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Centre and Periphery  
**within the Borders**  
of Central and Eastern Europe

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R E P O R T S

**SPECIAL EDITION**

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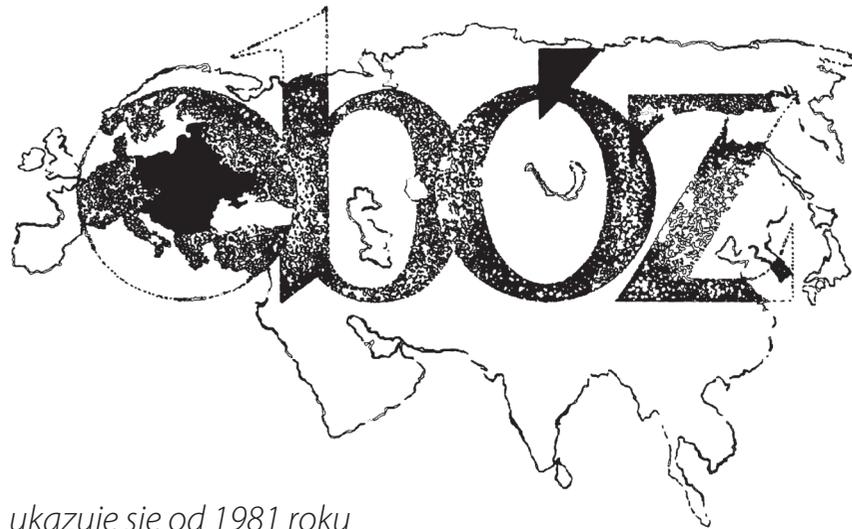
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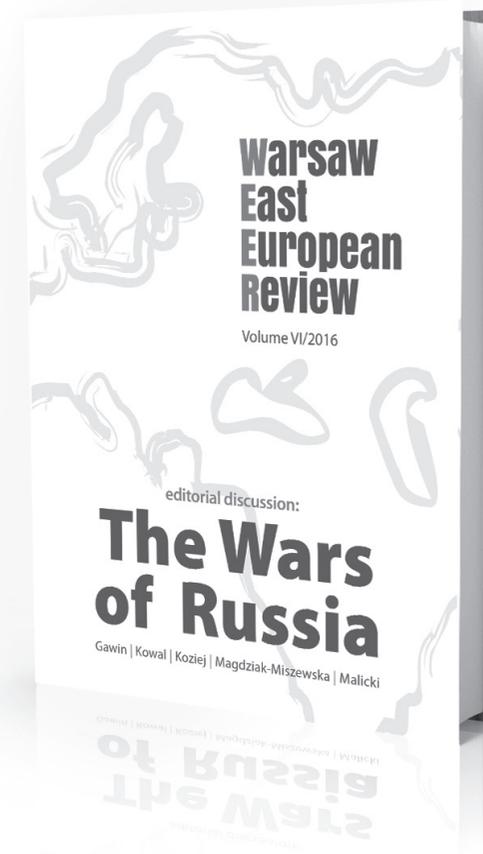
# WARSAW EAST EUROPEAN REVIEW

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ENTITLED:

## THE WARS OF RUSSIA

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Ludwika Włodek

## The way to safety in Warsaw

**In the last year, the number of asylum seekers from Central Asia to Poland has increased several times over. The number of economic migrants from this region is also on the rise. At the same time, the knowledge of Poles regarding these peoples' countries, and the problems which force them to leave, remains insignificant.**

"G" spends a lot of time riding the public transportation system. He always has his big, black backpack, he uses to carry the equipment he needs to do his job – cleaning windows. He is used to the fact that when he enters the metro or a bus, after a few minutes, the space around him clears. If he sits down, people next to him start to get up and move to the other end of the bus. Now he rarely sits, only stands as close to the doors as possible, not wanting to create a fuss.

"It's unpleasant," he admits, "but I don't have a choice. I have to live with it. I understand these people. They are afraid and they have a right to be. In their position, I would be afraid too."

Earlier "G" lived in Moscow, and there, the situation was similar. Except in Moscow, people would tell him to his face: "Fuck off, sand nigger! We don't want you here!" In Poland, they think more or less the same, but they do not say anything because they know it is illegal, it is impolite. So they demonstrate their aversion and fear through their silent behavior.

"G" was born in Tadjikistan, into the family of a well-known surgeon. In the 1990s, when many of his fellow countrymen became fascinated by Islam (according to "G", influenced by preachers from countries in the Persian Gulf), he converted to Christianity. He became a Jehovah's Witness, convinced by his father's hospital secretary, along with the rest of his family. Life got much harder after that. Relatives, neighbors, friends – they all felt they had gone crazy. They took to convincing them that they were behaving wrongfully, condemning them, and using threats or spite, attempting to force them to abandon their new religion. Moving from the capital, Dushanbe, to Kulob, where "G's" father was from, did not help matters. The pressure there became even more intense. Everyone, even a very distant cousin, felt they had the right to accuse them of betraying the faith of their forefathers, of apostasy and stupidity.

Over ten years ago, the whole family left for Russia. They first lived in Volgograd and later settled in Moscow. Things were going well for them and their family business was a success. However, in the Tajik migrant community, they were deemed traitors. They were constantly harassed. At the time, "G" already had his own family, having met his wife during one of his

visits to Tajikistan. She was a Muslim, like most of society. She even wore the hijab, but under the influence of discussions with “G”, she became a Jehovah’s Witness. After their wedding, her Tajik family broke off contact with her.

For most traditional Tajiks, the conversion of “G’s” family was unacceptable. In Moscow, threats from the growing Tajik community became unbearable. “G” tried to get the police involved, but each time they told him that these were internal Tajik community intrigues which the police wanted no part of. The situation spilled over in 2014, when “G” and his brother were beaten up by another group of Tajiks in the Moscow underground. The police detained the victims and released the perpetrators. Even though everyone knew who the aggressors were, they were left untouched, while “G” and his family began to receive threats. It was then that the decision was reached to leave Russia.

They did not want to go to Poland. Their business was going very well, and “G’s” eldest children had already started attending school in Russia. But they had no choice: they did not feel safe. They chose the same method as over 80% of asylum seekers in Poland – through Belarus, a train to Brest and then the border crossing train to Terespol in Poland.

They first ended up in a Centre for Foreigners in Białą Podlaską for a few days, and then spent a few months in Linin, located at the foot of Góra Kalwaria near Warsaw.

“It was very unpleasant there”, says “G”. “The group of Chechens kept bothering my wife. Whenever she went to cook something in the communal kitchen, a few of them would immediately approach her and badger her with questions, how she could betray her own faith. They would tell me that I no longer deserved to be called a human being.”

“G’s” legal status and that of his family is still in limbo. He has twice been refused. He believes the reason is because he did not present enough proof of persecution. “Where could I get proof from, when the Russian police didn’t even want to take down my statements”, he complains. “Was I supposed to ask my tormenters to sign a statement for me that they beat me?” In “G’s” opinion, the protocol of his first interview was not in accordance with the truth. It stated that G and his family could safely return to Russia where there is no threat to them, while he tried to explain to the official throughout the entire interview that it was just the opposite. “If I could, I would still be sitting there. I had my own company, an apartment, school for the children. Why would I want to start anew in Poland?”

The second interview, to do with granting asylum status, went similarly. This time he had a lawyer from one of the foundations which helps asylum seekers. He says that she advised him to sign the interview transcript, because everything written in it agreed with his testimony. He was very surprised when after an inordinate amount of time it turned out that on this application, it was also written that he could safely return to Moscow. Now he is fighting for asylum in another instance. He is counting that justice will finally be served.

As soon as it was possible, “G” and his family left the Centre. “G” feels that if not for the assistance of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Warsaw he would probably have never found an apartment. They now live in the home of a brother (what they call members of their community),

who lives abroad. Today, this community is their greatest base of support. These are the only friends that “G” can fully rely on.

Other people vary. At school, “G’s” children were well received. The principal met with them and they talked. “G” has four children, three of them of school age. “Among themselves, they already speak in Polish more often than Tajik or Russian. The boss at the company that “G” works for is also alright. Earlier, “G” worked in Poznań for more money than he makes now, but he was unable to deal with the constant travel and separation from his family, so he asked to be transferred to Warsaw. The company went along with it.

On the street, besides unfriendly glances, he almost never meets with displays of open aggression. Only once, when he was walking with his wife in Łazienki Park, some drunk began to pester him, shouting that they should leave his country. The situation became unpleasant, but fortunately other strollers backed them up, and some woman ordered the drunk to stop insulting them. Despite this, “G” has no illusions – most Poles are entirely indifferent to their fate. It is the 21st century and people all over the world treat each other with hostility, like animals. “More tolerance would come in handy”, he says at the end of our interview. I am not sure if he means inter-human relations in his native Tajikistan, in Russia, or in Poland.

### Go back where you came from

Religion, or more precisely, persecution connected to religious choice, was the main reason that most of the people I spoke to made the decision to emigrate. Similar to “G’s” story is the story of an asylum seeker from another Central Asian country. Because she was even more adamant about anonymity than “G”, I cannot reveal where she came from. Let us call her “N” from the dictatorial country of “A”.

“N” speaks fluent Polish. She had already been in Poland five years. She has been a member of the Jehovah’s Witnesses since she was sixteen (I do not think she knows “G”). She left her native country after a policeman lured her eleven-year-old son into his patrol car, threatening that he would kill the boy if he would not tell him where his mother and father went for their religious gatherings. When the boy refused to answer, the policeman began hitting the boy with his own Bible in the back, and hitting him over the head with a truncheon.

So they left for Poland, where their friends had settled earlier. After going through the whole arduous procedure they were granted asylum status. “I never thought I would be a refugee. I associated the word “refugee” with Africa and tents in the desert”, she tells me restlessly.

Despite the fact that her family (husband and four children) are beneficiaries of the Polish system for refugee protection, “N” feels that Poland receives asylum seekers only so that it does not “get kicked out of the EU”. “None of the government officials who are supposed to be taking care of us are frankly concerned with our fate. Nobody cares how we are doing”, she explains to me, complaining of the low social benefits granted to refugees. Her family is no longer entitled to most of the money paid out to them during the first period after gaining refugee status. However, she still receives social welfare money for the children. The amount, though, varies widely depending on the district. “N” believes that if she lived in the Wola district of Warsaw, she would even receive 2400 zlotys more than she does now, but it is practically

a miracle for foreigners to find an apartment in Warsaw. They cannot make a fuss. They have to live wherever they can find a place to rent. Similarly to “G”, “N” knows that without the help of Polish Jehovah’s Witnesses, they would not find an apartment to rent at all. Whenever people hear a foreign accent over the phone, they immediately refuse. If they agree to show the apartment, it is necessary to go with a native Pole, otherwise they will refuse to rent.

“The 500+ program (for each child, 500 zlotys is granted) does not apply to us, even though, in accordance with the law on refugees, we should be treated as Poles. Ukrainians sitting here on a half-year work visa receive 500+, while we, even though we are here permanently, don’t”, “N” say with outrage. They went to court. The Court of First Instance agreed with them.

Most of all, though, “N” complains about social welfare workers. “Whenever I’ve gone to see them, I always feel like I am their enemy. There is one woman at the Centre for Social Welfare who degrades me just by the way she looks at me.

“N” claims that another official concealed from her that her family could apply for food assistance. “N” must find out about all these things on her own, wrangling for everything. “They accepted us, ticked us off the list, but they do nothing to make our live easier”, she says. “At least I know Polish. I don’t work what with four children, but I run around the city taking care of matters for days on end. But my husband, during these five years, hasn’t even had time to learn Polish. Well, someone has to work to somehow earn for the six of us. He does minor technical jobs. It’s enough to survive on, but it’s not easy.”

Neighbors, teachers, passersby are all different, in the opinion of “N” – some good, some bad. One will help out, another will pester you for no reason, or say, “Go back where you came from!” – like the young dog-owning couple, that “N” asked to use muzzles and shorter leashes when they take them for walks, because she is afraid of dogs from childhood and cannot pass by them.

### **Nobody died of pain yet**

It is difficult to compare what individual refugees say, because each of them might have met with different personnel at the border, then at the refugee center and finally at social welfare. People have different personalities and their views of the world vary. One sees the glass as still half-full, another only pays attention to failures and affronts.

Shahodat from Tajikistan spent seven months in a refugee centre in Austria, so she can compare how refugees are cared for in another country. She admits that in the West, the benefits are much higher and conditions much better. For this reason, many of those who come to Poland and begin the procedure for refugee status try to get to richer EU countries. They risk “the Dublin” – that they will fall under the procedure named after the Irish capital, which stipulates that those attempting to gain refugee status should do it in the first EU country they enter. Nonetheless, the decided majority admits that the risk of getting caught is worth it. This is evidenced by the fact that in 2016, 90% of decisions to grant protection to citizens of Tajikistan were terminated – the most common reason for termination being that the applying party has left the country.

Shahodat says that she didn’t leave Poland for Austria because of the better conditions, but to be with her husband. He was an activist in the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan. They left just before August 2015, when the party – the only real opposition to the President of Tajikistan, who has ruled since 1992 – was banned under the pretext of preparing an armed coup. There was already pressure on party activists earlier, but the final years of its legal functioning were a test of strength for its sympathizers and activists. Today, its leader, Muhiddin Kabiri, is abroad (it is unknown where exactly, but most likely Turkey), while many other important activists who were unable to flee – including practically the entire leadership – sit in jail. They have either been sentenced to long jail terms, or their grotesque trials continue, reminiscent of the Moscow Trials of the 1930s.

An Interpol letter was sent after Shahodat’s husband, as if he were a common criminal. For this reason they had to flee Moscow, just after they escaped Tajikistan, and later leave Turkey. Shahodat tells me her whole story. First, with just her two children, she arrived from Turkey through Ukraine to Poland, and then went to Austria, probably because her husband felt safer there. However, when the Austrian government found out that she had entered the EU on a Polish visa, they deported her back to Poland, pregnant and alone with her children – the Dublin Procedure.

I cannot entirely work out from her story if she ended up in the Centre for Foreigners in Dębak, near Podkowa Leśna, before or after she left for Austria. Whatever the case may be, she recalls the staff there in a positive light, much like the doctors from the hospital where she gave birth to her child. However, she recalls a worker at the Reception Centre she was assigned to for female refugees (at ul. Księżnej Anny in Warsaw’s Targówek Przemysłowy) in a less positive light. Her son was born premature in her eighth month of pregnancy, which is why he did not leave the hospital with her. Sympathetic doctors encouraged her to come every day and breastfeed him, spending as much time as possible with him. Shahodat complains that at the aforementioned Centre, they did not want to help her with travelling to the hospital. “I could barely walk after the birth. I couldn’t get on the bus to get to another district (of the city). I had to go into debt to take taxis.”

The nurse at the Centre, as opposed to the empathetic doctors at the hospital, was horrible. “Why’ve you all come here? Go back to your own county. Nobody wants you here.”, she allegedly regularly repeated to the patients. According to Shahodat, the doctor at the Centre was just as inhumane. He told her, “nobody has died of pain yet”, when she asked for something to ease the contraction pains, which sometimes even continue for weeks after giving birth.

Now the woman is “being processed”, waiting for a decision on granting her refugee status. But at least her husband is now with her. Along with their three children, they rent an apartment. The rent – 1800 zlotys a month – is almost the entire sum she receives for living costs, because, as Shahodat explains, she is entitled to 2100 zlotys. Neither she nor her husband work, because they still have not received work permits. It is unclear to me how she survives. I suspect that other Tajik immigrants may be helping them, or perhaps more affluent members of the party.

Shahodat's two eldest children go to school. The daughter attends fourth grade, while the son attends third grade. The school board met with them at the beginning of the school year. The children are happy and so are they. People on the street, in buses, parents of other school children are all pleasant to them, in the worst case apathetic. Shahodat worries about her family in Tajikistan. A few times a month, the local KGB approaches her relatives and asks about them.

### **She has cried so many tears over my story**

There are many activists of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan in Poland, along with members of their families. It can be assumed that the persecution of persons affiliated with this party – which increased in fall of 2015, following its delegalization – is the reason why in 2016, arrivals from Tajikistan made up the third largest group of asylum seekers in Poland, after Russians and Ukrainians. Over 800 citizens of Tajikistan have lodged appeals for asylum in Poland since the start of 2016. Until now, six of them have received refugee status and four have received subsidiary protection. As of January 2016, the Office for Foreigners (OFF) has recorded over sixty refusals for granting any form of protection and over 600 application terminations with regard to Tajiks. A portion of these decisions undoubtedly concerned arrivals from years past. For comparison, during the same period, one person from Turkmenistan was granted refugee status (out of ten applicants) and two (out of twenty applicants) from Uzbekistan.

The close family of the party leader, Muhidin Kabiri, also finds itself in Poland. I met with the wife of his nephew and his aunt. They both came to the meeting in head scarves. They admitted that the hijab does in fact attract looks from passersby. "People are generally nice, but sometimes they look strangely at us. When I reach into my bag for my ringing phone, I sometimes get the feeling that they think I have a bomb inside that I will shortly detonate", says the wife of the nephew, who we will call "C", as she did not want me to reveal her real name.

Like Shahodat, she first lived in Moscow with her husband. However, after the delegalization of the party in Tajikistan and escalated persecution of its members, the Russian capital became too dangerous for them. Before she was permitted to enter Poland, she boarded the train at the Brest-Terespol border crossing over a dozen times. Each time, she was refused entry, because besides her own children, she had her husband's two under-age brothers with her. Finally, they went to Turkey to her mother-in-law, and later "C", with just her own children, entered Poland via the border with Ukraine. She ended up at the Centre for Foreigner in Włochy, on the outskirts of Warsaw. Once there, "C" was finally met by her mother-in-law and her husband's brothers.

She continues to wait for a decision which is supposed to arrive any day now. She lives outside the Centre. They first rented an apartment in Żąbki, now they live in Nowy Dwór. They also had trouble finding a place to rent, searching for ten days until they were finally successful.

Let us call the aunt of Kabiri's nephew "B". She came to the meeting along with "C" and continues to live in the Centre in Dębak, because she only just arrived in Poland in September. In Tajikistan, she worked for the party paper. First she watched as more and more young people came to the party headquarters in Dushanbe, asking to resign their party memberships and

receive the necessary attesting document they needed to present at university for them to be allowed to sit exams or to receive credit for the school year. At first after the delegalization of the party, she did not want to leave, but when the arrests started, she and her husband understood there was no other way out. She fled at night, without time to even say goodbye to her sleeping son. Along with her husband, she did not want him to know what had happened to her, in case security services were to interrogate him at school.

