers, and was generally supporting the colonial German authorities. Yet, when the expatriation plan came on the table, he and the other chiefs at first pressured the administration through letters, petitions, and legal arguments, but these were ignored or rebutted. Manga Bell turned to other European governments for aid and sent representatives to the leaders of other Cameroonian peoples to suggest the overthrow of the German regime. This events reminds the Prussian Poles of their own situation. In 1912, the Silesian newspaper *Polak* wrote : « as you can see, the government, regarding to germanization, removes not only Poles, but also Blacks from their homeland. »²⁵

As a matter of fact, Prussian Poles were already since more than two decades facing a policy of dispossession based on ethnic discrimination principles. On 26 March 1885, the ministry of internal affairs of Prussia ordered its provincial authorities to expel abroad all ethnic Poles and Jews holding Russian citizenship. In July 1885, the expulsion order was extended to include Polish Austrian citizens also. The order was executed upon all non-Prussian citizens regardless of their long term residence or previous service in the Prussian Army, and despite their state of health, age or sex. More than 30,000 Poles with Austrian or Russian citizenship were driven in mass towards the eastern border under control of gendarmes. Fatal incidents were being reported, as the expulsions were carried in winter time²⁶. In addition, Bismarck's government decide to support a new wave of settlement by German colonists at the expense of Poles. In 1886, a Prussian Settlement Commission was created to increase land ownership by Germans in Poznan and West Prussia. The goals of the Commission were the financial weakening of Polish landowners, and ensuring Germanisation of rural areas²⁷.

The creation of the Commission stimulated Poles to take countermeasures, that gradually turned into a competition of the Polish minority against the German state with Poles running their own settlement banks and settlement societies, resulting in a « battle for soil » (*Kampf um Boden*). From 1890, Polish banks and associations grew in number and strength, providing Poles with defence against the Germanization of their land. Ultimately, the efforts to Germanize the region strengthened the Polish nationalist movement and united Polish nationalism, Catholicism and cultural resistance among the Poles in Pomerania, Masuria and Silesia. As as results of this struggle, the Settlement Commission was empowered with new more powerful rights. In 1904, the Prussian Government sought to restrict Poles from acquiring land, if this would interfere with the goals of the commission. Any new settlement required a building permit, even if it were only for renovation of an existing building to make it habitable. Local officials routinely denied these permits to Poles. The law faced international criticism and opposition from

PYSIAK (dir.), *Europejczycy, Afrykanie, Inni. Księga jubileuszowa Prof. Michała Tymowskiego*, Warsaw, 2011, p. 475-493.

