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▶ **To cite this version:**

Franciszek Zakrzewski. The 1932 population register. 2020. hal-03626871

HAL Id: hal-03626871
https://hal.science/hal-03626871

Submitted on 22 Apr 2022

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The 1932 population register

by Franciszek ZAKRZEWSKI

The Lubartów population was registered by local authorities from the end of the 19th century, after the 1918 independence and once again in 1932. These **population registers** (*Rejestr mieszkancow***)** are located in the Lublin archives; they list all the inhabitants, apartment by apartment, **indicating the age and religion** of each of them. More exceptionally, the population register opened in 1932 **records the movements of each individual up to 1951**, indicating for example the date and place of destinations (Warsaw, Lublin as well as Paris, Buenos Aires, Cuba, or Costa Rica…), as well as other information. It also mentions the deportation of the Jews arrested in Lubartów in April 1942 and sent to the Belzec extermination camp. Therefore, these registers offer a **remarkable starting-point for our research**, as it allows assessing the population status in 1932 and mentions various population movements.

The legal framework

In 1932, it became compulsory for all persons residing in Poland to declare a place of residence. The new regulation was first announced by President Ignacy Mościcki and then introduced by the Polish government. Presidential ordinance stated that everyone who lived on the Polish territory should be registered in the public records. Various registers were intended for permanent and temporary residents. People movements also had to be reported and recorded. With the introduction of a new registration rules, the authorities gained a tool for precise control over the movement of their population, while earlier registers kept in the Polish lands were primarily used to monitor the number of inhabitants. *Gminas* – often referred to as communes or municipalities, which constituted the third level of administrative division in interwar Poland, after voivodeships, an equivalent of provinces, and powiats, which correspond to counties or districts – were entrusted for implementing the registration process and for updating the registers.

In interwar Poland, the town of Lubartów, located in the central part of the country in the Lublin region, formed a separate *gmina* of a municipal kind. In mid-1932, in accordance with the new regulation, the town's authorities started to register the local populations and to control their movements. Everyone who stayed in Lubartów was considered to be a town resident, regardless of whether the stay was permanent or temporary. Under the new law, a permanent resident was a person who had personal or economic matters in the *gmina* while a temporary resident dwelt there with no intention of permanent stay. Therefore, a person could only be a permanent resident of only one *gmina* at a time. People that were traveling, working seasonally, serving as soldiers, delegated officials, as well as persons in hospitals or prisons outside from the designated *gmina*, remained registered as permanent residents of the *gmina* they came from, and became temporary residents of the *gmina* they were staying in.

Instruction from the Ministry of Internal Affairs from November 1930 thoroughly explained how *gminas* should fill in and update the registers. They were to be opened by the 1st of July

1932 with the names of all residents living in the *gmina*. In case of people arriving, registration was mandatory in the next 4 days. Forms, one for each resident, both temporary and permanent, were collected by the main locator of a household, possibly a head of family, and later forwarded to the building owner. Then, the owner, after checking the forms, submitted them to the *gmina* administration. Before adding an individual to the register an officer double checked the information with pre-existing records that were usually stored in *gmina*'s offices. The fact that a name was entered in a register was a direct proof that this person was a resident of this *gmina*.

A brief description of the Lubartów register

The register of permanent Lubartów residents includes 11 978 individuals. Most of them, 7300, were registered in June and July 1932 when the town administration opened the register. The rest are people who moved in the town or were born in Lubartów in the following years. The last residents were added during the war, in May 1944. The register consists of 10 volumes, approximately 200 pages each. One page is dedicated to a single household. Multi apartments buildings that prevailed in Lubartów were input in the register street by street, accordingly to the alphabetical order – hence the register begins with Annoborska Street and ends with Zabia street. These volumes are supplemented by an alphabetical index of names that includes everyone who appears in the register.

A single register page is divided into 18 columns that contain all kinds of information relating to residents. Basic information such as surnames, parents' names or dates and places of birth are followed by other information that describe one's social situation: status in the household, profession, faith, marital and military status, and eventually citizenship. Another group of information concerns eventual mobilities: previous places of residence, date of moving in Lubartów and registration, as well as the next place of a residence and a date of departure. This part of the register relates to the books of population moves, in which additional details concerning moving in and out can be found (reflecting the entire procedure of moving which required the two *gminas* to exchange several forms). The 17th column deals with the criminal record of residents. The last one is left for general comments left by the officers who filled in the register, such as places of temporary residences; restrictions of electoral rights, etc.

A mirror of Lubartów social history

The register is intrinsically dynamic. Lubartów municipality initiated the register in 1932 and kept using it until the early 1950s. Different officials added new entries, notes and corrections that can be perceived through the use of different ink colors, types of pencils, and the presence of different handwritings. Register's pages mirror the dynamic of the social universe of Lubartów. For several years, officials have been following the population changes as well as changes in the town's social structure. Newborns just like newcomers had to be included, married couple were to be linked in the registry. Residents that changed their place of residence within Lubartów were moved from one page of the register to another, with their new household address. People that moved out permanently from Lubartów or died were simply crossed out from the register.

The register was run by the town administration that served three different political regimes. Created during the Second Republic of Poland, the register, from 1939, was in hands of the administration that occupied Lubartów, and eventually in mid 1940s it was took over by postwar Polish municipal officials. Although an interwar central administration designed the register to serve its own administrative purposes, it remained useful for successive political regimes. Wartime municipality not only kept tracking residents but also used the register in ways that were not meant to. Notably, wartime officials registered specific information about the deportations of Jews in 1942 or inputted of the references of the *Kennkarte* (German IDs) assigned to the local population. During the war the number of newly registered residents gradually decreased, from 222 in 1942 to 50 in 1943 and single one in 1944. The same trend is noticeable in another registry from Lubartów that was opened by the German administration. Post war administration used the 1932 register to an even lesser extent. Neither newborns nor newcomers were added to the register after 1945.

The register of permanent Lubartów residents is an exceptional source that allows social historians covering every inhabitant of the city with a familial, professional and neighborly environment. It also provides researchers with key information to reconstruct migration and – more generally – social trajectories of individuals and families in the turbulent period of the 1930s, World War II and the installation of the communist regime in Lubartów.

Selected documents:

Ordinance of the President of the Republic from March 16, 1928; Dz.U. 1928 nr 32 poz. 309; (http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU19280320309)

Ordinance of the Ministry of the Interior from October 16, 1930; ; (http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU19300840653)

Instruction of the Ministry of the Interior from November 27, 1930; M.P. 1930 nr 291 poz. 411**; (**http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WMP19302910411)