She first went to Turkey, like many party members. However, when the Turkish lawyers working for party members were taken into custody and she later realized that someone was following her in Istanbul, she decided to flee farther. She applied for a Polish visa for an OSCE conference in Warsaw in September, where human rights activists from Tajikistan took part, appealing to the delegates to investigate the persecution of the opposition in their country.

After the conference, "B" declared herself at OFF as an asylum seeker and ended up at the Center for Foreigners near Podkowa Leśna. In the meantime, her husband and son were also able to leave Tajikistan. They are now in the Reception Centre in Biała Podlaska and will soon be moved to Dębak, where their family can be together once more. For now, "B" lives in a room with a few Pakistani women. She fled their country because of their Christian faith, for which they were persecuted. The women really support each other. "B", a persecuted Muslim, knows what it means to not be able to openly practice your religion. In Dębak, she also has a friend from Mariupol, a Ukrainian Jewish woman. "She has cried so many tears over my story", she tells me, moved by her friend's empathy.

### **People are kind when you are kind**

It seems that Gulnar probably lacks the kind of support that "B" enjoys. Gulnar has been in Poland since May and lives at the Centre at ul. Księżnej Anny. She is a Kazakh from Orenburg in Russia. First her parents had to flee Russia. Her father worked at the local mosque. He was actively involved in the life of the Muslim community in Orenberg, organizing meetings and helping Asian migrants. The FSB urged him to cooperate with them. He was to inform the security services what was going on in the city's Muslim community – who was saying what and what their interests were. He refused and was accused of extremism, and sentenced to eighteen months in a penal colony. He was released thanks to the intervention of Amnesty International, Great Britain and Norway. Nonetheless, he continued to be harassed by the security services, which is why in 2009, he left for Norway with his wife, and was granted refugee status there.

Gulnara did not go with them because she was finishing her university studies. She planned to live in Russia. She was also connected to the mosque and participated in the life of the Orenberg Muslim community. On the day she finished her studies, an FSB official appeared at the university and persuaded her to take on the same job he had proposed to her father. When she refused, he promised to ruin her, driving her to mental illness, or even suicide.

Sometime later, no longer living in Orenburg, but in Ufa with her sister, two intoxicated women got into a verbal altercation with her on a railroad viaduct and tried to throw her under a train. During the trial, the charges against them were changed from attempted murder to simple hooliganism. Soon after, Muslims working at the same company as Gulnara began

to be persecuted. One day, a number of people did not arrive to work, tens of Muslims were arrested in the whole city, homes were searched and interrogations took place, while the FSB once more started trying to recruit Gulnara.

She thought about leaving Russia. She found a company that helps people find work and get permanent residence in Poland. By the time she had arranged everything it was fall 2015. She arrived in Warsaw and at the same time found out that her parents were in poor health in Norway. They asked her drop everything and join them, applying for refugee status there. She gave up the office job she had arranged in Warsaw, returned to Moscow to get the documents she needed to gain asylum and left for Norway on a Polish Schengen visa.

There, though, she came under “Dublin”, and after a short time was deported. “They came to pick me up from the ferry in Gdańsk. A very sympathetic translator spoke with me. She was honestly concerned with my fate, trying to calm me down, saying that everything would be alright”, Gulnara tells me, speaking of her first hours following her deportation. Later she was in Dębak, until she finally ended up at the women’s Centre on ul. Księżnej Anny. “It’s very dirty, but that’s because there is a mass of women here, most of them with a few children and not enough staff. People are kind to you, if you are kind to them”, she relates.

Gulnara is learning Polish. She has completed her first interview and is now waiting for a decision. For now, she does not work. On the street, people treat her similarly to how they did in Russia, where the full hijab also elicited surprise. Added to this is an aversion to Russian language in Poland. But she has also met with many instances of kindness. When she asks for directions, people generally open up. When Gulnara goes for walks around Targówek with her friend from the Centre, a mother with her child and pram, everyone goes out of their way to help them, holding open doors and helping them overcome stairs.

Gulnara is happy that she lives at the Centre. She feels much safer there, than if she were to live on her own. “At least this way if something were to happen to me, and I didn’t come back at night, my friends would inform the authorities”, she explains.

### **Vietnamese and living in a yurt**

People coming to Poland are arrivals from Central Asia who have had to flee their homelands because of persecution, danger and degradation. I have described a few of their stories in some detail in order to demonstrate that those seeking asylum do not necessarily have to be arrivals from war-torn Syria, but also citizens from seemingly tranquil countries, where practically nothing is happening – or nothing that might interest the Polish media. With a picture of Central Asia shaped solely and exclusively on the basis of the mainstream transmissions of the Polish media, one might be astonished that hundreds of Tajiks, tens of Uzbeks, Turkmens, or Kazaks are searching for in Poland.

In spring of this year, the Polish television program “Debata” emitted a scandalous documentary report. The main character was Gulbarg, a Tajik mother with a number of children, waiting for a decision regarding her status and living at the Centre at ul. Księżnej Anny. Her husband, an Islamic Renaissance Party activist was sitting in jail in Tajikistan. The reporter described her as the wife of a terrorist.

Later, in the fall, Polish Television (TVP) emitted an episode of Witold Gadowski’s program “Łowca Smoków” (Dragon Hunter) taped in Tajikistan. Viewers found out that the country’s president had protected the country from Islamic extremism and the Taliban (sic!), and while Tajik democracy was not working perfectly, it was nonetheless fulfilling its function. During the program, not a word was mentioned on the subject of mass political trials, or the harassment of anyone for whom Islam is not a blown egg, promoted by President Rahmon. Although there was mention of opposition journalists who do not have it easy, the entire bit occupied much less airtime than shots of a reporter smoking a cigarette, attempting to find alleged drug dens (which he failed to do in the end).

All this media information plays on Polish islamophobia, as well as attitudes to the former USSR, full of orientalism and contempt, especially towards its Asian territories. It is unfortunate, because we will not avoid an influx of asylum seekers from this part of the world. Their presence might also present an opportunity for Polish universities and the country’s economy. Especially since culturally, these people are much more similar than it may appear to many Poles on the surface.

Altynkyz Imanaliyeva – the only one of my subjects not afraid to give her full name – came to Poland with her sister, totally legally. Initially she only intended to stay for a short visit, but she liked it so much, that she decided to stay longer. Now she possesses a year-long residence permit, because she is studying Polish at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University. She intends to take advantage of her knowledge of the Polish language, and following her return to Kirgizstan, work with a Polish company that produces furniture there.

Altynkyz is one of the lucky ones. She likely belongs to a well-to-do family, because her stay in Poland was partially financed by her parents, partially by her sister’s Polish boyfriend. It is no wonder then that she is susceptible to a more positive and optimistic view of her new surroundings, than many asylum seekers fated to experience difficulties and hardships. Questions whether everyone in her country lives in Yurts and grazes sheep – though not rare – are rather a source of merriment than worry. She does not have to confront Muslim stereotypes because she dresses in European clothes, while the shape of her eyes means everyone takes her to be Vietnamese at first glance.

It is difficult to come to a single cohesive picture of Polish attitudes towards arrivals from Central Asia on the basis of these individual cases. Nonetheless, a number of themes consistently appear in all these stories. The incidental aversion which occurs on the street is mainly a result of fear and ignorance. It affects men much more often than women. The more structural discourtesy, or even hostility, characterizes – it is fortunate to note – only a small percentage of refugee aid workers and most likely results from difficult working conditions, poor wages and an overload of responsibilities. How else is it possible to explain that doctors at an ordinary hospital were kind and full of concern, while those assigned to the Centre were so discourteous? Or the fact that the school in Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki is open and friendly towards refugee children, while the school in Podkowa Leśna, which many children of the inhabitants of the Centre in Dębak attend, is considerably less friendly?

Poland lacks a comprehensive and cohesive system of care for refugees which, on the one hand, would take into account the needs of refugees and, on the other, the possibilities of the country. For example, why are there no competent mullahs prepared to meet the religious needs at Centres where there are mainly Muslims? This only increases the chance that left without care, these refugees will end up under the wing of homegrown radicals, as was often the case in Western Europe. It is worth putting in some effort to avoid these mistakes, especially since the scale of the problem is much smaller. In Poland, the majority of arrivals still do not appear at the designated Centre after putting in their application, which means they most likely have gone on to search for happiness in other, richer EU countries.

A few of the people I interviewed mentioned the unpleasant conditions which prevail in the Centres for Foreigners: for example, the lawless Chechens who often make up large and tight-knit groups, terrorizing other residents. The workers of the government services responsible for granting asylum status know too little of the internal situations of countries that migrants come from and, for that reason, sometimes judgements concerning granting or refusing protection are unfair. The most striking example of ignorance may just be the statement of Minister of the Interior, Mariusz Błaszczak. The minister claimed that the war in Chechnya had long ago ended and that migrants fleeing there were no longer in any danger. The TVP program dedicated to Tajikistan is proof that the Polish government and public opinion know less about the situation in Central Asia, than they do concerning the situation in the Caucasus.

Few people remember that during World War II, it was the Poles who were refugees in Central Asia. It was precisely on the territory of the then Kirgiz, Uzbek and Turkmen Soviet Republics that refugee camps for Polish citizens, released by Stalin from Soviet Gulag camps, were located. From there, General Anders, and later General Berling, formed the Polish Army earmarked to fight against Hitler and his allies. Leon Pasternak wrote of them: "From the auls of Kirgizia and the foamy Syr Darya River, boys ride to join Poland's Army, fight in its divisions and relieve her."

Many of those who arrived at these assembly points, though, were unfit to fight in any army. Exhausted by their incarcerations and the trip by oxen-wagon, exposed to freezing temperatures and the sweltering heat, they barely made it – decimated by typhus and dysentery. Many of those that survived did so only thanks to the help and charity of local inhabitants. Today, an opportunity presents itself for Poles to repay that debt.

Krzysztof Nieczydor

## Central-Eastern Europe without illusions

**At the turn of the 20th and 21st century, the countries of Central Europe – Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, followed by Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – after many years of efforts, realized their two most significant strategic goals. They became members of the strongest military alliance in the world, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and not long after they became participants in the largest economic agreement, the European Union. Achieving these goals completely changed the hitherto geopolitical layout. Firstly, these countries were no longer the "East", and secondly they gained the possibility to influence EU policy towards the "new East".**

The largest ambition in this regard was shown by Poland. The tool to realize these intentions was the Eastern Partnership Programme, meant to initiate closer ties between partner countries and the EU by supporting systemic transformations in the direction of democratic, law-abiding government, promoting human rights and building market economies. The foundation for this initiative was the premise that states bordering the expanded EU in the East were "destined" to succeed in modernisation and would receive EU membership in the future. The success of the system's transformation in Poland and other countries in the region were intended to set the example.

In the Polish situation, this optimistic determinism in approaching its Eastern neighbours grew out of Promethean convictions (rooted in the doctrine formulated by Jerzy Giedroyc), assuming the area between Poland's eastern border and Russia as a space of historical competition with Russia for the character of the countries in the region, their independence and sovereignty<sup>1</sup>. In this vision, Poland intended to counter Russian imperialism with the prospective of prosperity, realized by countries encompassed by the Eastern Partnership Programme through introducing EU standards – both legislative and axiological (Copenhagen criteria).

### The American dream in Eastern Europe

Formulated in this way, Poland's role was to put the country in the position of a regional leader and promoter of Western values and standards, countering Russia's desta-

<sup>1</sup> P. Kowal, *Sztuka przekonywania. Polska a polityka wschodnia Unii Europejskiej w latach 2004–2014*, "Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe" 2014, no. 32, p. 81

bilizing influence, subordinating countries in the region. This approach was a reflection of American foreign policy, which made the existence of peace and stability in the world dependent on realizing its democratic mission throughout the world (“The USA will make every effort to give people in every corner of the world hope for democracy, development, free trade and the free market.” – American national strategy published in September 2002).

US diplomatic activity was directed at popularizing the idea of the inseparable bond between freedom in the world and American security in international opinion. However individual, lone actions and a gross disproportion between the proclaimed ideology of freedom, democracy and human rights, with practices used in the War on Terror, led to disruptions in American alliances, as well as a drop in support for US actions around the world. Furthermore, the failure of the Arab Spring and its consequences for the international order undermined the axiological foundations of American foreign policy. Once more, it was dramatically confirmed that there was no “end to history”.

The “end” also did not take place in Eastern Europe. The Partnership Programme did not lead to any meaningful rapprochement between the Partnership countries and the EU. The Programme was not a success, though not because the proposals offered were not attractive to the addressed countries (for example, the lack of a promise of membership), or Poland lacking the potential to realize it. Although many critics of the Programme point to the first factor, it is difficult to find good grounds for it. Analogically, it should be stated that the success of Poland’s transformation was the result of stimulating reform by promises of prosperity made by representatives of the European community or NATO. In essence, the success of Poland (and the remaining countries of Central Europe) was driven by consensus, as well as the determination of the political elite and society regarding a pro-Western direction of development.

### Disappointing alliances

In the cases of both the US and Poland, similar diagnoses can be proclaimed concerning a lack of effectiveness. The diplomatic mistake of both countries was thinking of international relations as a zero-sum game. By abandoning the project’s ideological background, the real goal of the Eastern Partnership Programme became defeating its opponent, the Russian Federation, in a game for influence in Eastern Europe. Presenting offers to countries situated between the EU and Russia was essentially based on putting their backs against the wall – the alternative to EU integration was sure-fire subordination to Moscow.

Similarly to the case of American doctrine, the Polish policy of “exporting democracy” also turned out to be ineffective. This was a result of mistakes in assessing the expected positions of EU and NATO allies, as well as those of the targeted countries of EU-Polish activity. Perhaps the biggest disappointment was cooperation with Germany, which until

2 J. Bernat, Przyczyny amerykańskich interwencji po zakończeniu zimnej wojny, Portal Spraw Zagranicznych, <http://www.psz.pl/117-polityka/joanna-bernat-przyczyny-amerykanskich-interwencji-po-zakonczeniu-zimnej-wojny> [accessed: 7 June 2016].

recently was deemed a strategic necessity. However this idea was bankrupted as a result of Berlin’s reaction to the annexation of Crimea and further events in Eastern Ukraine.

The largest degree of difference is in each country’s approach to the Russian Federation – Berlin is attempting, at any price, for the level of sanctions to be as small as possible and is constantly appealing for an armistice in Ukraine. Moreover, Germany not only appears to endorse Russian reconquest of the post-Soviet space, but is also contributing to lessening the cohesiveness of NATO, categorically opposing the deployment of additional NATO forces on the territory of Poland and the Baltic countries<sup>3</sup>.

### Global game

The reasons for the aversion of certain European decision-makers to open conflict with Russia are also hidden in the pragmatic approach to realizing self-interests. The Germans and French are not entirely concerned about the democratization of Ukraine and the acceptance of European values by Eastern Partnership Programme participant countries. German politicians frankly say that relations with Russia should not be disturbed, because Ukraine (or Georgia) lies in the Russian sphere of influence<sup>4</sup>. This is a diplomatic excuse, which hides more practical reasons.

It is much easier to do business with oligarchs who are not limited by internal regulations, legal norms (which is what would happen in the event of accepting EU legislation), or even ethical standards obligating in the West. This is why French and German big business opts for maintaining the status quo with Ukraine and Russia, finding themselves in a grey area which allows making lucrative deals. The goal of the government in Berlin is resolving the crisis in Ukraine at any price, as long as it does not mean cutting cooperation with Russia<sup>5</sup>.

Russia also needs the Americans, who have now concentrated much of their geopolitical focus in the Pacific to counter China’s growing might. Russia is becoming a key US partner in the Middle East, which is competing with the Middle Kingdom. Without Russia, it will be difficult for Washington to block any potential imperial tendencies on the part of Beijing. The Russians are surely aware of this and are negotiating their position by projecting (as usual) their strength in Eastern Europe (annexation of Crimea) and the Middle East (military operations in Syria), as well as imitating closer ties with their Chinese partner.

Russia is after all needed to stopping Islamic extremism in countries of the Middle East. A successful war against Islamic State will not be possible without the participation of Russia. Similarly, an agreement with Iran without the participation of Russia would also be difficult to image – in fact, Russian engineers are the ones helping in large part to dismantle Iran’s nuclear potential. The threat of nuclear arms proliferation also cannot

3 P. Maciążek, “Polska nie jest bezpieczna”. Bankructwo strategii obronnych RP, Defence24.pl, [http://www.defence24.pl/analiza\\_polska-nie-jest-bezpieczna-bankructwo-strategii-obronnych-rp](http://www.defence24.pl/analiza_polska-nie-jest-bezpieczna-bankructwo-strategii-obronnych-rp), [accessed: 7 June 2016].

4 Ł. Grajewski, Dlaczego Niemcy czują miętę do Rosji?, Eastbook.eu, <http://www.eastbook.eu/blog/2014/10/04/dlaczego-niemcy-czuja-miete-do-rosji/> [accessed: 7 June 2016].

5 See: K. Nieczytor, Rosyjsko-niemiecka współpraca z Ukrainą w tle, Eastbook.eu, <http://www.eastbook.eu/blog/2014/04/25/rosyjsko-niemiecka-wspolpraca-z-ukraina-w-tle/> [accessed: 7 June 2016].

be forgotten, as well as a lack of control of Russia's nuclear arsenal in the event that an economic crisis would cause the removal of Vladimir Putin. This is a scenario that Western countries really do avail themselves of in their calculations.

### Diplomacy without coverage

Ineffective Eastern policy was not only influenced by a lack of reflection and deeper analysis of interests, not to mention the aims of all players who were in a position of influencing it (mostly Germany and the US): Polish diplomacy was also unable to properly evaluate the situation in countries that were the object of her activity. Leaving no field for negotiation by accepting a declared and explicit position is always a mistake.

In the case of Ukraine, the unequivocal support of Euromaidan activists by Polish society was worthy of recognition. However, similar behaviour by official state representatives stands in opposition with realizing Polish national interests. The effect of such a stance was pointedly demonstrated by the fact that Poland was not asked to occupy a seat at the negotiating table in the matter of the conflict in Ukraine.