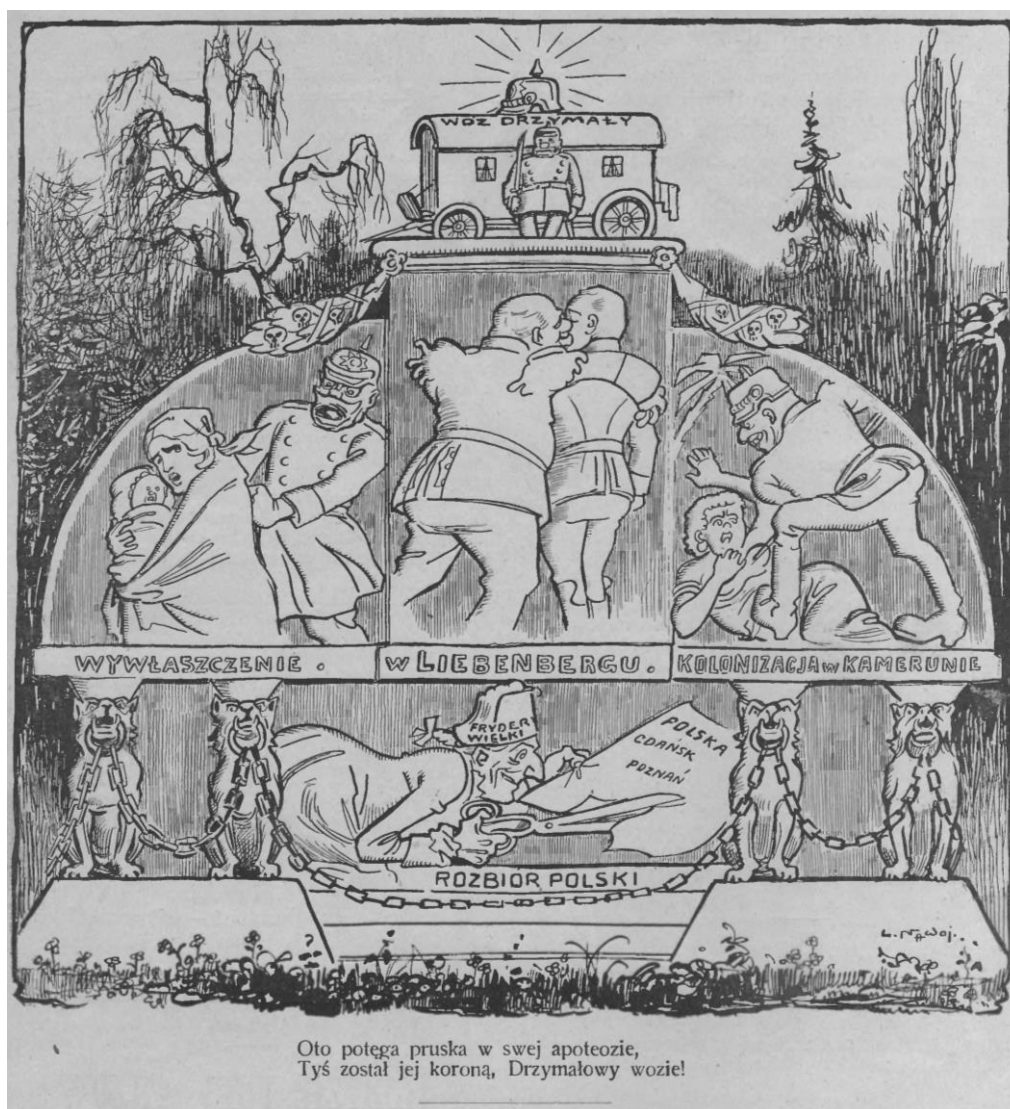
²⁵ « Jak widać, rząd, gdy chodzi o niemczyznę, nietylko Polaków, lecz i murzynów z ojcowizny usuwa » « Wywłaszczycciele w Afryce », *Polak*, No 150, 14/12/1912

²⁶ Helmut NEUBACH, *Die Ausweisungen von Polen und Juden aus Preussen 1885/86; ein Beitrag zu Bismarcks Polenpolitik und zur Geschichte des deutsch-polnischen Verhältnisses.*, Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, 1967.

²⁷ Scott McNeil EDDIE, « Ethno-Nationality and Property Rights in Land in Prussian Poland, 1886-1918, Buying the Land from Under the Poles' Feet? », in Stanley L. ENGERMAN et Jacob METZER (dir.), *Land Rights, Ethno-Nationality, and Sovereignty in History*, Londres/New York, Routledge, 2004, p. 55-86.

liberal groups concerned about private property rights. Ultimately, the Prussian Administrative High Court ended this legislation. Yet, in 1908, the Prussian diet passed a law permitting the forcible expropriation of Polish landowners by the Settlement Commission. For the Polish public opinion the similarities and the linkages between the dispossession of land policies lead in the different parts of the German Empire were obvious. In 1909, the satirical magazine *Mucha* published a cartoon that summarized the key elements of the German governmental policies against the Polish and the Cameroonian peoples (cf. Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 : « The Power of Prussia in his apotheosis » (1909)