The situation with the EU's other neighbour, Belarus, is no better. Many years of isolating the president of this country, as well as steadfastly supporting the matter of the betterment of the opposition situation – representing a decided minority of Belarusian society – is reminiscent of banging one's head against a wall. Surprisingly, the resulting headache did not lead to the obvious conclusion: currently, Alexander Lukashenko is the only guarantor of stability in Belarus, which after all should be the concern of all the remaining countries in the region, not just Poland (which is best understood by Lithuanian politicians, maintaining regular relations with the Belarusian government), especially considering Russia's actions in the east of Ukraine.

According to many credible public opinion polls, support for the Belarusian leader is maintained at a stable, high level, securing him victory even in fair and transparent elections. The above conclusions are proof of the failure of Eastern policy goals and evidence of the weak field of experts who have for many years consequently predicted the "imminent" collapse of the Belarusian economy, followed soon after by the fall of Alexander Lukashenko.

### Democratization failure

In the analysis of Eastern policy realized until now, a basic problem should be pointed out. As opposed to Western players, Poland has not yet attempted to connect with elites from countries outside our Eastern borders with the aid of political and economic instruments. Instead, the main efforts have been directed at establishing and supporting dialogue with "civic society" in these countries, which was mainly based on realizing aid and scholarship programmes (containing the specific clause that participants contribute to "building democracy oriented towards Europe").

Their realization does not entirely reflect expectations – beneficiaries of these programmes are still exceptions on the Ukrainian (not to even mention Belarussian or Rus-

sian) political and intellectual scene – it is more common to meet them in Warsaw, where they tell us about their country of origin, than in Kyiv (Minsk, Moscow...), where they would talk about Poland.

Thus it turns out that not only are our goals still unachieved, but worse, the stability which should be the target of our diplomacy in the East is becoming more and more fragile. It is then time to accept that the idea that democratization can be an effective tool in realizing goals in the East has not been a successful one. As the events on Maidan indicate, lofty values are able to excite emotions, with which we identify and sympathise with, but our country does not become any safer as a result of them.

### Chinese alternative?

The inroads that the Chinese transportation initiative has made in Eastern Central Europe in the last few months – dubbed the "New Silk Road" – is imposing. The splendid opportunities which are to open for countries of the region in connection with lucrative trade deals with the Far East are indeed tempting<sup>6</sup>. This especially concerns Poland and to a lesser degree also Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine<sup>7</sup>. The establishment of a transportation route connecting China and Western Europe puts Poland in the position of a regional transportation hub and may cause Beijing to end up as Warsaw's most important partner in 21st century Euro-Asian policy.

Strangely, the Chinese initiative has been accepted unusually positively by Central Europe. It is perceived by Polish diplomacy as another tool for gaining influence in Eastern Europe through cooperation with China and by utilizing the Chinese offer to outbid Russian influence in the region. What is more, many authors analysing the situation have without reflection postulated gaining priority status in the European Union through partnership with China<sup>8</sup>!

Many authors extensively present the positive aspects of cooperation, focusing on its economic potential<sup>9</sup>. Unfortunately, many of them do not consider the negative character of Chinese economic expansion which has reached other parts of the world in. It should be highlighted that China is intensively developing economic cooperation with particular countries, especially on the territory of Africa, without regard to their political systems or records on human rights. Quite often, to protect their interests, they support ruthless and brutal regimes (for example, Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe), which guarantee lucrative deals connected to access to African energy resource deposits. Even the heads of African states have sharply rebuked Beijing's actions and criticized Chinese companies for violating regulations and worker safety norms, as well as warning the inhabitants of Africa of "new Chinese colonialism". However this does not stand in the way of imagining a vision of Warsaw and Beijing mutually coordinating a process of "stabilizing the

<sup>6</sup> See: M. Kaczmarek, Nowy Jedwabny Szlak: uniwersalne narzędzie chińskiej polityki, "Komentarze OSW" 2015, no. 161.

<sup>7</sup> Zob. T. Iwański, Ukraina, Białoruś i Mołdawia wobec ekspansji gospodarczej Chin w Europie Wschodniej, "Komentarze OSW" 2012, no. 79.

<sup>8</sup> For more, see: M. Kacperek, Polska europejskim Państwem Środka?, Pressje, Teka 43.

<sup>9</sup> Especially analysts and experts gathered around the Poland-Asia Research Centre.

Euro-Asian region, assuring the unfettered transfer of goods, without actually narrowing down what this “coordination” might entail<sup>10</sup>.

Bestowing a European perspective on our neighbours has become the *idée fixe* of Polish Eastern policy, while its main principal has become the dogma that Poland’s importance in Europe will go hand in hand with its ability to influence the tone of EU Eastern policy. Poland has positioned itself in the role of a promoter (advocate) of closer EU ties with the countries of Eastern Europe, even if its Eastern partners did not express such intentions (Belarus, Azerbaijan, Armenia), or solely expressed them in declarative form, factually recognizing this goal as unachievable (Ukraine during the Yanukovych period).

The realization of Eastern policy defined by Polish diplomacy in such a way caused that the country lost all manoeuvrability in relations with its partners in a quickly changing international reality. The weakness of Poland’s position was demonstrated to full effect by the Ukrainian-Russian crisis in which Poland – perceiving itself the actor predestined to play the leading role and main force of change in EU Eastern policy – was not considered in the group of countries deciding on the conditions of a resolution to the conflict in the east of Ukraine. It is symptomatic that in the most serious post-World War II crisis in Eastern Europe, not even Kyiv cared to seek a place for Poland at the negotiating table. Thus, it is difficult not to get the impression that foreign policy conducted on the basis of EU paradigms led Polish policy astray.

Searching for an alternative, in the form of Chinese investment, also seems to lack meritocratic grounds and does not take into account the real costs of Warsaw entering into a strategic alliance with Beijing. Instead of deep reflection a “hurrah-optimism” dominates, built on visions of fast economic growth stimulated by the implementation of the Chinese project. Delight at rising Chinese might and Polish chances for advancing to a higher civilizational plane on the back of the Chinese dragon cannot be the basis for formulating foreign policy goals. Things may turn out as they did in the case of the Eastern Partnership project: we’ll be left out in the cold, not taking into account the real interests of all partners involved in our activities.

<sup>10</sup> M. Kacperek, *op. cit.*

Jan Kubik

## Are Regional Studies Needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? The Case of Eastern European Studies<sup>1</sup>

**The dilemma seems simple, though quite profound. In the East – stated in a general manner– the region is disturbed by another display of Russian armed action. The question is obvious: what should be done? One of the answers, which could clearly be heard at this conference is: we need to begin reasonable activity with the goal of developing deeply diverse, precise and multi-faceted knowledge, and this knowledge is key. This was pointed out on many occasions during various discussions. In the West, regional studies have been in crisis for some time. Research institutions and entities involved in this field often struggle with financial problems, and are sometimes closed down. Financial sources for many initiatives, specifically those connected to Eastern European, studies are getting weaker, especially in the United States. Perhaps this will change, but until now the tendency is a downward trajectory. At the same time, regional studies is entering a period of interesting transformations and rediscovering its mission, methods and theories.**

The source of these problems in the West is essentially two-fold. Firstly, many people today say that after 1989, regional studies are a relic of the Cold War. There is much criticism and attacks based on ideology. Just the fact that these studies were created during the Cold War period makes them subject to criticism. The Cold War is generally evaluated negatively and for this reason it is high time to get rid of these studies. More significant is criticism that regional studies are no longer current, containing an antiquated approach. It is enough to conduct research within the framework of classically understood disciplines. We have a shift headed in the direction of “big data” research, with statistical methods leading the field at many institutions. Regional studies are not the ideal specialization for young scholars looking to work at the best American schools. It seems to me that in Europe, the situation is somewhat different. It differs by the fact that interdisciplinarity and the approach to regional studies are valued more. Thus, we have these two sources of problems.

Another group of problems is contained in the question: “What does it mean to develop global knowledge?” Because we all want global knowledge. When we practice regional studies, we engage with particular areas and “add” them to this detailed “knowl-

<sup>1</sup> The following text was delivered during the closing lecture of the 12th Sessions of the Warsaw East European Conference on 13 July 2015.

edge”: one area, a second area, a third... Of course, we often don’t study an entity in a global situation, but entities entangled in a certain context, also regional, reacting to the challenges of globalization. In regional studies, the dominating feeling is that these regional wholes, these systems, areas, mean something. But what does it mean to add knowledge to achieve a global level? Another question is: “Why region, not country?” We are talking, of course, of experts on countries. Many of us participate in regional study conferences, but we take to the floor as experts on specific countries: Hungary, Bulgaria, Ukraine. Why don’t we invite someone on Bulgaria and someone on Belgium? Why Bulgaria and Romania? There are, of course, certain reasons for this. However, these reasons are slowly disappearing, especially in those former Eastern bloc countries that are now part of the European Union. This is a meaningful set of issues.

Finally, what is the beginning of rethinking a problem anew – is a region a geographical place, or is it something more, or perhaps something else. I will attempt to present the first approximate definition. A “region” is an organic cultural whole, however loosely structured, meaningful to the people in the given area. I will introduce reasons for which I am tied to this statement. It requires a deep contextualization, multifaceted, such as inter-disciplinary knowledge on the subject of a relatively small area of the globe. And here, once more, the question returns: Why not country? Is a country less meaningful than a region? Where does the role of region come from in regional studies? These are questions which critics continue to raise, stating that this type of approach is antiquated.

So, I began to think of inspirations. And – very patriotically – I found three great Polish intellectuals. Two specialists from the social sciences and one art historian. I had the great privilege of being a student of Professor Mieczysław Porębski. It so happened that I became involved in anthropology through art history. Bronisław Malinowski is my intellectual great grandfather – anthropologists like genealogy. On the other hand, what role does the thought of Florian Znaniecki play in the conception which I will propose later?

I’ll start with Mieczysław Porębski. Some time ago he published an essay which never failed to torment me, or to inspire me: *Polskość jako Sytuacja* (Polishness as a Situation). This is a fairly short text published by “Znak” in a collection of Porębski’s poems. “What is Polishness? The condition on which the existence of the situation called Polishness is based on is a certain spiritual community. Anthropologists and sociologists would call it: “a community discourse. Spiritual community which unites around historically determined symbols. This spiritual community defines its existence and persistence through these symbols. It also draws its dignity from these symbols. Thus, it has a certain normative, ethical and moral dimension<sup>2</sup>.”

Later on, Porębski discusses symbols; briefly, but very eloquently and to the point. Localizations (places), books, paintings, sounds (music), tastes and colors – like white and red in the Polish example. Near the end, he introduces one more element: the existence of a state of danger as a part of the condition or situation called Polishness. Unfortunately, we have no time to get into this further. If you wish to know more about this essay, you can

<sup>2</sup> See: M. Porębski, *Polskość jako sytuacja*, Kraków 2002

easily find a copy. Porębski also says that sometimes Polishness is our own worst enemy. Danger does not always come from outside.

This is the first source of inspiration. The second came to me some time ago when I was thinking about this lecture. In 1941, Bronisław Malinowski began to gather his notes which were later published by his wife in 1944. *Freedom and Civilization* was to be his last book. This book was never a particular favorite of mine. It was one of those works that you have to read, but the final remarks concerning a global government seem somewhat naïve, out of date and some have in fact gone out of date. But the basic ideas arrive at the beginning. In the context of what is currently happening in Ukraine, in our part of the world, this essay gains added and especially significant meaning.

The key argument concerns how to think about defending freedom in a situation when it is threatened. In an obvious manner, Malinowski writes against two totalitarianisms. He writes from London, attempting to arrive at what an anthropologist can bring to this issue.

In a very simplistic way, he says that freedom is rooted in complex cultural whole – Malinowski is known for his functionalism – and the condition of freedom depends on the condition of this whole, of these various elements. Malinowski understood culture very widely, starting from economic activity carried out by a given group of people of specific organizations (he called these institutions), including magic and other elements of culture. The lesson to be taken from this is that a situation of danger must be studied and interpreted holistically. We must study it from different angles and we should not utilize reductionism; understanding by one method. This is the lesson from Malinowski.

So, region equals situation – you can guess where I am going with this. Porębski says of Polishness that it is a situation, but in what sense is a region a situation? This is a wider set of questions: how to think about it, how it is constructed, by whom and with what result?

The last and third fundamental element on which my ideas are based, comes from Florian Znaniecki. American students are very familiar with William Thomas’s theorem. They don’t know, or they don’t remember, that the idea originally came from Znaniecki – or at least to a large degree from Znaniecki – who brought his ideas from Poznań to Chicago. What I will call the “Znaniecki-Thomas theorem” can be formulated in the following way: If man describes situations as real, then they are real in their consequences.

The fact the word “situation” appears here in a different context draws attention. This is the motto of constructivism. For those who are interested in international relations, this is the motto of those who believe precisely that reality is created by culture-building activities of mankind, acting in accordance with the understanding of the world he created (or someone else created for him).

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award-winning books: *The Power of Symbols against the Symbols of Power. The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland and Rebellious Civil Society: Popular Protest and Democratic Consolidation in Poland, 1989-1993*, cowritten with Grzegorz Ekiert. He is a recognized expert in the field of post-communist transformation, while his research interests encompass social movements, the politics of opposition, communist and post-communist politics, as well as the politics of remembrance. His most recent book, *Twenty Years After Communism: The Politics of Memory and Commemoration*, edited along with Michael Bernhard, was published by Oxford University Press in July 2014.

How is this situation – the situation of the region – defined? What is the logic behind regional studies. First off, it is an ontological hypothesis: the situation in a geographic sense, as a geographic grouping. However, if we think for a moment about the significance of geographic grouping, then this is a collective history or collective fate. It is a series of events which took place on a given territory, which transfer this experience from one person to another, from one generation to the next. We bestow political character on them, or not. We forget, remember once more, create these memories anew. This is a stream of many different memories of that which took place on this territory which we recognize as our own; of one we belong to. Of course, we attempt to encompass larger territories, besides national states. If it were the opposite, there would be no point to regional studies.

I am aware that everything I have spoken of up to this point continues to be quite indefinite. Nonetheless, the epistemological or methodological suppositions are clear. We must come from the idea of “thick knowledge”; knowledge of cultural constructs which confer orientation in the world on people. This is the basic idea of modern cultural anthropology and many other humanistic disciplines, including history; all the disciplines where the term “cultural terrain” is utilized.

At SSEES, we are developing the idea of regional studies without borders. From something that is a whole document, I have drawn on two elements. The matter I mentioned earlier: how do we add this knowledge, one region to another? There exists a need for inter-regional projects. For example, focusing on common problems – you could say trans-regional problems – such as poverty. However, without stripping them of their characteristic traits for specific situations of origin. I think the idea is such that the conception of “situation” must always be in the background of every future intellectual work.

Multi-disciplinarity is also important. A deep familiarity with, for example, anthropology or literature research, is important – the type of anthropological-literary studies that allow one to learn how other people’s cultures work. This is just as important as studying geopolitics or the economy. In a moment, you will see what I am driving towards.

This is a collection of ideas which I am developing around the approach which I call “contextual holism”. They were published in 2015, in *East European Politics and Societies* (No. 29 (2)). My essay is there, but also a number of other interesting works – especially for those interested in political sciences – originating from a conference where one of the subjects was inter-disciplinarity.

We can begin by calculating the situation in Central Eastern Europe. These are just a few very simple examples, a very simple list. The first, mentioned many times at this conference, is of course, massive diversity. Over the course of the last few months I was in Tirana and then Tallinn. This is a completely different world, with a different set of problems. However, at our university and at many other places, where the region of Eastern Europe is studied, these two places are connected. Thus, we have meaningful diversity of great weight.

Another idea which was discussed many times during this conference was the search for various types of peripheries. Here, however, the diagnosis is often mixed with simplified images in the form of Orientalism, which is richly and clearly analyzed in the classic works of such authors as Larr Wolff or Maria Todorova.

The state of “in-betweenness” as an element of this situation – I underline this element, as I will return to it.

The legacy of communism is one of a number of essential experiences. Some of my colleagues say: “Let us stop talking about post-communism. A quarter century has passed.” I say to them: “Wait, hold on a second.” This is a part of the world which experienced the largest manmade experiment in history, the costs of which we still don’t fully appreciate, nor do we fully know what really happened. So, there is still plenty to be done. I don’t think we should push this subject onto the margin, saying: “Let’s forget it. Let’s keep going further.” Of course, we have to keep going further, but dealing with this issue continues to be intellectually fascinating. It is also important to grasp that this aspect contains massive human tragedy in itself.

Furthermore, we have the state of danger, which I think is connected to the state of “being in-between”. When I began to reflect about the state of a thing, I was immediately reminded of Angamben’s *State of Exception*. What is the difference between the state of danger and the state of exception? As you know, according to Angamben’s idea, the state of exception is something that the West is imposing on itself following the September 11 attacks – this is the main conclusion. Too many limiting regulations, excessive limitation of freedoms and a dangerous increase in government power. The state of danger is certainly something else, possibly even more serious if we look at its duration and political consequences.

Finally, an issue worthy of working on. I expanded on a number of examples in my article – inside regional differences, such as various legacies within the region. I always like to underline that there was no communism or state socialism, but various communisms, different state socialisms. Because of this, Poland essentially differed from the former GDR or Romania. Inter-regional comparisons, for example, something that we studied very thoroughly with many individuals, like the consequences of neoliberalism in different regions of the world, with various results. Thirdly, globalization, the appearance of supra-regional cultures, especially in our part of Europe. In the case of the EU, much is said about the huge number of cultural difficulties connected with the common memory of Europe, which I myself have begun to work on. People appear from the East who undermine the

conviction that the Holocaust is the only significant cornerstone of European common memory. They ask: “What about our Holocaust? The Stalinist Holocaust?” Those of you who follow these matters know that it is strongly divisive, but important to debate. This is our situation against their situation.

Finally, my main example. A few weeks ago, I took part in a debate during a session on the subject of Ukraine. I was discussing Richard Sakwa’s book, *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderland*, with the author. I based my remarks to a large degree on the book *Ukraine Crisis, What It Means for the West*, written by my SSEES colleague, Andrew Wilson.

Two completely different books. Richard Sakwa states that the West is equally at fault, even more than Russia, when it comes to the conflict in Ukraine. There is something not quite right with the West. This is the real point of his book. Sakwa publicly defended the thesis that we occupy ourselves too much with Putin and what he is doing. We should instead deliberate over what the West is doing, because the fault of the West with regard to events in Ukraine is nearly equal.

This irritated me. I was born here and I told him that for natives of the region this is not an easy concept to digest, but let us nevertheless try to reflect on it. I earlier read the book very carefully and what I believe is the most important in it, is the conviction which I not only found in Sakwa, but also other researchers and observers of the region in London, when I took part in a discussion on the subject of the situation in Ukraine. I would call this position “Symmetric bilateralism”. “Bilateralism”, because within the framework of this conviction there are only two important actors: the first is Russia (more precisely Putin and his group of people), while the second is the West. The complexity of the West – which is now internally divided, sometimes the cause of its passiveness or unsuitable reaction – this complexity is completely absent: there is the West and there is Russia. “Symmetrical”, because it is recognized that both actors have justified interests and they are similarly constructed. We have the interests of the West, the interest of Russia and clashes that take place between them. We have two similar actors who clash as a result of differences in their interests.

This type of view on reality is connected (which will interest those engaged in international relations) with the philosophy of realism in international relations – *кто? кого?* (Rus. Who? whose?) – naked strength, realistic geopolitics. And when I realized that this is the essence of the book, I began to wonder how I might clearly express the source of my frustration upon reading it.

Of course, if we have “symmetric bilateralism”, then its opposite must also appear: “asymmetric multilateralism”. I think that this is it. “Asymmetric”, because how the Western political system processes its interests and how the Russian political system processes its interests are two different realities. Also in political sciences, in other contexts, we understand this, because we have type of systems and the whole discussion on the subject of competitive authoritarianism. Only Russia can no longer be numbered among competitive authoritarianisms, she is simply an authoritarianism, according to a somewhat simplified, but useful, classification.

We know that Russia is a different political system, processing interests and identities at least partially differently than in Western cultural institutions. Thus, we have a lack of symmetry, despite what the previous stance attempts to state. And what about multilateralism, which is the very crux of my argument. According to the bilateral viewpoint, people who find themselves in between, in the situation of a “being in-between” state, are simply disappearing. The great suffering of ordinary Ukrainians, especially where military operations are taking place, somehow don’t fit into this picture. The situation is similar with the interests of the Ukrainian state. The interests of other countries in the region are, at the very least, ignored.

If you are a multilateralist, then one should seriously attempt to create a strategy to exit this tragedy in a different way, but it must be supported by a different philosophy of international relations. International relations give us ready tool to achieve this. We have three main schools of international relations, and one of them calls itself constructivist. Constructivism is an idea, a system based on the theory of the “Znanecki-Thomas theorem”. People define a situation as real, its consequences are real, they act as if it were “real” in a deep sense. Symmetric bilateralism simply forgets about the people in this region, as well. And even if it doesn’t forget, then their presence in a conflict is only ostensible and symbolic. It is not the crux of the dispute. And I think that asymmetric constructivism that treats constructivism seriously, like Znanecki’s, allows understanding the situation much better, because it would then be closer to what millions of people on the spot define the situation to be. And as an intellectual construct, at least morally and ethically, it would provide the tools to allow people to free themselves from the “symmetric bilateralist” trap.

I wouldn’t want to suggest that this is the only way of thinking for people in the West. However, during the couple of months I spent in London, I met with this argument on a number of occasions, not only in this book. So, there is something important here which should be contested. And I hope that this is all somehow connected with a renewed understanding of regional studies through this particular method of thinking; the concept of the region’s situation.

Kazimierz Wóycicki

## Can historians reconcile us? Suffering cannot be calculated

**In the lapidary report of the press agency concerning the last meeting of Polish and Ukrainian historians, which took place in October 2016 – following a stormy period of public debate connected to the film “Wołyń”, as well as a parliamentary bill concerning genocide in the Sejm – the following is written:**

“A crime of genocide – that is how the Wołyń Massacre is termed in Poland. The term promoted by the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance (INR) is “Polish-Ukrainian War”. There is no agreement on this term between historians on both sides. As the vice-president of the Polish INR, Dr Mateusz Szpytma underlines, this is not the only controversial point. There are discrepancies concerning, among others, the number of victims and the cause of the crime. Dr Szpytma simultaneously underlined that during the recent Ukrainian-Polish historical debate excellent specialists from both sides took part, and the exchange of opinions was both open and well-mannered!”

An essential question is whether the discussion on the subject of defining the Wołyń tragedy of 1943 (Genocide vs. Polish-Ukrainian War), as well as establishing the number of victims on both sides, is the best road leading to Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation. It is worth noting that in the Polish-German dialogue, which often serves as a prime example, statistics were never made an issue, despite the fact that the number of victims exceeded the number of victims of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict many times over. In the opinion of the author, the controversies surrounding the definition of the Wołyń tragedy cannot bring anything useful to either side. An agreement could be reached that genocide took place (as the bill in the Polish Sejm states), but also concerning the Polish-Ukrainian War (as the Ukrainian INR states). Most likely, though, no one will go for such a “decayed compromise”, because the issue is not just definition, but its symbolic meaning.

Though fairly accurate, the agency report goes on to state that the head of the Ukrainian INR, Volodymyr Viatrovych, noted that the goal of the forum is also depoliticizing discussion on the subject of Wołyń:

“Historians would like for the main figures speaking about history to be historians. If this is able to be accomplished then, in the view of the head of the Ukrainian INR, it will be

1 <http://www.polskieradio.pl/78/1227/Artykul/1685245,Ukraina-polscy-i-ukrainscy-historycy-dyskutowali-o-Wolyniu>

possible to avoid negative political consequences which we sometimes have to deal with in Polish-Ukrainian relations<sup>2</sup>.”

In as much as depoliticizing discussion on the subject of Wołyń would mean lowering emotional temperature, it would be prudent to agree with Viatrovych. However, if the desire is for “the main figures speaking about history to just be historians”, then this is an unrealistic postulate.

The statement: “Leave the past to historians”, is often repeated. It expresses the intention to avoid disputes concerning the past, which transform into never-ending conflicts. Instead of quarreling, the matter should be entrusted to historians. They – non-partisan professionals – should arrive at the truth. The problem is that although objectivism is a requirement of scholarship, it does not make up the criterion of full historical truth. Historians can accurately establish dates of events, their sequence, the names of participants and many other elements of data. The knowledge concerning these facts can be astonishingly vast and continue to expand. That is a lot, sometimes even staggeringly much, but it is also and only just that. Nonetheless, inevitably, the problem of interpretation always remains. Historians will argue just like anyone else, however, they have no one else to “leave the past” to.

The idea that historians are the highest instance of historical truth is, from this point of view, naïve. Historical sciences can at most play the role of controlling instance towards everything that all of us say, not just historians. If some interpretation, or some popular opinion concerning the past, were to be contrary to factual knowledge or if they were to be picked out and selected one-sidedly, then a historian has the right to say that it should be cast aside (an entirely different matter is who will listen to such a statement). The maturity of a given society’s cultural history is based on the historian being permitted to just such a controlling role. Anything more, though, cannot be expected.

The fact that, up to this point, even this is not anticipated from discussions by Polish-Ukrainian historians best demonstrates the state of dialogue between the two parties, which is no better off than the state of Polish historical dialogue regarding remembrance in both societies.

It is worth tracing back why this happens, taking into consideration the most talked-about books regarding the subject of Wołyń, not to mention that it seems they also had the largest readership and influence on public opinion, not just expert debates.

Siemaszkos’ book has entered the canon of works dedicated to events in Wołyń 1943, especially in circles disinclined towards Ukraine and Ukrainians. Włodzimierz Siemaszko, a Home Army (AK) soldier in Wołyń, later persecuted during the Stalinist period, already began his work of remembrance for the victims of Wołyń 1943 in the 1980s, gathering documents and testimonies. Because of this, his book, *Zbrodnie nacjonalistów ukraińskich dokonane na polskiej ludności na Wołyniu* (The Crimes of Ukrainian Na-

2 <http://www.polskieradio.pl/78/1227/Artykul/1685245,Ukraina-polscy-i-ukrainscy-historycy-dyskutowali-o-Wolyniu>

tionalists Carried Out On The Polish Population In Wołyń) already appeared in 1990<sup>3</sup>. In accordance with the title, the author focused on documenting crimes committed by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) on the Polish population. The authors' historical method was based on recording and gathering accounts of particular crimes. They acted in the conviction that they were breaking with the long-existing taboo concerning the matter of Wołyń, though the most pioneering element was their work on the list of victims. It became subject to criticism from many historians, who accused the authors of a lack of professionalism in their approach to source material, as well as a subjectivism, typical of first-hand witnesses.

Two years later, Ryszard Torzecki's work was published, *Polacy i Ukraińcy. Sprawa ukraińska w czasie II wojny światowej na terenie II Rzeczypospolitej*<sup>4</sup> (*Poles and Ukrainians. The Ukrainian Matter During World War II On The Territory Of The Second Polish Republic*). It was received with acclaim by both the Polish and Ukrainian historical community. This book stood in somewhat opposition to Turowski and Siemaszko's book, treating sources with great care and necessary distance, as well as taking Ukrainian sources into consideration. For a time, this book was treated as somewhat of a road map for further research on the subject.

In 2000, an extended version of the original work appeared by the Siemaszkos, becoming the most cited book for nearly a decade<sup>5</sup>. It is to be admired for the industriousness of the authors in gathering testimonies. In relation to the 1990 work, the new edition was not only more extensive, but also possessed meaningful new accents. Most notably, the title contained the word "genocide", while the book's foreword was written by political scientist, Prof. Dr. Ryszard Szawłowski. This was most likely intended to give the book greater academic credibility, because the Siemaszkos were not professional historians, and not having changed their approach to sources, they had to expect criticism similar to that which they received the first time around.

Szawłowski did not conduct independent research within the scope of the subject of Wołyń 1943, which is why he was sometimes qualified with the title amateur historian. In articles dedicated to the subject, he provided a much higher victim count than that which figured in the Siemaszkos' work. He is the author of the "three genocide" theory, which proposes assigning equal significance to crimes perpetrated by the Third Reich, USSR and Ukrainian nationalists. By the same token, he assigned the Ukrainian nationalists' crimes a higher qualification than Nazi and Soviet crimes, calling them *genocidum atrox* – "especially cruel genocide". Szawłowski had an obvious and even vocalized ambition to formulate a legal category, "genecidom atrox", which would occupy a similar place to Rafał Lemkin's classic definition of genocide, which later came to be utilized in international law. Taking into account his profession, while a trained political scientist, he

was also an amateur lawyer. Up to this point, no noted legal community has taken up discussion on the subject of a widened definition of genocide, as proposed by Szawłowski.

The Siemaszkos' book, with Szawłowski's introduction, undoubtedly contributed to the fact that the matter of Wołyń 1943 began to narrow into a question of branding tragedy with the title of genocide.

In direct polemic with the Siemaszkos' book is the two-volume *Krwawy Wołyń* (*Bloody Wołyń*) by Iwan Olchowskij. The author attempts to prove many errors and misrepresentations, which, in his opinion, the Siemaszkos committed, covering two regions around the cities of Luboml (Liuboml), Szack (Shatsk) and Turzysk (Turiisk) in Western Wołyń. According to Olchowskij, in the region of Luboml, 566 Ukrainians and 1837 Poles (identified by name) were killed in 1939-1945, while the Siemaszkos claim 2058 Poles and just 40 Ukrainians. Anyone not a historian and archivist should leave the statistics alone without commentary<sup>6</sup>. Olchowskij provides similar statistics with regard to the region around the city of Turzysk. 2422 Poles (identified by name) and 1101 Ukrainians (also identified by name) were to have been killed in the region of Turzysk. According to the Siemaszko, 2379 Poles (identified by name) and 52 Ukrainians were killed<sup>7</sup>. Olchowskij's book belongs to quite a wide range of literature by historians taking on the subject of Wołyń, dedicated to the period 1939-1945, and written after 1991<sup>8</sup>. This is a work that should be studied by the Polish side in order to thoroughly evaluate it.

It was fully thirteen years later that a book came out that was equally essential to public debate as the Siemaszkos' work<sup>9</sup>. It was written by a historian of the middle generation, Grzegorz Motyka. In a calm and factual tone, he tackled the question of the Wołyń Massacre, for which he was prepared with a highly professional historical method, concentrating on a positivist analysis of sources. Motyka, focusing on UPA crimes, also reminded readers of Polish misconduct in the background of his deliberations. Because in many circles invoking the Siemaszkos' work the thesis of genocide was a principal matter, Grzegorz Motyka was met with aggressive criticism from the political right and far right.

Grzegorza Motyka's panorama is drawn without any wider comparison. His successive books, based on very thorough research, are not to be missed for anyone wanting to engage in the Polish-Ukrainian conflict. Motyka mainly researches the period 1943-1947, though he often reaches back to earlier events, as well as jumping forward into the post-war years. The author attempts to balance his opinions and his writing often possesses the character of a chronicle<sup>10</sup>. This establishes both the strength of his undoubted accomplishments, as well as certain reverses. It is worth nothing here the conclusions found in one of his most recent books.

6 I. Olchowskij, *Krywawa Wołyń*, vol. I, Ukraińsko-polskie przeciwstawienia na terenach regionów, Lubomli i Szacka, Kyiv 2008.

7 I. Olchowskij, *Krywawa Wołyń*, vol. II, Ukraińsko-polskie przeciwstawienia na terenach regionie Turzyska, Kyiv 2011, p. 331.

8 Ю. Макар, *Холмщина і Підляшшя у першій половині ХХ ст. Політична проблематика*, Львів 2003; М. Кучерена, *Історія Волиня 1939-1941*, Łuck 2003.

9 G. Motyka, *Od rzezi wołyńskiej do akcji „Wisła”. Konflikt polsko-ukraiński 1943-1947*, Kraków 2013.

10 I. Iljuszyn, *UPA i AK. Konflikt w zachodniej Ukrainie*, (1939-1945), Warsaw 2011.

3 J. Turowski, W. Siemaszko, *Zbrodnie nacjonalistów ukraińskich dokonane na polskiej ludności na Wołyniu*, Warsaw 1990.

4 R. Torzecki, *Polacy i Ukraińcy. Sprawa ukraińska w czasie II wojny światowej na terenie II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warsaw 1993.

5 W. Siemaszko, E. Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939-1945*, vol.1-2, Warsaw 2000. Równoległe do książki Siemaszków ukazała się książka W. Filara, *Przed akcją Wisła był Wołyń*, Warsaw 2000. However, it did not play a meaningful role in public debate.

“The history of OUN-B and UPA, similarly to the whole history of Central Europe, is full of ambiguities. The long-term “unshakeable” battle for independence with the communist government became a part of Western Ukrainian identity and it is not difficult to understand why. This does not change the fact that the crimes committed by UPA should not be forgotten. It appears that this is understood by those Ukrainian historians attempting to arrive at bringing together UPA tradition with liberal-democratic values by clearly separating the faults of this organization from those which absolutely cannot be justified!”

The author also observes and analyses differences between his own interpretations, and those of many Ukrainian historians.

“The post-war resistance to communists put up by Western Ukrainians possesses many similarities with other anti-Soviet movements in the USSR [...] In Poland, OUN-B and UPA would probably be evaluated similarly to the Lithuanian, Estonian and even post-war Polish underground if not for their anti-Polish activity. The memory of the murdered victims causes that we look at these formations only from the perspective of the crimes committed on the Polish population. In Ukraine, though, this fragment of UPA history is often boiled down to an ordinary guerilla war, during the course of which crimes were committed by both sides, with the number of victims deemed of secondary importance<sup>12</sup>.”

One of the main opponents of Grzegorz Motyka on the Ukrainian side appears to be Bohdan Hud, an accomplished historian from Lviv. He adds much more of a sociological dimension to his research than his Polish colleague, and also deals with a much wider time frame. He believes that Wołyń 1943 has significant roots in the much more distance past than just the events of World War II. Hud, citing the works of the French historian Daniel Beauvois, perceives the deeper source of the conflict in the hundreds of years of conflict between the Polish court and the Ukrainian countryside. He characterizes social relations which have existed for many hundreds of years on the territories of Podole, Galicia or Wołyń, as well as commenting on the series of peasant rebellions and uprisings, such as Koliyivshchyna or the phenomenon of haidamakas. Hud also evokes the French term *jacquerie*, connected to the image of a blind, bloody and anarchistic peasant revolt.

Nonetheless, the main opponent of many Polish historians seems to be Volodymyr Viatrovych, occupying the important position of head of the Ukrainian INR, which makes him a figure strongly involved in shaping Ukrainian historical policy. According to him, some of the events of World War II were a repeat of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict from the World War I. Just the title of his book is testament to that: *Druga wojna polsko-ukraińska 1942-1947*<sup>13</sup> (*The Second Polish Ukrainian War 1942-1947*). In the opinion of the Ukrainian historian, this was a dispute concerning the territory of the future country. The first Polish-Ukrainian war took place around 1918. For the Polish side, the events of World

11 G. Motyka, *Ukraińska partyzantka 1942-1960. Działalność Organizacji Ukraińskich Nacjonalistów i Ukraińskiej Powstańczej Armii*, Warsaw 2015, p. 660.

12 G. Motyka, *Ukraińska partyzantka 1942-1960. Działalność Organizacji Ukraińskich Nacjonalistów i Ukraińskiej Powstańczej Armii*, Warsaw 2015, p. 658.

13 W. Wołodomyr, *Druga wojna polsko-ukraińska 1942-1947*, Warsaw 2017.

*War I in Polish-Ukrainian relations are mostly associated with Piłsudski and Petlura's cooperation, which is recalled in Poland in a myriad of ways. According to Viatrovych, this remembrance is primarily revolves around the fact that this was a conflict in which Ukrainian were defeated by Poles.*

*For Viatrovych, the Polish-Ukrainian conflict from the period of World War II is also a clash of two equal forces, whereby he does not dispute UPA's war crimes or the decided prevalence of Polish victims.*

*The operation, originally planned by UPA as a strike against the Polish underground and its bases, went far beyond the framework of the order issued by “Klym Savur” and quite often, under the guise of liquidating these bases and partisan infrastructure, was transformed into a massacre of innocent civilians having nothing to do with the underground forces<sup>14</sup>.*

No one in their right mind can negate that in Wołyń, the Ukrainian underground perpetrated a war crime, similarly to the Polish underground<sup>15</sup>.