Source : *Mucha*, No 49, 03/12/1909

On the top of the monument the cartoonist drew the so called « Drzymała's wagon » a house on wheels built by the peasant Michał Drzymała as a protest against Imperial Germany's policy of colonization. In 1904, Drzymała became a Polish folk hero because, after he was denied permission to build a house on his own land by the Prussian authorities in the village of Kaisertreu, he bought a circus wagon and turned it into his

home. The cartoon also refers to the 1908 expropriation law. In the end, the law didn't amount to any more than the expropriations of four land estates of 1,656 ha in 1912. Yet, the law faced criticism from international community and liberals concerned about the free market rights. Additionally, the Austrian State Council, upon the request of the Poles, who enjoyed considerable autonomy and influence in Austro-Hungary, condemned the actions of German government. In part due to those protests, the law's execution was delayed until 1914.

All this excitement made the Poles even more sensitive to issue of expropriation in Cameroon. Several papers about the topic were published in the Polish press. In March 1914, *Kuryer Śląski* denounced « German lawlessness and abuse against the Black population ». According to the author, the Germans oppressed the Blacks in an « inhuman manner », because they « don't consider them as human »²⁸. He also presented Rudolph Bell as an example to be followed and used him as a mobilization figure for the fight against germanization in Upper Silesia and its Polish supporters :

Being a valiant patriot and guardian of his countrymen, he began to reign as the chief, recognized by the German Government, after returning to the country. He was not ashamed of his origin, did not disown the language of his fathers and even adopted the national name Duala Manga ; in Europe he is known as Rudolf Bell. Knowing the German language and having such an education, he defended his people at every point, in every case. What a beautiful example gives this Blackman to thousands of children of the Polish People who have been germanized in German schools and whose parents, relatives and other people have forgotten and even fight against the national movement, which yet runs for the defense, for a better life of the Polish folk and people! It must be pointed to our germanized enemies !²⁹

German efforts to expropriate the urban landholdings of the Duala also led to a debate in the German Parliament during the first half of 1914. On 9th March, a Polish member of the *Reichstag*, Franciszek Morawski-Dzierżykraj, denounced the lack of democratic representation for the Cameroonians. According to him, the situation was much better for the colonized under British rule. He took defense of the Cameroonians and expressed a form of solidarity with them :

²⁸ « Dzielnym narodowcem i opiekunem swych rodaków będąc, po powrocie do kraju objął rządy jako główny naczelnik, uznany przez rząd niemiecki. Nie wstydził się swego pochodzenia, nie wyrzekł języka ojców a przyjął nawet nazwisko narodowo Duala Manga ; w Europie nazywano go Rudolfem Bellem. Znając język niemiecki i mając jakieś wykształcenie, bronił swego ludu na każdym punkcie, w każdej sprawie. Jak piękny przykład daje ten murzyn tysiącom synów ludu polskiego, którzy się zgermanizowali w szkołach niemieckich, o rodzicach, krewnych i ludzie swoim zapomnieli a nawet zwalczą jego ruch narodowy, który przecież prowadzony jest dla obrony, dla lepszego bytu ludu i narodu polskiego ! Trzeba na to wskazać zgermanizowanym wrogom naszym ! « Z murzynami obchodzą się podobnie, jak z nami », *Kuryer Śląski*, No 65, 20/03/1914.

²⁹ « Dzielnym narodowcem i opiekunem swych rodaków będąc, po powrocie do kraju objął rządy jako główny naczelnik, uznany przez rząd niemiecki. Nie wstydził się swego pochodzenia, nie wyrzekł języka ojców a przyjął nawet nazwisko narodowo Duala Manga ; w Europie nazywano go Rudolfem Bellem. Znając język niemiecki i mając jakieś wykształcenie, bronił swego ludu na każdym punkcie, w każdej sprawie. Jak piękny przykład daje ten murzyn tysiącom synów ludu polskiego, którzy się zgermanizowali w szkołach niemieckich, o rodzicach, krewnych i ludzie swoim zapomnieli a nawet zwalczą jego ruch narodowy, który przecież prowadzony jest dla obrony, dla lepszego bytu ludu i narodu polskiego ! Trzeba na to wskazać zgermanizowanym wrogom naszym ! « Z murzynami obchodzą się podobnie, jak z nami », *Kuryer Śląski*, No 65, 20/03/1914.

Gentlemen, the Blacks can not defend themselves. There are no Black Membres of Parliament here [...]. There can be no one. They don't have any newspapers, they don't any telegraph agencies. It is a poor population, which is granted to you by the ruling white race. Gentlemen, we know how hard it is sometimes to enlighten the public opinion of a nation on the very close situation of another one. Especially our parliamentary group knows it exactly, how difficult it is to make the German people really aware about the conditions that prevail for instance among us, though we have all the written and spoken ressources for it. The informations about the Blacks are indeed necessarily one-sided, because they are always only given by the white race.³⁰

According to Morawski-Dzierżykraj, the missionaries were the only impartial information source about Cameroon. There were some Poles among them, especially in the Pallottine Mission to Kamerun, like for instance Alojzy Majewski (1869-1947), a former chaplain of Biskupiec who came in Cameroon in 1902³¹. In an interesting manner, Morawski-Dzierżykraj's commitment against the brutality of the german colonial policy in Cameroon led him to a general critique of European colonialism in the world :

I just want to remind how the Spaniards behaved in South America, especially in Peru, in which way the set up culture among the poor Indians. I remind you what terrible, horrifying things have occurred in recent times in Belgian Congo. Ans last but not least, Gentlemen, please allow me to say : we are here those who sympathize the most and we are very suspicious against reports saying that the Blacks are not treated badly. If 15 miles from Berlin a high-level civilized Nation is handled that way (Laughs on the right), as we know it all too well (very true ! from the Poles), then, we think it must be nice in a country where the natives can not even defend themselves in speech and writing (Applause from the Poles).³²

³⁰ « Meine Herren, die Schwarzen können sich nicht selbst verteidigen. Es gibt hier keine Schwarzen Abgeordneten [...]. Es kann keine geben. Sie haben keine Zeitungen, sie haben keine Telegraphenagenturen. Es ist eine arme Bevölkerung, die ihr von seiten der herrschenden weißen Rasse gewährt wird. Meine Herren, wir wissen, wie schwer es ist, die öffentliche Meinung eines Volkes über die ganz nahen Zustände eines anderen manchmal aufzuklären. Gerade unsere Fraktion weiß davon genau, wie schwer es ist, die Zustände, wie sie z. B. bei uns herrschen, dem deutschen Volke wirklich zum Bewußtsein zu bringen, trotzdem wir doch in Wort und Schrift die Mittel dazu haben. Über die Schwarzen sind die Informationen ja notwendigerweise einseitig, da sie nur immer von der weißen Rasse gegeben werden. » *Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, XIII Legislaturperiode, 231 Sitzung, 09/03/1914, Berlin, 1914, p. 7943-7944.

³¹ *Gazeta Toruńska*, No 236, 10/10/1902. During the Interwar-Period Majewski published an important book about Africa : Alojzy MAJEWSKI, *Świat murzyński*, Warsaw, Wydaw. Księży Pallotynów, 1930.

³² « Ich erinnere nur daran, wie es die Spanier in Südamerika speziell in Peru getrieben haben, wie sie dort diesen armen Indianern die Kultur einpflanzten. Ich erinnere daran, was in neuester Zeit im belgischen Kongolande für fürchterliche, grauenerregende Dinge vorgekommen sind. Und zu guter Letzt, meine Herren, gestatten Sie mir zu sagen : gerade wir fühlen hier am besten mit und sind sehr mißtrauisch gegenüber den Berichten, die etwa sagen, daß die Schwarzen nicht schlecht behandelt werden. Wenn bei uns ein hochstehendes Kulturvolk 15 Meilen von Berlin so behandelt wird, (Lachen rechts) wie wir es doch nur zu gut wissen (sehr richtig ! bei den Polen) dann, denken wir, muß es schön aussehen in diesem Lande, wo die Eingeborenen sich nicht einmal in Wort und Schrift verteidigen können (Beifall bei den Polen). » *Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, XIII Legislaturperiode, 231 Sitzung, 09/03/1914, Berlin, 1914, p. 7943-7944.