Though Viatrovych perceives the suffering of Poles, he places it on the same level of Ukrainian suffering. On the other hand, on the Polish side, the dominant view is that Poles were primarily the victims of this conflict.

Viatrovych also stands in obvious opposition to Grzegorz Motyka, who concludes that the Wołyń Massacre was the result of a planned operation and an unequivocal, issued order. Viatrovych, on the other hand, states that there was no such order, nor any uniform plan, while claiming that Polish historians allowed themselves to be manipulated by doctored KGB documents. The title of one of his interviews *Rozkaz nr 1 to fałszywka KGB* (Order No. 1 was a KGB Forgery) states this clearly, which he gave during the period of most heated debate surrounding the film *Wołyń*.

This leads to the conclusion which is the subject of polemics from the side of many Polish historians, and, most of all, attacks from publicists.

“I am nonetheless opposed to collective responsibility and burdening OUN and UPA for all the blood that was spilled<sup>16</sup>.”

At the same time, he adds:

“But I have no doubts that those guilty for war crimes against civilians should be named. I am confident that an “archival revolution” will soon make this possible<sup>17</sup>.”

14 Rzeź wołyńska. Rozkaz nr 1 to fałszywka KGB. Rozmowa z szefem ukraińskiego IPN. I.T. Miecik, <http://wyborcza.pl/magazyn/1,124059,20806910,rzez-wolynska-rozkaz-nr-1-to-falszywka-kgb-rozmowa-z-szefem.html>

15 Rzeź wołyńska. Rozkaz nr 1 to fałszywka KGB. Rozmowa z szefem ukraińskiego IPN. I. T.Miecik, <http://wyborcza.pl/magazyn/1,124059,20806910,rzez-wolynska-rozkaz-nr-1-to-falszywka-kgb-rozmowa-z-szefem.html>

16 Rzeź wołyńska. Rozkaz nr 1 to fałszywka KGB. Rozmowa z szefem ukraińskiego IPN. I. T.Miecik, <http://wyborcza.pl/magazyn/1,124059,20806910,rzez-wolynska-rozkaz-nr-1-to-falszywka-kgb-rozmowa-z-szefem.html>

17 Rzeź wołyńska. Rozkaz nr 1 to fałszywka KGB. Rozmowa z szefem ukraińskiego IPN. I. T.Miecik, <http://wyborcza.pl/magazyn/1,124059,20806910,rzez-wolynska-rozkaz-nr-1-to-falszywka-kgb-rozmowa-z-szefem.html>

Nonetheless, up until now, the Ukrainian side has not stated the matter as such. One can only guess at a scenario, whereby, had Dmytro Klyachivsky – the direct perpetrator of the Wołyń tragedy (which is unassailable, irrespective of whether it was started by an order of his or not) – been clearly condemned, whether UPA's frontal attack in Poland might have been snuffed out. If so, perhaps then circumstances may have arisen in Poland to recognize UPA as a Ukrainian formation for independence, and thus Polish accusations would have focused on specific, individual perpetrators. Instead, though, both sides entered into a fruitless discussion: Was the Wołyń Massacre a result of one order, or was the directive a KGB forgery?

Although Viatrovych's work is generally greeted with reluctance and criticism by the Polish side, it should also be understood that it is dominated by an anti-Russian, not anti-Polish, stance. The author also states that he is searching for understanding with the Polish side. On the Polish side, these declarations are treated as empty.

Ihor Iljuszyn, author of a work concerning AK and UPA<sup>18</sup> relations, perceives the Polish-Ukrainian clash in Wołyń as mainly a political conflict – it should be added – unresolvable during wartime.

The author does not deny UPA crimes against Polish civilians in 1943, though this most assuredly is not the main subject of his work, as he primarily attempts to clarify the political positions of both sides which led to the bloody clash. In the view of Ukrainians, the Polish state was destroyed in 1939, though a meaningful portion of Ukrainians – Polish citizens – remained loyal to the Polish Second Republic. For the Polish side, territorial integrity of the state was never in question and could not be the subject of negotiations. In the years 1939–1941, both Poles and national-oriented Ukrainians are the subject of Soviet persecution and the conflict remains hidden. Initially, the arrival of the Germans does not change all that much with regard to this. The territory of Wołyń becomes part of a district in which the majority is Ukrainian, while the Germans, practicing the method of “divide and rule” in no way grant them absolute primacy<sup>19</sup>.

Iljuszyn's book demands that the situation in Wołyń be perceived in a sort of Polish-Ukrainian-Soviet-German quadrangle, where there is a lack of a fixed and unchanging line of confrontation: The Germans primarily want control and exploitation ability to take advantage of resources; the Soviets treat it as front-line territory and want to ignite all types of conflicts on it, unconcerned with civilian victims; the Poles initially want to wait until the end of the war and gather the maximum amount of strength for any possible confrontation with the Soviets; while the Ukrainians, after a short and full of illusions alliance with the Third Reich, begin fighting on all three fronts. In the Ukrainian historian's opinion, the growing political conflict transforms into a confrontation between two underground military formations. The Polish side had ruled out any and all post-war border changes, while Ukrainians efforts were directed at the creation of an independent state at the end of World War II, occupying lands where they occupied the decided majority.

18 I. Iljuszyn, *UPA i AK. Konflikt w Zachodniej Ukrainie*, Warszawa 2011.

19 There is a lack of research studies dedicated to police formations on the territory of Wołyń during the period 1941–1943, whose members were both Poles, as well as Ukrainians.

Iljuszyn's work is interesting in that although, in some aspects, it comes close to Viatrovych's theories, it nonetheless avoids their generalizations. Both Iljuszyn and Viatrovych, similarly to Polish historians, focus only on the period of World War II.

It is worth pointing out an issue which constantly appears somewhere in the background of the Polish-Ukrainian discussion, but which nevertheless has not yet received any separate or fuller studies.

This mainly has to do with the complicity of the USSR<sup>20</sup>, present in Wołyń in the form of Stalin's partisan units, but also the German side, responsible for an unscrupulous and brutal occupation. This lack is also part of – in my opinion – the continuing deficit in German historical reckoning with regard to the period of the Third Reich. The German side utilized the method of “divide and rule”, fanning the flames of Polish-Ukrainian conflict, though this issue should undoubtedly undergo separate study. The level that Soviet partisan units (using such methods as provocation) also influenced the Polish-Ukrainian conflict was recognized to a lesser degree. Already before World War II, Wołyń (similarly to the eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic inhabited by Belarusians) was an area of strong communist penetration. From the very start, this was made easier by Soviet partisan organizations from 1941. Having a strong infrastructure, these organizations conducted active armed operations, which subsequently evoked brutal retaliation from the German side<sup>21</sup>.

Even though it is necessary to note the still serious gaps in our knowledge concerning Wołyń during the period of World War II, there are of course numerous works which, in a wider or narrower context, deal with the subject of events in Wołyń in 1943. It is a rich vein of knowledge and would fill quite a large amount of shelf space. One would imagine that these books would have to be segregated into Polish and Ukrainian. These books and views would be in two opposing camps, divided along “national” lines. Although this should be worrisome, since scholarly studies should not come under such divisions, there is rationale to do just that to enable the best possible sorting of available materials.

On the Polish side, the prevailing number of research focuses on the subject of Wołyń 1943, whose narrative is entirely encompassed within the war years. On the Ukrainian side, the dominant perception of Wołyń 1943 is framed in significantly wider context. These different approaches also reflect, to some degree, two different strategies – the goal of each being to introduce their own side in a more positive light.

Polish focus on the war years, and even specifically on 1943, exposes UPA crimes, at the same time allowing for avoiding discussion on earlier history, where deeper causes

20 The Ukrainian historian, Bohdan Hud, searching for the source of the 1943 Wołyń tragedy, reaches back to the time of World War I, pointing out how large a portion of the Wołyń countryside entered Russian Black Hundreds organizations. [http://gazeta.ua/articles/history/\\_u-volinskij-tragediyi-vinni-komunisti-istorik/519520](http://gazeta.ua/articles/history/_u-volinskij-tragediyi-vinni-komunisti-istorik/519520)

21 In as much as the activities of Soviet partisans possessed the character of purposeful provocations, unconcerned with the situation and civilian casualties, it still requires separate research. Provocations could have had a much varied character. There are presumptions of murders carried out by Soviet partisans, disguised to implicate Poles or Ukrainians (a method not altogether unfamiliar to other parties, as well.)

for many events can be detected. This primarily has to do with policy of the Polish Second Republic, where the Ukrainians decidedly appear more as the victims than the perpetrators. The wider timeline in many Ukrainian works is felt by the Polish side to be a way of pushing relativism into the discussion of what exactly happened in Wołyń in 1943.

Both sides are incapable of recognizing a common denominator, even the statement that earlier injury can provide the motive of the crime, though not justify it. It would also explain, at least partly, why the Polish-Ukrainian dialogue between historians has been flailing so much in the last few years.

If it were only up to historians, Ukrainian-Polish reconciliation would not find itself in a much better place than it is currently in. Nonetheless, points of common agreement do exist. No serious historian denies the fact that war crimes took place in Wołyń (the disagreement on calling it genocide has no substantive meaning, though it does have great emotional meaning), though there are serious discrepancies as to their extent.

The approach of Bohdan Hua or Volodymyr Viatrovych – perceiving Wołyń 1943 in a much wider perspective of time – is not entirely unknown to the Polish side. Criticism of the Second Polish Republic's policy towards the Ukrainian minority, and even criticism of its policy towards Ukraine, is not only clearly present in Polish academic literature, but also in most common consciousness (such as in discussion concerning the lost opportunity of the Treaty of Hadiach or repeating the anecdote of Piłsudski's apology to Petlura). This wider narrative concerning Ukraine, though, in Poland, remains separate of the discussion around Wołyń.

A similar remark can also be made about the Ukrainian discourse, where the one-sided view of "lordly Poland" dominates, despite the fact that Poland is a country which is well-liked in Ukraine and highly placed on the public scale of sympathy. If more interest appeared on the Ukrainian side of engaging in the heritage of the old Rzeczpospolita, even social tension, the significance of which is highlighted by Bohdan Hud, could be interpreted somewhat differently. What is more, not all national heroes should be defended so unrelentingly, though assuredly the Polish side should not be the one to dictate this to Ukraine.

A valid remark on the subject of Polish-Ukrainian dialogue is that made by the Polish-Ukrainian historian, Włodzimierz Mokry:

The second Polish-Ukrainian war is sentenced to a long period of remembrance in the memories of both nations. The reason is the dramatic nature accompanying its events, and that they directly touched thousands of Ukrainian and Polish families<sup>22</sup>.

In essence, societies and nations possess their remembrance of the past and the shaping of its images is only to a small degree dependent on purely scientific establishment of facts. It is a good sign if they are not totally at odds with each other. The stories present among people, cultivated by families, and even more strongly by sources of mass

communication, decide about references to the past. Historical sciences are sometimes left out on the margin of the process of shaping historical consciousness. This especially happens when historical sciences are treated primarily and almost singularly as the establishment of facts, while research concerning historical consciousness and social remembrance is not carried out. Factological historiography is of little use in such studies. What is needed for this is a kindred field: remembrance historiography, intended to engage in processes of historical consciousness which change in time.

Historians are unable to establish absolute, unassailable truths. Historians can, though, without doubt be more effective in verifying manipulated or falsified images of the past. They can effectively point out facts which contradict current opinions, or even interpretations which are passed off in certain circles as proven and undisputed fact. For this, though, not only is more advanced methodology required, but often, in addition, a healthy dose of moral courage. It is not easy to question the current truths of your own camp. Every honest scientific study is laborious and the presentation of its results is rarely decipherable to wider public opinion.

Reconciliation is the work of societies and not just solely historians. It is wrong when historians feel that they represent all of society or national interests. All they should represent is the academic responsibility to scientific honesty.

History cannot also just be entrusted to historians. Although they bear a particular professional responsibility, they are not depositaries of truth, able to shape social remembrance. Social remembrance is the result of how the past is related by publicists, the press, radio, television, what is written on social media networks, and finally, what ordinary people are able to say about it on a day to day basis – even when they begin to talk about what too place, their attitude and what emotions they feel towards it by accident. Reconciliation cannot take place without good will and a genuine interest in dialogue with others. This allows opposition to often purposely and consciously disseminated hate, but also stupidity and ignorance, which is neither banal, nor rare. Every one of us is in some small way responsible for the social image of the past.

<sup>22</sup> *Problemy Ukraińców w Polsce po wysiedlerczej akcji „Wiśła” 1947*, ed. W. Mokry, Kraków 1997.

by Anton Saifullyeu

## Central Europe – ideas, spaces, perspectives

An interview with Ihar Babkoŭ

**Anton Saifullyeu:** In one of your articles, you pointed out that in the 19th century in Central Europe, the image of the ethnic human dominated, while the 20th century was the age of the so-called “Ideology Kingdom”. From these realities which functioned in the East of Europe, Central Europe was born – the creation of German intellectualists, as we know. At the end of the 20th century, the societies of this particular Europe adapted these concepts because of the need for continental identification. Do you think they accomplished their task? Did Central Europe become something like “not-West, not-East”; something Polish and Hungarian intellectuals dreamed of since the second half of the 20th century? And has it used up its possibilities in today’s understanding of the word?

Ihar Babkoŭ: First off, I would like to underline that there are in fact a number of “Central Europes”, just as there was number of ideas under one and the same name. What you started with is Friedrich Naumann’s *Mitteleuropa*, and this is a German idea: the idea of German domination in Central Europe in the post-Austro-Hungarian space – the least interesting, though also one of the first. Later, as we know, there was the Kundera version, Ladislav Matějka and the writers of *Cross Currents*, an assortment

of Central European dissidents and immigrants, who had gathered in Slavic and East European departments at Western universities. In their so-called “Eastern European research” on the domination of Sovietology and Kremlinology, they attempted to introduce totally different paradigms and opposing principles. It’s no secret that after the war, in the West, knowledge policy was ideologically shaped and all departments, faculties and centres of Eastern and Slavic studies possessed a Russo-centred character focused on Moscow – their base was Russian studies, Sovietology and Kremlinology. It’s obvious that with this type of approach a certain point of view was created in which there was no room for the small Central European countries and their cultures. According to this point of view, everyone became a “Russki”, although in reality they were in fact Estonians, Lithuanians, Belarusians and Ukrainians.

Now I understand that the whole pathos and main content of the idea of Central Europe which was created in the 1970s and 1980s – of which the most well-known manifestation became Milan Kundera’s *The Tragedy of Central European* – is in fact the opposition (and even opposing) of the ideologization of Central Europe in the Western academic and cultural discourse. In essence, Kundera, Miłosz, Kiš and others were attempting to destroy this ideological

monolith and delineate within the borders of Central Eastern Europe, or even Eastern Europe, this whole forgotten and abandoned continent – Central Europe.

In the Kundera-Miłosz understanding of it, Central Europe doesn't refer to geography. And even if it is partially geography, it is discourse geography, idea geography. This idea's substance is the defence of diversity, pointing out "local specificities" forgotten and abandoned by "History"; the careful and detailed reading of them. Kundera simply explained them brilliantly in his essay. When he writes that Central Europe is "small" cultures which lost out to "History", but learned to compensate their defeat with something else, this all becomes clear, in its place. In this sense – Central Europe as an idea – it equally concerns Belarus and Ukraine, as it does Lithuanian and Estonia. And when it entered our sphere of interest somewhere in the first half of the 1990s, we came to understand that the conceptual place of Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova is, in fact, Central Europe. Although Belarus still remained part of Eastern Europe – the post-Soviet ideological monolith – and probably still does, culturally and intellectually its true motherland was, of course, Central Europe.

**A.S: You underlined the great meaning of Kundera's essay, which is a particular Central European manifest among intelligentsia circles in Europe and the world, and is an attempt at leaving behind dependency narratives – especially Russian – still exported to the West. This manifest attempted to break free from Western conceptual standards referred to by the Russian intelligentsia in the 1920s, which included Central Europe as part of Eastern Europe. In relation to this, the assertion appears that the imagined area of Central Europe is a result of both the accumulation of**

**traumatic experiences – which proclaims its "Europeanness" and attempts to break out of earlier discourses subordinated to the "Other" – and the knowledge which the "Other" concentrated around the region. How great is the role of traumatic experiences in the building and imagining of Central Europe among the intelligentsia in the 1980s and 1990s?**

I.B: Decidedly huge. In fact, Kundera himself writes of this when he says "history is like a hallucination" from which nations attempt to awake. Later, Timothy Snyder would write about "bloody lands", about the Holocaust, as not just a Jewish, but Central European trauma of the 20th century. But what is important in the idea of Central Europe is that Kundera, Miłosz, Kiš and all the other intellectuals tried to propose a positive program. They juxtaposed the total ideologization discourse with the idea of defending cultural and linguistic diversity. According to Kundera, Central Europe possesses the largest diversity within the borders of a minimal space. In this sense, Central Europe appears as the opposite of Eastern Europe, which Kundera sees as a "rusted-out" Soviet monolith. It's another matter that the same Kundera says that Central Europe doesn't represent something entirely separate, some kind of third continent, compared to Western and Eastern Europe. It is a natural and organic part of the all-European space. A space which understands that, along with the disappearance of diversity, something important for all European is disappearing. That is why this positive programme is so extremely important. Kundera writes of the Central European Jew as the continent's typical representative and cultural hero. For Kundera, the Jew is a human being, who, even when he assimilates and adapts to the general discourse, is not able to com-

pletely get rid of his individual specificity – his "localness" and diversity. In a sense, Central Europe is a "collective Jew". Without looking at the wavering towards East or West, at further political changes which encompass this region and shape it to the dominant identity and discourse, familial signs break through – through the various discourses and ideologies.