Despite different support to Bell's cause from the *Zentrum*, the socio-democrats and the Poles, the Duala leader was arrested. After a summary trial, Manga Bell was hanged for high treason on 8 August 1914.

Conclusion

Most of scholars searching the question of German colonialism in Central and Eastern Europe focus on the question of « colonial reverberations » of the overseas experiences on the evolution of Germany's territorial expansion and dominations politics against its eastern neighbours. Róisín Healy for instance underlines that the « hardening of Prussian policy towards its Polish subjects » occurred « at precisely the time that Germany embarked on the acquisition of a colonial empire »³³. Several studies have reinterpreted 20th-century European history in the light of the colonial conquests and their repercussions on the western World. During the 2000s, a fierce debate has emerged for instance regarding the Herero and Nama genocide in Southwest Africa from 1904 to 1907 and its meaning within German history, particularly the extent to which it can be seen as a precursor to Nazi crimes³⁴. Yet, some other scholars challenged the idea that the colonization period was a the founding event in the history of modern violence. Regarding the history of mass crimes, they asserted that they may be not only a « path » from Windhoek to Auschwitz, but also one from Europe to Africa. In a disquieting case study, Isabell Hull argues that the Prussian military culture that developed within the German military no later than the war against France in 1870 to 1871 made possible the genocide against the Herero³⁵. Regarding to this debate, it is interesting to underline that most of the Prussian Poles did not consider that Germans colonial conquests in Africa had an influence on the Germanization policies experienced « at home ». In their eyes, it was just the opposite. Indeed, Poles often compared the mistreatment of the Cameroonians at the hands of the Prussians to contemporary German Policy toward themselves. From the beginnings of Prussian rule, Poles were subject to a series of measures aimed against them and their culture ; the Polish language was replaced by German as the official language, and most administration was made German as well. Having faced Germanization policies before the Africans, many Poles tended to view the European colonialism in Africa as kind of an enlargement of a domination system that was at first conceived against them. This feeling was expressed in the title of an article from the *Kuryer Śląski*, « Z murzynami obchodzą się podobnie, jak z nami » (« They handle with the Blacks just as with us ») from March 1914. In fact, this kind of perception holds as well for the Prussian Poles as for the Poles living in the other partitions. Adeline Koh for instance considers Joseph Conrad's first novel, *Almayer's Folly* (1895), as his « tribute to the politics of anti-colonialism from the point of view of the colonized subject, or the colonized Polish subject ».³⁶ It is the only

³³ Róisín HEALY, « From Commonwealth to Colony? Poland under Prussia », in Róisín HEALY et Enrico DAL LAGO (dir.), *The Shadow of Colonialism on Europe's Modern Past*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 109-125, p. 109.

³⁴ Jürgen ZIMMERER, « The Birth of the "Ostland" out of the Spirit of Colonialism : a Postcolonial Perspective on the Nazi Policy of Conquest and Extermination », in A. Dirk MOSES et Dan STONE (dir.), *Colonialism and genocide Colonialism and Genocide*, Londres, Routledge, 2007, p. 101-123.

³⁵ Isabel V. HULL, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2005

³⁶ Adeline KOH, « Comparative Racialisations: Reading Joseph Conrad across Africa, Asia and Poland », *Third Text*, 2010, vol. 24, n° 6, p. 641-652.

novel in which Conrad expresses a radical anti-colonialism that had emerged out of emotions that developed with his within a revolutionary family. After his parents died because of hard living conditions and forced exile to Vologda after the January Uprising, his uncle Tadeusz became his guardian from the age of twelve. Uncle Tadeusz impressed upon young Conrad's mind the importance of the establishment of Polish national identity amid Russian imperialism. As a matter of fact, the confrontation with a foreign rule at home seems to have made the Poles more sensitive to the consequences of colonial policies in the overseas colonies.