**A.S: Let's go back to the matter of the West's attitude. Proclaiming Central Europe in and of itself, and adapting this idea among Central European intellectuals – this is an inherent trap which the region has fallen into with the help of intellectual elites, which at one time arrived in the West from Russia and began a periphery discourse about this region. Is this not the fault of the West itself and Western intellectuals, because they didn't open themselves up to the region at the appropriate moment? Which the whole time blocked and, in a sense, forced the traumatization of the Central European discourse?**

I.B: It seems to me that the history here is a bit different. In the West, just the idea (myth?) of Central Europe was received quite favourable from the very start, but mostly in political circles. Everyone understood how strange it would sound that the potential of political connotations accompanies this discourse. The idea of Central Europe in the late Soviet period – this is the idea which frees the region from the monolith of Soviet ideology and the Russian dictate. This is why only individuals protested loudly – Brodski and Russian intellectuals, even immigrants, who still retained the imperial complex. Brodski wrote back to Kundera that there is a different Russia, which in itself is deep. This is why thinking about the ideological monolith in the East is also an ideology. The words themselves are

correct, but they hide an attempt to marginalise the very idea; of pushing the very discourse into the background. Brodski said that in comparison with the greatness of Russian culture, we are small, local and uninteresting country bumpkins.

And there is one more important point of Russian intellectual contact with this idea. Right at the very end of the Soviet era, I think in 1990, *Cross Currents* published a report from a PEN Club conference. Miłosz, Kiš and others were talking about the idea of Central Europe there, which finally came to the surface. Then Russian writers, Tatyana Tolstoya, Lev Anninsky – progressive Russian writers – maliciously threw themselves at Kiš and began talking about "grand universal culture" and "stupid nationalists" that drag everyone into their little caves.

Referring to the West, there is one more moment... At the end of his essay, Kundera points out that the idea of culture is quickly disappearing in the West. It is no longer the main idea behind Western thinking and discourse. All that is left is journalism, politics, public figures. Great journalists now play first fiddle. For this reason, when Central Europe finally unites with the West in the name of culture, there is first surprise that culture is no longer the dominating idea there. Anyway, this took place in the 1990s. Central Europe united with the continent and became simply Europe. The dissident myth only remains in intellectual history. Today, myths are built around other foundations.

**A.S: So, it turns out that after achieving some goals, Central Europe is melting away into certain general European standards and discourses?**

I.B: I would put it even more radically: if any Central European countries are left in

the world, then they are Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova.

**A.S:** At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, the term “Central Eastern Europe” was especially promoted in Polish intellectual circles. At the beginning of its activity, the whole editing team of *Czarne* focused on the image of Central Eastern Europe. This image included, or more precisely didn't exclude, Belarus and Ukraine in the cultural landscape of Central Europe. Can we today talk about the existence of such a cultural-civilizational phenomenon as Central Eastern Europe? Or will it remain – also leaving out certain political events – a failed attempt at pulling the old cultural peripheries away from Russia and creating its own, especially from a Polish point of view, cultural microsphere and quasi-civilizational influence?

I.B: At one time, I participated in the Kłoczkowski project (Institute of East-Central Europe) and remember very well how the idea of expanding Central Europe into Central Eastern Europe came about. How it took place and what came of it – that's a separate and very interesting story. I can only say that the term “Central Eastern Europe”, as a description of the whole region, remains a recognised historical term to this day. But it is mainly utilised by historians in their own discipline. It did not become a cultural myth, as opposed to the Kunderian-dissident idea of Central Europe, which was a wandering idea and appeared more as a paradigm, than in a geographical sense. The next step in the region's self-realisation was Larry Wolff's 1994 book, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, which shifted the discussion from creating cultural mythology to deconstructing the concept in the sphere of post-colonial conception. In this gene-

alogical project, Wolff attempted to understand and describe how Eastern Europe was created in the notion of the West as an ideological construct, and what its creation was connected to. In the work, he cites Immanuel Wallerstein and Edward Said, introducing the idea of a “demi-orientalisation” of the East of Europe. Immediately afterwards, a whole series of conceptually similar projects exploded onto the scene – the most well-known is Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans*.

It turns out that Central Eastern Europe (if we are to utilise the term used by historians) is falling apart into micro-regions. It is obvious that, for example, the Balkans represent a part of this region. But along with this they have their mythology, their distinct place in the Western vision. And the image of the Balkans leads us in an entirely different direction. Because the Balkans, the mythology of the Balkans – it's a powder keg of ethnic conflicts, local wars, totally dissimilar to the cultural utopia of Prague or Budapest. And finally – producing a new Euro-Asian mythology in the East – the East that is also falling apart into micro-regions. Or is just simply falling apart.

**A.S:** And this mythology is being created and adapted in Russia...

I.B: In Russia and the West. The only region which remains without its own name – the former area of European Sarmatia, or a region of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Because we all understand that Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Poland, Lithuania, Livonia – this is a very complex and mutually connected region. And we are probably mentally closer to Lithuanians, than the Russians. But what should we call it and what myth can we put forward as the basis of regional self-realisation? For a time, there existed the idea of *Intermar-*

*ium*, but it wasn't filled with concrete substance. In Poland, there are cultural centres which work with, and in the region. For example, the publication *Czarne*, Krzysztof Czyżewski with his *Pogranicze and Krasnogruda*. But an appropriate name for the region never established itself.

**A.S:** I have to ask about what you called the “demi-orientalisation of the East” and “post-colonial notions”. In Poland, questions regarding post-colonialism continue to be topical – adapting post-colonial studies in Central, Eastern and East-Central Europe, adapting the concepts of Leela Gandhi, Loomby, Said, etc. Ewa Thompson's work is, to a certain degree, of key importance for Poland. You could say she was the one who started the post-colonial direction of thinking in this region. However, many intellectuals feel – as opposed to Thompson and her supporters – that Central Europe is a post-dependent region with the characteristics of a post-colonial region, which can nonetheless be underlined by the strong cultural and historical identity of the region. This identity blocked empires colonising the region in the 19th century. Do you think that these terms have the right to exist? Which of them is most appropriate to today's Central Europe, which is losing its cultural features and is melting away in the “European-ness” of Europe.

I.B: I would mention one particular meeting. At the end of the 1990s, Belarusian and Ukrainian intellectuals gathered at a conference in Kyiv. After the debate, when we were all sitting together, I asked George Grabowicz about utilising post-colonial theory for work on the East-European borderlands. Especially since Marko Pawłyszyn and Oksana Grabowicz were pioneers in this field. He answered very

simply and pragmatically, stating that the methodology would certainly work, but, at a disciplinary level, we would be forced into one camp with India, Africa and Latin America – in other words, the third world. All of the humanities in the West fall into certain fields – area studies. East European and Slavic studies encompass the second world, while post-colonial studies, the third. These are not just simply different “geographies”, but also different mentalities and, perhaps, even different civilizations.

After Pawłyszyn, Ewa Thompson arrived with her book *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism*. Of course, she is not just simply a researcher, but simultaneously a conservative intellectual and she cheerfully took advantage of post-colonial theory in the role of a great big sledgehammer to hit the “Russian Bear” on the head. Everyone perfectly understands this. In general, they criticise her that she did it too directly. Nonetheless, she broke through a certain wall – the wall of Slavic studies isolation from the main Western methodological stream. Of course, the Russians will never translate her works or cite her. By the way, similar problems of adapting post-colonialism exist in Latin American. Walter D. Mignolo even made up the term “post-occidentalism”; for India, Africa, countries which were in fact colonies – “post-colonialism”, while for Latin American countries – post-occidentalism”. We can try to think about ourselves in a modern Western context, but this must be done from our own perspective.

For the Eastern European “borderlands”, the situation is even more interesting. On the one side, we have the Russian Empire, and on the other, the Western “edges”, which constantly create projects for deconstructing the imperial discourse. No one else, can do this better, we Belarusians, Ukrainians, Poles... The post-colonial

and post-occidental set of tools is ideal for the project of empire deconstruction. On the other hand, reading Larry Wolff, we understand that this same region, with regard to the West, appears as dependent peripheries – economically, civilisational-ly and intellectually dependent. We arrive at this strange fork of double identity and a game of deconstruction. Very often, in order to struggle with the Russian discourse, intellectuals from the region propose that European and Western ideas represent the main civilizational norms.

**A.S: As a peculiar type of alternative metropolis...**

I.B: ...which demolishes complaints of the universality of the imperial norm, which includes the myth of “great Russian culture”. At the same time, with dependency on the West, everything is more complex. It isn't that easy to find ways and schemes to exit a situation that is based on dependency. Here, you can no longer contrast the imperial norm, but pure localness also isn't satisfying. You could say that today, East-Central Europe's main problem is not dependency on the Russian empire, but relations with the West, as the supposed centre, whereby post-colonial theory very distinctly separate anti-colonial and post-colonial strategies for overcoming dependency. Post-colonialism is overcoming, not destroying – not in opposition to the West, but meeting with it.

**A.S: A specific provincialization of Europe?**

I.B: More of a de-provincialization of our own selves – be together, but at the same time remain separate entities.

**A.S: In essence, all the redefinitions of post-colonialism have mutual origins from**

**Said, subaltern studies, etc. So, it turns out that this is simply another adaptation of post-colonial theory to further peripheries?**

I.B: Not compulsorily. We have the right (and maybe even the responsibility) to think up our “own” post-colonial theory. Of course, we read these texts and of course they are important for us – Said, Spivak, Bhabha, and also Dipesh Chakrabarty and Walter Dignolo (who, by the way, lectured at our post-colonial schools in Minsk and Vilnius). We were wandering around Vilnius with Dipesh one day, comparing schemes and ideas – how it is over here and over there – and it turns out that for “them”, our experience is no less interesting or important. For example, the text of Akudovich, *Разбурыць Парыж*, is a classic text of post-colonial thinking, worthy of any European anthology. Or Alexander Kiossev and “self-colonised” cultures. Let's not forget Mickiewicz, who in his *Księgi Narodu Polskiego i Pielgrzymstwa Polskiego* (The Books and Pilgrimage of the Polish Nation) essentially deconstructs the normative trajectory of Western modernity, demonstrating that it has its dark side. We have our own intellectual tradition so why not work with it, as well?

**A.S: There remains the issue of applying the post-colonial set of tools in our own backyard.**

I.B: It would be mindless indeed, if we were to act like country bumpkins who have attached themselves to the latest intellectual fad. For us, this is a set of tools which we need, inasmuch as it allows us to contribute knowledge about our own selves. We have to imagine, think and translate for ourselves...and for everyone else.

**A.S: And simultaneously deconstruct foreign knowledge?**

I.B: If it's not satisfactory.

**A.S: This is exactly what the message of post-colonialism is based on, that it overcomes due to means of adapting knowledge which was imposed in its time, and attempts to define it anew. Let us sum up our conversation with another question which was partially answered earlier. With the whirlpool of mentality and political transformations, not only in Central and Eastern Europe, but in the whole world – is the continued existence of Central Europe possible in the same format that it has achieved? In other words, will a certain type of transformation of cultural codes take place which will abandon the Central Europe that we know, and discard it to the archive of European memory? Or will another step take place in the transformation of the idea, which allows the introduction of a particular new form of proclaiming its existence – unexpected, and without traumas and dependencies?**

I.B: Not long ago in Berlin at the Heinrich Böll Foundation, we were having a discussion about Belarus in Europe. A certain thought was formed, supported by the Germans, which I found unexpected. The thought that, in a global context, Europe is no longer the dominating imperial power which creates norms and ideas for the whole world, and imposes them. It has finally just become Europe – a province of “global design”. A very important and comfortable part to play. In a sense, it is reminiscent – in its conception – of Central Europe as understood by Kundera. It is not Central Europe that has melted into Western Europe, but more that Western Europe has become a part of a concert of diversi-

ty – it has “fallen out” of world history. The Germans have accepted that, in this kind of Europe, everyone lives much better than in an Empire or “Fortress”, which tries to control and steer “the remainder”.

**A.S: So, does this mean that it is impossible for Europe to go back to the role of a global metropolis?**

I.B: I think so. Although this is a topic for a separate discussion – the Ukrainian-Russian War, the triumph of China, this is a transformation of the image of the world, which is taking place right before our very eyes. In this new world, the role of “first great power” will assuredly remain with the USA, which will function as the embassy of all humankind – a forum in which the future of the world will be discussed; where the interests and subjects of the most diverse cultures, nations and regions will intersect. Europe will remain an area of culture, spirit, metaphysics...and that, let me tell you, is no small thing.

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цені (2001), a book-essay, Каралеўства Беларусь: вытлумачэньні ру(і)наў (2005) and a historical-philosophical treatise, Філасофія Яна Снядэцкага. He has translated the works of such well-known authors as James Joyce, J.D. Salinger, William Butler and Paul Celan into Belarusian.

by Anton Saifullayeu

## Peripheral Challenges

### An Interview with Jan Sowa

**Anton Saifullayeu:** After reading *Inna Rzeczpospolita*, I had the impression that the language you used was soaked with awareness connected to Poland's lack of ability to exit its peripheral existence, represented among others by the so-called "cargo modernization". According to you, is this "peripheriness" a backwardness contained in imitating and imagining Poland's "first world status"? Or is it something greater, rooted in the cultural and political code of the community?

Jan Sowa: First of all, I am a supporter of the renewed thinking along categories of materialistic grounds and class divisions, including global class divisions. Just like in Wallerstein, the concept of world systems. We have peripheral regions and we have central regions, which define themselves through their place in the process of capital accumulation. And that's in the longest possible perspective which I try to demonstrate. *Inna Rzeczpospolita* is a publicistic book. Earlier I wrote a scholarly book, which was my habilitation – *Fantomowe Ciało Króla* – where I introduce a more detailed description of this process. The point of reference is economic history, which illustrates the fact that East Central Europe was the first – historically speaking – third world (I don't like the term "third world", but it is universally understood, so that's why

I use it). It was region which provided cheap labour, natural resources, low-grade processed agricultural products etc., to the developed centre – the capitalistic core. In fact, the problem remains to this day. Poland and Central Eastern Europe are, above all, providers of cheap manual labour and, perhaps, agricultural products. We are a big exporter of apples, potatoes, etc. On the other hand, the border for innovation in new technologies clearly runs where the border once existed between the East and West of Europe in terms of urbanization, the disappearance of serfdom, industrialization, etc. I'm not a determinist, but it seems to me that there is a specific structure, so-called "long-term constancy". Just as Fernand Braudel's *Annales School* understands it – starting from Roman times, systematically at various levels and by different means, replicated in the region of Europe on the border between East and West, development and "peripherization" – backwardness. It runs more or less along the Elbe River. It is, of course, accompanied by certain forms of culture and social organization. As opposed to the West, neither a strong middle-class, nor a strong proletariat was cultivated. These processes were connected to each other. The proletariat was formed when a mass of villagers, freed from the yoke of serfdom, migrated to cities in search of

new sources of livelihood. This was also an effect of enclosures, which took away from their traditional sources of livelihood in the village. In this way, certain groups of free people were formed. Marx said of this that it is the key to emerging from capitalism: there needs to exist a pool of free labour to utilise. In the region of Central Eastern Europe, this all takes place very late – only in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today the mentality of manor-slavery-serfdom is replicated in various aspects of social life. A work sociologist from the Warsaw Polytechnic, Janusz Hryniewicz, conducted very interesting research concerning the culture of organization existing in Polish corporations. They show a type of relation typical of the manor, where the boss presents an authoritarian model; very distanced with regard to his workers, just like an economist or lord of the manor. The workers, on the other hand, with regard to management and relations in the company, value peace and quiet the most. They depend on the lord to tell them what to do. You could say metaphorically – to assign the part of the field which is to be planted for the lord. When the work is completed, they want peace and quiet, for no one to bother them, for the lord not to (brow) beat them, for no extra work to be added to their responsibilities, etc. Thus, it is clear that material relations and certain forms of culture, social organization, are connected with each other and are reproduced. Is there a way out of this? I feel definitely yes, but because of the rootedness of the problem in material relations, this will not be carried out without a revision of them. In other words: until this region involves itself in the global economic sphere, the peripheral position, which concerns production chains, the global labour division, and in this sense global class relations, certain forms of culture will

continue to replicate, as well as symbolic formations which correspond to them. There is no other way out of this situation than through changes in material relations. Symbolic redefinitions, the famous “getting up off one’s knees” and telling ourselves who we are: important, modern fantastic, what a grand history we possess, how we were once an awesome empire – all of this will give us nothing, besides an obvious improvement in our general frame of mind.

**A.S: In one of your interviews, I ran into the theory that after 1989, the idea of ‘class’ was eliminated from the public discourse. Bearing in mind all the fluctuations of the ideological and political scope of the last twenty-five years (the redefinition of these classes, their mimicry, or hiding them in some other categories), can it be said that the category of class continues to be relevant today for Poland and the region?**

J.S: It seems to me that what 2016 showed us cannot be explained if we do not take class relations under consideration. I’m not talking about the calendar year, but the political year, in our case from 25 October 2015, when PiS (Law and Justice) crushingly won the elections – the first party to win an independent parliamentary majority in the Sejm in the post-Soviet era – followed by Brexit, and including Trump’s win in the United States. These events clearly demonstrate that the category of class and class divisions functions in politics. I’m not talking about introducing primitive determinism here along the lines of: the base completely defines the superstructure. That’s totally not what we’re talking about here. When I speak of ‘class analysis’, what I’m talking about is a contemporary sociological theory, where for example Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of

forms of capital is very important. It shows that a social class also defines itself through its material right (because Bourdieu does not underline the category of material capital), but the matter of cultural and symbolic capital turns out to be essential. Cultural capital works extremely powerfully in politics. For example, the fact that populist-right voters are more susceptible to conspiracy theories. They don’t possess the intellectual tools needed to decode reality, to see the nonsense of certain categories. Look at the heroic efforts of those I’d call “the enlightened”, who attempt to rationally discuss the subject of the Smolensk catastrophe in Poland. It’s not about exaggerating what happened there, but to utilise a rational, scientific method of thinking. On the other hand, the conspiracy group tries to take advantage of scientific tools, organises Smolensk conferences, but at the same time, totally doesn’t understand that scientific thinking must take place through the process of peer review. You cannot say: I used a computer in Ohio to do a simulation, but I won’t give anyone access to it. The results of scientific analysis must be replicated and the researcher must say what kind of computer it was, the program, model, while someone else should be able to repeat the experiment. Lower classes don’t understand this, and for them, pseudoscientific evidence of a conspiracy is convincing. The manner of scientific reasoning is a certain method of organizing culture. It does not exist in and of itself. Scientific culture is a part of anthropologically understood culture, in other words, as a way of life. A lack of participation in these procedures, not understanding them, is part of exclusion from cultural capital. This is a very deep problem. We aren’t just talking about the public discourse. As a sociologist, I see the same in the language of sociological

analysis. The approach to class analysis has been replaced with, at most, the theory of stratification, and is very often replaced by figures of false unity. For example, this is what happens when a term such as “nation” or “country” is used to evaluate the merits of a particular economic policy. Let us take on the discussion around transformation: was the transformation from the beginning of the 1990s good or not? We must ask: “For whom?” We cannot say that it was simply good. This is the basic problem we have here. In Polish society, classes did exist, first of all the urban upper and middle class, which after 1989 had some forms of capital – either material capital or cultural capital, or social capital – and they benefitted. That is 20-30% of Polish society. The other 20-30% from the opposite end of the social ladder lost out, and they enthusiastically support PiS, or other national-populistic formations, such as Kukiz ’15. Between these two camps, we have a group of people who exchanged one set of problems for another: there are no more ration cards, but poor people can only afford to eat the worst quality food, so they are diabetic or obese; apartments are available if you receive credit, but then you are a slave of the bank for thirty years, anyway; everyone can buy a car, but then we all choke on exhaust fumes; hospitals possess modern medical equipment, but you have to wait for years to get access to them, and the list goes on.

**A.S: After 1989, a demonisation of Marxism took place, as the main idealistic antagonist for the whole of “our” historical course after World War II. After twenty-five years, how is the approach to (post) Marxism in the region? Are we starting to give it any attention? To perceive and understand it in a different way?**

J.S: First of all, I want to underline that in the return to Marxism which I propose, there is absolutely no nostalgia for the period known as communism, real socialism, Bolshevism, the Soviet era, or however else we might call it. The issue is very complex and I don't want to get into it here, because it is a separate matter. Once we understand what Marx's point was and what took place in the Soviet bloc, then we will perceive that there is no particular cause-effect dependency between the two. We had to do with a certain experiment designed by Lenin – very specifically understood – what can be done, what cannot be done, what should be done and how to act. Later we assessed its consequences, which mainly played out through Stalinism and then later the dismantling of Stalinism. The Marxist perspective which you defined as “post-Marxism” – which I would agree with a bit in its class-materialist understanding – is making quite a strong comeback and delineating a wider area for itself. Firstly, what is connected to the problem of the so-called “Precariat”, “precarization”, the relation of work, is of course nothing other than exploitation and alienation – Marxist categories which turn out to still be of consequence. It is not that we precarize for the sake of precarization. Workers are thrown out of full-time posts, and put on to civil agreements to make more profit. This is exploitation that is evidently motivated by the pursuit of accumulating capital. Let us look at the essential issue of the last U.S. presidential election: moving factories and production to poorer countries. What is this? It's striving to maximize profit by lowering labour costs. In other words, the springboard of the whole process turns out to be the accumulation of capital, once more. Just as Marx wrote, capitalism must continue to deal with the problem of falling rates of profit (according to Marx,

a key factor to understanding dynamics in capitalism). In order to raise the rate of profit, the factory is moved, and this also holds social consequences. Another issue, which Italian post-workerist and post-autonomist Marxism deals with, is the processes of production automatisaion and the growing meaning of the cognitive component. It is said that the United States is a country where less and less is produced, while more and more is invented. And you can see that, in fact, intellectual property, knowledge, innovation, they are all factors of growing importance in production. If we compare Apple and Foxconn, in other words the company which physically produces the smartphones and tablets thought up by Apple, the inventor, we see that Apple's operating margin is 25%, while Foxconn's is 2-3%.

**A.S: You mentioned growing populism and that 2016 can be acknowledged as the year it exploded. Do you see a difference between populism in the West and populism in the region of Central Europe, as well as between the American and Polish versions? If so, what is this difference?**

J.S: We find ourselves in a very interesting moment. You could say that it is redefining Central European politics on the scale of the last century, if not on a larger scale. What happened? From the beginning of the 1990s, we experienced explosions of various types of populism. First, we had Stan Tymiński, a figure who is barely remembered today. He was a candidate in the 1990 presidential election. He beat Tadeusz Mazowiecki, an icon of Polish politics. Tymiński, *toutes proportions gardées*, was something of a Polish Donald Trump – a businessman, presenting himself as a self-made man (despite the fact that

he likes presenting himself as such, Trump is not a self-made man, having received \$14 million from his father). Simultaneously, he appeared as the “spokesman of the poor”.

Then we had Andrezej Lepper – a classic case of populism. It contained an agrarian thread, so essential for populism since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the United States, a majority of people living in towns and small cities supported Trump. What is symptomatic, most often we explained away Lepper's successes in Poland as due to the lack of political culture, tradition and institutions. We told ourselves: “We don't have any tradition of parliamentarism or, what accompanies it – public debate – we don't have any developed institutions responsible for it. Because of this we are falling into this populist jungle, while in the West they have these great statesmen – Helmut Kohl, Francois Mitterrand, Tony Blair, Ronald Reagan, Barack Obama, etc.”

The last year essentially transformed this landscape. There are many things you can say about Great Britain or the United States, but not that they don't have a political culture, tradition and the corresponding institutions. Just the opposite. These are two countries, which are always held up as the model of political life – especially liberal theoreticians – due to the Magna Carta and the “Glorious Revolution”, not to mention what Burke wrote with regard to the political traditions of British parliamentarism and creating the first modern republic in the United States, as well as American constitutional traditions – an energetic civic society admired since the times of Tocqueville and the like. These are countries that are depositaries of political tradition, culture and its institutions. Despite all this, politically speaking, we are all in a very similar place. This is an ironic

turn of events, because in Poland, we always had the ambition to find ourselves in the mainstream of world politics. After 1989, there were two main symbolical narratives which defined who we were and where we were heading. The first said: “We are finally masters of our own domain”, we got rid of the Russkies, the Soviets, and now we can feel at home. The second was a “return to Europe”. This was a slogan which excited and energised us until 2004. This was the fundamental, main strategic goal of Poland's development, both at home and when it came to international politics – to become a part of NATO, the European Union, guaranteeing us a return to the Western world. We dreamed of just that – to advance to the mainstream of world politics. Today we are in it. Today, the same thing is happening in Poland that is happening in Great Britain and the United States, but there is a bit more to it than that. An interesting example is the Philippine populist, Rodrigo Duterte. A very similar rhetoric functions there: of an enemy which is rotting society, though they found themselves a different scapegoat – drugs and drug dealers. While here in Poland this role is played by the refugee – the “other”, the foreigner, embodiment of evil – they focused their aversion on drug dealers and users, who in that narrative are responsible for their society's ills. In the United States, there isn't such a strong element of settling of accounts with so-called “Judeo-Communism”, because they went through the McCarthy era already in the 1950s, when communists were such a target. But now this doesn't matter – now we have Muslims and migrants from Mexico, Mexicans, Latinos... This is a very strange time, internally at odds. It turns out that populism – which is extremely oriented on particularism, withdrawal, isolationism – has become a certain

moment of universalism in world politics. We have similar processes and similar problems in different places, without regard to culture. This is a signal that it is worth abandoning cultural explanations and searching for more universal factors that stand behind this course of events. In my opinion, the main culprit here is processes of the global expansion of capitalism, while the various forms of populism represent defence mechanisms against the problems caused by these processes.

**A.S: Referring to the fear of the “other” that you mentioned, I’d like to ask if in Poland this fear, especially on a racial plane, is nonetheless a bit unique, though similar to that which exists in other homogenous societies in Central and Eastern Europe. Is opposition to a race, to foreigners according to the colour of their skin or religion, a form of copying the nations of the “first world”? Because in essence, I wouldn’t say that in Poland there exists such a large threat in these terms.**

J.S: Of course, but let’s look at the results of the referendum regarding Brexit. Immigration was the number one question, but the areas that were most for leaving were those where there are no immigrants at all. At the same time, those areas that were for remaining in the EU were those where there are many of them. So, this isn’t an effect of direct contact and experience.

During the inter-war period, around 30% of Poland’s population was constituted of a non-ethnically Polish element. Of course, Jews made up a large portion, but besides them, we also had other minorities: Russians, Germans, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Tatars and others. Today’s Poland – completely white and homogenous – is, paradoxically, the work of Hitler and Stalin’s social engineering. First, Hitler’s destruction

(most of all the murder of the Jews and other minorities – the Roma people were also persecuted by the Nazis), and later Stalin’s social engineering, which created contemporary Poland. This is a fundamental paradox of the whole national-patriotic narrative. To my way of thinking, its adherents revere a certain simulacrum, a product of artificial construction which simultaneously says that community is not something that we can shape with the help of social engineering, but is an organic value which develops naturally and has its own traditions, laws, etc.

In the margin, it is worth noting how interesting this all looks when we consider the discussion regarding modernity and post-modernity. The Polish right is unbelievably post-modern precisely because it is constructing its identity on the back of simulated “Polishness” – the map outstrips the territory! This is possible because post-structuralism contains a larger conservative-preventative dose than we might imagine. For example, in Poland, Zdzisław Krasnodebski became interested in post-modern social narratives very early on. Today, he is one of the main proponents of so-called “getting up off one’s knees”. Why? Seeing as intellect is not any meta-category, but an expression of cultural imperialism, and every, however minor, narrative is equally good – such as enlightened rationalism – then what is called obscurantism from the point of view of an enlightened intellect is also good. In accordance with this, all our prejudices, biases, traditions (however nonsensical) possess equal rights with the traditions of enlightenment, and so on. The post-modern attack on enlightenment is a known phenomenon, though it was carried out under the political banner of “otherness” and the affirmation of distinction,

apparently smothered by intellectual imperialism. However, it turned out that when the intellect is asleep, demons awake: racism, xenophobia, fascism, misogyny, etc. Metaphorically speaking, I would say that this is a kind of “Smerdyakov syndrome”. At the family table, Ivan Karamazov carries on abstract disputes that there is no God and everything is permitted. His bastard step-brother, Smerdyakov, hears this and thinks to himself: “Okay, since everything is allowed, I’ll stab and kill my father.” To a certain degree, the situation is that those Western intellectuals were carrying on a discussion about how oppressive this enlightenment is, that intellect is dreadful, that local social-cultural traditions should be valued. Just like Jameson demonstrates, post-modernity is a flat-horizontal order. There is no depth – nothing is more important, nothing is less important. Intellectuals from the periphery heard this and thought, “Well, if so, great. In that case, we reject enlightenment and we will now affirm our obscurantism, because you say it is just as good as everything else.”

Naturally, I wouldn’t glorify traditional Polish multiculturalism, because it was always very hierarchical and the Jews always had low status in it. In *Trójkąt Ukraiński* (Ukrainian Triangle) Daniel Beauvois shows how relations between these ethnic groups in fact looked, which is very interesting. The nobility (*szlachta*) often and deliberately redirected the peasants’ disaffection – anger and peasant uprisings – onto the Jews. When peasant uprisings took place, then right after, there were pogroms, because the nobility told the peasants: “You work hard, we try to sell your goods, we have to somehow get along...but between us are these terrible middlemen – the Jews, who exploit both of us. You should have grievances towards

the Jews!” So, these relations were never that good. This is a multi-cultural, but simultaneously hierarchical, community. I wouldn’t want to put this tradition of tolerance on a pedestal, but I would like to point out that the mosaic of various ethnicities, nationalities and cultures was nonetheless always a part of our culture. So, if we were to search for some traditions, they certainly wouldn’t be white and purely Polish.

I’m also talking about this to underline, once more, that what is happening today in Poland is not a result of local specificity and history. We should look for answers on a more universal level. In short, in my opinion, we have to do with a desublimation of fear, resulting from a lack of a sense of stability and material security. Not poverty in a sociometric sense, but a lack of stability and material security. This explains the shift of the middle class – especially the lower middle class – towards populism. The populist electorate is made up of two groups: those who are simply poor and because of this feel threatened, and those who belong to the middle class, but are afraid of declassification, especially between generations. This especially applies to the lower segment of the middle class, which as we know enthusiastically supports populists. Again – this is not a local, Polish or Central European phenomenon. In the West, everyone is conscious that the new generation will not start off in better circumstances than their parent’s generation. In connection with this, there exists a fearfulness resulting from material relations; a fear that I will be worse off in life, that I will be declassified when it comes to material conditions and lifestyle – access to culture, ability to travel, etc. So, once more, class should be considered, bearing in mind cultural capital. This

fearfulness is desublimated, transferred to a lower level – a level of identity conflict between “us” and “them”. I feel this is a lower level, because matters to do with material redistribution can be resolved in a material manner by sharing wealth. You don’t need to hang anyone, imprison them in camps, expel or deport them, etc. Identity conflicts require eliminating one side of the conflict, as a recent statement from a PiS MP demonstrates, proclaiming that atheists, Muslims, foreigners, either sign a declaration of loyalty, and commit to observing “Polish values”, or they will be deported from Poland. This is precisely the way which cultural and identity conflicts are resolved. For this reason, I believe this solution to be more barbaric and lower. There is no sublimation, rising to a higher level, only desublimation of material conflicts at the level of identity-cultural conflicts, clashes of civilizations. The only way to resolve this is that one side must disappear, leave, be gotten rid of. This is descending into certain forms of barbarianism.

**A.S:** You mentioned the subject of nationalism in passing. According to the “classic” post-colonial theory, one of the syndromes which characterises the peripheral and post-colonial state is nationalism of the masses, government and intelligentsia. Today, this is quite characteristic in Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, Serbia, and so on. The question of nationalism sharply contrasts with what you call the “achieved” liberal utopia and what came before populism, the so-called “modern vision of being European”. How do you see the perspective of such an overload of nationalism today? Does nationalism – so often today veiled in populist patriotism – have a chance for its slogans to be realized?

J.S: In my opinion, it doesn’t. It seems to me rather a withdrawal. It’s quite obvious that populism is one of the consequences of modernisation. You can clearly see that people need some sort of reterritorialization, speaking in the schizoanalytical language of Deleuze and Guattari. They don’t want to exist in such a state where everything is disjointed and functions amidst circulating global codes; where everything is mixed up like in a supermarket, which gives rise to a simulated identity, which in effect means you don’t know who you are and what you belong to. As long as you can say “everything is good” and people don’t feel threatened, they can somehow function within it. However, at the moment when problems start, human beings look to community. This is a natural reaction, very materialistic. It is easier to survive in a group, so they are exposed to all the problems connected to globalization, including – what is extremely important – losing class identity, which was intentionally destroyed by liberals. In the public discourse in Poland, every reference to social justice, socialism, class rights, etc. after 1989, was immediately silenced with the comment that it ended in Gulags. It started with, “perhaps the intentions are good, perhaps there really is something noble in reflexes of the heart, but we don’t walk that path, because we’ll immediately end up in Gulags and oppression.” People were divested of the ability to think of themselves – to define oneself – through class community, and look for support, like the workers movement did: solidarity, unions, self-organisation, work councils, self-help, etc. This was taken away from people. Workers unions were absolutely exterminated – Leszek Balcerowicz and his anti-union rhetoric is an excellent example of this. This is also why people retreat to primordial identities, which are the easiest and seem the most obvious: we are Poles,

we have to defend ourselves, we must have economic patriotism. This is why I feel that, really, liberalism and especially neoliberalism, created conditions and possibilities for this kind of articulation, doing nothing with class decisions, and even actively affirming them. Leszek Balcerowicz recently gave an interview to someone, I can’t remember whom. He was asked (and he is very affirmative in declarations regarding his own achievements) by the reporter: “Everyone suffers failures, so if you were to say what, in your opinion, went wrong during the transformation process, what would it be?” Without hesitation, he responded with something along the lines of: “Welfare for the unemployed was a mistake, because this caused people not to fear unemployment enough and they didn’t work effectively enough.”

Connecting these two elements – playing on poverty and exclusion, with the goal of stimulating motivation to work, along with destroying progressive, leftist political-identity narratives, pushed dissatisfied people straight into the arms of those selling the simplest comfort: the nation. And in addition, because class also possesses the aspect of cultural division, people who are excluded materially are also excluded culturally. This means they possess the least number of intellectual tools to defend themselves against conspiracy theories; being seduced by a demagogue, by a strong leader, etc. This explosion of populism is not an irrational occurrence lacking understandable causes, as if people had suddenly been overtaken by savagery from looking at sunspots. It seems to me a rational and understandable consequence of the method of construction of social relations that we have had dealings with for the last four decades – in the West, since the takeover of ideological hegemony

by neoliberalism in the Thatcher and Reagan years and in Poland, since the end of the 1980s. I’m not saying this to normalise populism, or to assuage that there isn’t a problem. However, I feel that understanding where populism came from and what led us to it is essential for fighting it – what the stipulations and possibilities of populism are; a kind of Kantian category of the stipulations of possibilities; what is needed, what has to happen in society for such articulation to appear. So, if we abandon analysis of relations between social classes and pretend that they don’t exist, or that capitalism leads us to a post-class society of omni-present middle class, then we ourselves are abandoning the tool that will allow us somehow to positively confront this.

**A.S:** So, nationalism has become a replacement category, to a degree, for the eliminated class concept and materialistic division?

J.S: That’s what I would say. There’s a really beautiful sentence in Benjamin’s *The Arcades Project*, which in my opinion encapsulates it in a nutshell. Benjamin says: “As long as there is still one beggar around, there will still be myth.” Myth – in other words, precisely all those ideological constructions: nation, the necessity to defend “our culture”, the supposed threat from foreigners, etc. Benjamin was, above all, specifically referring to fascism, but you can say that populism is also constructed of these kinds of myths: “Let’s get rid of the refugees”, “Let’s get rid of intellectuals”, or “Let’s get rid of Germans”, “Let’s get rid of Russian agents”, and then “everything will be fine”. People are sold these kinds of myths, but people buy them because they are poor. So, I would take the reference to that “beggar” and interpret it

as a synecdoche, as a *pars pro toto* class position, which relies on excluding material, cultural and social capital from circulation. So, in this perspective, you can be a beggar in a cultural or symbolic sense.

You can interpret the most recent social history of the West in these categories. After World War II, we had three decades which are sometimes called the “Glorious Decades” – a period of expansion of the welfare state, redistribution, progress of every class, levelling inequalities, etc. Notice that these were very politically radical times, but in the progressive left model. There was no neo-Nazism, populism, xenophobia, misogyny, etc. At the moment when neo-liberalism comes around, it begins to destroy everything. As Piketty demonstrates, in a sense we are returning to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We have a strange sort of circle. Practically at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we were in a very similar situation to the situation at its start, and, along with this, all the most wild, hostile differences and diversities, political articulations, are returning. These are things that are evidently connected to each other.

**A.S: Continuing the subject, I am reminded of a fragment from *The Phantom Body of the King*, in which you write about the “battles” on the English-language page of the Wikipedia entry concerning the Khmelnytsky Uprising. You characterized this as a post-colonial battle for remembrance. Referring to that fragment, I’d like to ask you about the past with regard to post-colonial challenges. As we know, existing at various levels of the public discourse on periphery. Is overcoming the past necessary? And will it open a path to the “cloudless future”? Arriving at the envisioned, imagined post-modernity which certain elites strive for?**

J.S: This is not my ideal, but I understand it.

**A.S: And consequently, are final settlements of accounts with the past necessary for societies in the region and in Poland?**

J.S: It seems to me that as a collective entity, we are in a similar situation in which single entities, individual human beings, sometimes find themselves in. If we don’t understand what happened in our lives, then we will be condemned to a “repetition compulsion”, as psychoanalysts call it. Someone who, for example, doesn’t understand why their first, second, third relationship is unsuccessful, is sentenced to repeat these types of failures in perpetuity. So then when it comes to Polish-Ukrainian relations, I don’t negate Ukrainian violence Poles or violence against people who were not individually guilty. Nonetheless, Poles living in Ukraine as a group, even if they themselves did not commit violence against Ukrainians, were the inheritors of earlier violence. And subordinating Ukraine to the Polish Crown was a process that was full of violence. This is violence of the kind we cannot comprehend. We think of it in categories of spreading the culture of civilization, but is really the kind that when it comes to the fate of most inhabitants of Ukraine, the advent of Polish culture there – following the Union of Lublin within the framework of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – worsened their situation in a very concrete aspect, because it was tied to the increase of serfdom (*pańszczyzna*). The Poles brought with them an agricultural economy based on serfdom. On the territory of Ukraine, where Polish elements arrived, serfdom and the workload increased. In this sense, the coming of Poland to Ukraine spread the enslavement of the local population; the right of first night, a brutal method of

managing the labour force, contempt for culture... In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Cossacks send envoys to Władysław IV, saying: “We want to be part of the Commonwealth. Acknowledge us as equals.” What does the Polish nobility say? “Get this idea out of your head. Keep your mouths shut and stay silent. You have no right to speak of yourselves in this manner.” This is a very post-colonial moment. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, one of the most important theoreticians of post-colonialism, based the whole shape of social-cultural relations within the colonial project on this one question: Can a subaltern speak? This is exactly the type of situation we have here, where the Cossacks are persecuted for even daring to say they want to be part of the Commonwealth and be equal to the Polish nobles. Thus, in these relations, we have generations, centuries, of symbolic and material degradation of Ukrainians by Poles.

It is understandable that if you vilify, persecute and humiliate someone for long enough, then sooner or later there is a great risk that you’ll get punched in the mouth. And this is, for example, the Wołyń Massacre. This is a sort of “acting out” along the lines of: I’ve had enough of this, I don’t want to talk to you anymore. I just want to kick your ass, so to speak, and now is a great occasion. And this was this kind of situation.

Let’s consider a more controversial question: UPA. These are the Ukrainian “cursed soldiers”. In a structural manner of speaking, the exact same. I don’t mean to compare the two organisations, but to set together the place of discourse which UPA occupies in the identity narrative in Ukraine with the one the “cursed soldiers” occupy in Poland. So, you could say, Poles who

accuse UPA of committing crimes, is just as if Russians were to accuse Poles that the “cursed soldiers” murdered people who supported the new Soviet authorities in 1944. Right away we see the problem – if a Russian were to say something like that, the answer would be “Fuck off!”, absolutely no chance for discussion. The Ukrainian side also has its sins to contemplate. However, to push the matter forward you can’t beat someone else’s chest. In my opinion, Poland should make such a gesture of symbolic genuflection. Without ruffling our feathers, getting up off our knees – simply admitting historical problems and the violence we inflicted. If the Ukrainians would be unable to do the same and also admit to their violence, then nothing would come of it. However, I believe that the Ukrainians will never acknowledge their guilt if Poland doesn’t acknowledge its own. And Poland was the invader...that’s the historical truth. It wasn’t Ukraine that came to Poland, but Poland to Ukraine. These are undisputed historical facts. In this sense, because we started the persecution, it would be befitting for us to start the process of reconciliation and forgiveness. But just where is the basic problem? When it comes to Poland, it doesn’t just lay in Polish-Ukrainian relations as such, but in the absolutely fundamental shape that we have in describing our historical position, mainly that we were always the victim. Poland was always defending herself, always persecuted, never the aggressor. The fact that in 1938, the Poles very slyly took advantage of German aggression and expansionism and annexed Zaolzie (*Zaolší*), this doesn’t exist. But Poland cooperating with the Third Reich in dismantling Czechoslovakia is a historical fact! Negating these types of facts is harmful for us, which the whole discussion around the Holocaust demonstrates. Negating the

participation of Poles in the extermination of Jews, paradoxically, does not allow to differentiate between the positions of Germany and Poland. It is clear that the participation of Germans in the Holocaust was far greater than that of Poles, but the systematic negation by Poles that we didn't take part in this crime at all does not allow for the public discourse to stabilize in a place of truth: we cut ourselves off completely, which is easy to refute as historical fiction. So, everyone can label us liars and then carry out any evaluation, against which we have no way of defending ourselves. Again, if we wanted to work through something here, we would first need to admit what we did. Instead of censuring Gross, it's better to reflect on history – where these problems came from that he is writing about. Then we can say: "Okay, we did this and that, but we have to remember what the Germans did, the Ukrainians, etc." By lying about ourselves, we will never persuade others to acknowledge the truth.

**A.S: So, in the near future, the deconstruction of the past into the present is not possible? In the political discourse? The government discourse? Will the past always be ever-present? And will wrongful stereotypes be built on it?**

J.S: The past will always be ever-present. Agreed. This means that it will be a reservoir from which those who want to build something can draw from. That is one level. The second level is a question: Why do people believe them? In Poland, we clearly say that the narrative of pride, struggle, "cursed soldiers", strength, etc., are ways of deafening fear and lack of sense of one's own worth. We can re-enact the Battle of Grunwald, which happened 600 years ago, when we crush the Germans. Aren't we great? The thing is that today, Poland is the

assembly plant for German industry and it's much harder to make waves, so why don't we recompensate ourselves with a reconstruction of the Battle of Grunwald. Until we change the conditions, so that people don't want to listen to nationalist-populist propaganda, until they don't fear feeling threatened, and don't look for these cheap consolations, they will go around in circles and never effect any social change. For change to come about, people must emancipate themselves materially and culturally. Cultural divisions are a big problem in Poland. Our middle class built itself on distancing itself and affirming its own distinctness: enclosed housing estates, private schools, luxury restaurants, expensive cars... All this to create a kind of bubble in which they cut themselves off from the rest of society. Let us take one concrete example, namely private schools. Multitudes of sociological research shows that the public school system is a distributor of cultural capital, because it is a place where children from lower classes can meet with children from so-called "better homes". And not through paternalistic teaching, but through direct contact, they learn certain methods of interacting with other people, expressing themselves, certain words, ways of looking at the world, etc. This fulfils a massive role. A major portion of the Polish middle and upper class has withdrawn their children from public schools, isolating them from poorer people, so the latter form this type of culture on their own. And now, when the lower class is rebelling, the upper classes are shouting: "Goodness me! We are being attacked by barbarians!" What can you answer with? "You did everything you could to tell these people they are the fungus of society with which you want nothing to do with, so in their own group, they created these forms of political articulation and now

it's coming back to haunt you." This shows that the strategy of separating oneself from society is senseless, because in the long run you cannot definitively cut yourself off from other people in society, unless you are the 1% who can allow themselves to live wherever. This is why everything comes back to haunt you in the social sphere.

**A.S: I'd like to cite an example connected to Belarus. The casus of historical knowledge in Belarus is based on the fact that it is a multi-faceted narrative, either directly or indirectly dependent on the authorities, which stimulates the process of producing historical texts. In a hybridised version, this narrative is published in school textbooks, publicised in the media, etc. Nonetheless, in my view, in Belarus there exists a bit more far-reaching form of handling history, because to a certain degree a process of marginalising it takes place, and to a certain degree also commercialisation, which is a direct effect of marginalisation. However, so-called "scholarly history", ghettoizes itself and is only important to the very producers of the narrative. This suits the authorities, because they only make use of history when it is not needed. They try to put accents on other areas. The government discourse voices social aspects – raising the minimum wage, ridiculing "opponents", touting so-called "current successes", and so on. History recedes somewhere into the background. In my opinion this might also be a solution to a "good beginning". Although within the framework of Polish society – which is much larger in terms of population and has deeper traditions of "state political culture" – this might not work.**

J.S: Yes, also because as opposed to Belarus, we had a period of history when

we were a great power. In a natural way, this a source of nostalgia. In fact, you can see that nostalgia for great power status plays an extremely significant role in populist mobilisations. In Great Britain, researchers call this "nostalgia for paradise", or nostalgia for the period of colonial magnificence, when Great Britain ruled a fair portion of the planet and most of South Asia. This attitude plays a large role in anti-EU rhetoric. You can see this in the conviction that Great Britain could again be great, but the EU holds it back and limits it. After all, in the United States, Trump's slogan was "Make America great again!", to return a certain historical greatness. We, unfortunately, also have such an episode in our history in the form the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, from which the idea of *Intermarium* comes from – a sphere of Polish influence between the Baltic and Black Seas.

I'll admit with a hint of embarrassment that I know more about Polish-Ukrainian relations than I do Polish-Belarusian relations, so I don't want to pass strong judgements. Perhaps the fact that Belarus does not have a strong imperial history in its past, that is was not a player state on the whole territory of Central Eastern Europe, causes that nostalgia is unattractive. You could ask why, for example, the Czechs don't have this nostalgia. Because already in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Czech aristocracy had been decimated and the Czechs were never a great, card-dealing empire, so they don't have these feelings of a need for revindication. However, the Hungarians were, and thus this neo-imperial idea of "Greater Hungary". So, we see differences between Poland and Hungary on the one side, and the Czech Republic and Slovakia on the other. In Slovakia, they also don't have this imperial greatness.

But for example, in Serbia they do. You can see that “greatness heritage” has a very negative influence.

**A.S: Last question. I don't want to ask you to predict the future, however, could you propose some sort of strategy to overcome the state of peripheriness, not just for Poland, but also the remaining societies in the region?**

J.S: I am not a determinist when it comes to relations between the material base and its superstructure, however it seems to me that material relations – or the economy – marks out a certain area of possibilities – in other words, which political articulations and social orders are possible and which are not. What can clearly be seen now is the fact that the destruction of the middle class and the disappearing centre causes that the material conditions and possibilities to conduct liberal politics do not exist. They are ever-shrinking. I think that, like Wallerstein, we are at a point of bifurcation. There is a certain chaos, which could lead us two ways. It could lead to returning at least the kind of redistribution justice which we had after World War II; so, some limit on the lawlessness of capital, lawlessness of the rich, stopping the process of oligarchization, halting growing inequalities – some progressive articulation. The second possibility is regression. The kind of barbarity we know from the 1940s – various forms of barbarizing social conflicts: violence, camps, monitoring, walls on borders, etc. In my opinion, both the former and the latter are possible with the economic base we have. What is now impossible is liberal centrist politics. This is also the reason why establishment parties from the centre are losing elections. Podemos, or Syriza, or the Green Party candidate could win – in other

words the left. Or Brexit, Trump, Marie Le Pen from the right. What is definitely not possible, what will not happen, is a return to the idyll of the centre – a cheerful globalization, the conviction that the period of material division is ended, we are all submerged in the same culture, this myth of the end of history under the capitalistic-liberal flag proclaimed by Fukuyama at the beginning of the 1990s. If I were to predict anything, I would say that these are the two possibilities. The direction in which it goes depends a lot on political motivation and mobilisation, and how determined certain groups will be to work in a particular direction. We can see that on the right there is a rather small group, that I estimate numbers around two, two and a half million people who are absolutely determined to stop the processes of modernisation, to push back the clock, rewind history, to create a kind of closed, grotesque product of the imagination – a sort of made up national-Polish identity. They are determined and they will work in this direction – this is ONR, the Radio Maria circles, the *Gazeta Polska* club, etc. In my opinion KOD's narrative, which is a kind of centric narrative, has no chance to counter this movement, because all the economic transformations contradict this liberal thinking from the centre. If there is a chance to counter this brown-shirted mobilisation, then it is only in an equally strong, but progressive, leftist emancipative narrative. If it is articulated and gains enough support, and a more redistributive reform is carried out – egalitarian in nature – then we have a chance to move in a progressive direction. I don't know what direction we will go in, but there is definitely no return to a liberal consensus.

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Anton Saifullayeu

## Mykola Riabchuk, Ukraina: Syndrom Postkolonialny

KEW, Wrocław-Wojnowice 2016, 260 p.

The most recent Polish-language book of Ukrainian intellectual, Mykola Riabchuk, will trigger much interest in the sphere of popular discussion concerning Ukraine, and what has been going on there since Euromaidan took place. Riabchuk's book represents a more methodological and theoretical approach, compared to many other publications on the Polish market, especially journalistic publications. It utilises the prism of post-colonial studies – so popular in the last 15 years in Eastern and Central Europe – to look at events in Ukraine, as well as Ukraine itself. *Ukraina. Syndrom postkolonialny* (Ukraine. Post-Colonial Syndrome) was planned as a “collection of studies on culturological subjects, and, partly, political science subjects, dedicated to the complicated process of emancipating the modern Ukrainian nation from the pre-modern ‘imagined community’”<sup>2</sup>. The book is a translation of a collection of essays from various years which was first published in Ukraine in 2011 under the title: *Postkolonialny syndrom spostereżenia*<sup>3</sup> (The Post-Colonial Syndrome – Observations). The publication is

supplemented by a few newer texts, which, according to the author, are more scientific, as well as a number of journalistic texts<sup>4</sup>.

*Ukraina. Syndrom postkolonialny* is composed of sixteen wide-ranging texts on the subject of modern Ukrainology. In effect, the author attempts to introduce to Polish readers the most recent problems in the social and historical discourse in Poland on the subject of Ukraine. The author deals with such controversial figures as Stepan Bandera, Symon Petlura, as well as speculating on the subject of identity discussions surrounding Ukraine, and deliberating over relations between imperium and periphery, hegemon and subject, etc.

The texts are arranged in a logical whole, though this is a collection of earlier published texts. In a sense, it can be stated that *Ukraina. Syndrom postkolonialny* is the 2.0 version of *Dwóch Ukrain*<sup>5</sup> (Two Ukraines) Riabchuk's loud book, which, among others, was also published by Kolegium Europy Wschodniej in 2004. However, as opposed to his earlier deliberations, the author's direction of research is more clearly stated and is contained in the book's title. Riabchuk introduces its full dimension in the second

1 M. Riabczuk, *Ukraina. Syndrom postkolonialny*, trans. K. Kotyńska, J. Szliński, M. Sokal and others, Wrocław-Wojnowice 2015.

2 Ibidem, p. 5.

3 М. Рябчук, *Постколониальний синдром. Спостереження*, Kyiv, 2011.

4 M. Riabczuk, *Ukraina. Syndrom...*, p. 7.

5 M. Riabczuk, *Dwie Ukrainy*, trans. M. Dyhas, K. Kotyńska, I. Werestiuk and others, Wrocław 2004.

and fourth parts of the book, earlier published in Polish as a separate article in *New Prometheus*<sup>6</sup>, as well as a similar English-language text in *Porównania*<sup>7</sup>.

The question of utilizing the tools and instruments of post-colonial studies with regard to Eastern and Central Europe in Riabchuk's theoretical discourse, was addressed by myself on the pages of *New Prometheus*<sup>8</sup>, which is why, in this review, I avoid specific critical remarks concerning the use of post-colonial strategy in Riabchuk's texts. However, it is worth mentioning Marta Studenna-Skrucka's review, which – in the context of the whole book under discussion – makes light of Riabchuk's post-colonial deliberations in the following way: "The principle doubt concerns the fact that post-colonial theory explains the inability of disposing of colonial inheritance – which countries subjected to colonial domination were forever shouldered with – clarifying that the post-colonial condition is one which is characterized by consciousness of a permanent bond with the coloniser, the mutual interaction between coloniser and colonised or consciousness of its own hybridity. For Riabchuk, on the other hand, it serves the binary division of Ukrainian society into 'proper Ukraine' (purely Ukrainian, p. 123) and 'creole Ukraine'. Creoles (as Riabchuk notes, this term does

not possess a pejorative overtone, although this does not always result from the style of the narrative he leads) were to be Russified, such as Russian speaking Ukrainian citizens of Soviet mentality boycotting the truly Ukrainian national project."<sup>9</sup>

At the time, Marko Pawłyszyn wrote that, as a rule, Ukrainian researchers use the term "post-colonial" without reference to international (or even Ukrainian) literature concerning post-colonial studies. The main problems of theoretical "post-colonialism" in Central and Eastern Europe includes its simplification to the level of classical reasoning in the public discourse, as well as utilizing the term without proper methodological technique. Pawłyszyn indicates that in the Ukrainian intellectual discourse "post-colonial" is not used as a term which requires definition and precise application, but as an element of common language, meaning: "after the fall of the USSR", and holding unclear but negative connotations<sup>10</sup>. We are at the cusp of concluding that the entirety of Riabchuk's post-colonial evocation can be called a continuation, in other words, a widening of the post-colonial discourse as an ideological battle with the old parent state, just as the book in itself is a sign of post-colonial syndrome. It is – utilizing the terminology of the book's author – a sort of theoretical "creolization" of the experiences of the language-cultural deformation of Ukraine, carried out in the reality of the post-colonial continuation of Ukraine following the fall of the USSR, and the formal send-off of the empire. Accordingly,

6 M. Riabchuk, *Kolonializm inaczej. O przydatności metodologii postkolonialnej do badań nad Europą postkomunistyczną*, "Nowy Prometheus" 2014, no. 6, p. 59-73. [<http://nowyprometeusz.pl/kolonializm-inaczej-o-przydatnosci-metodologii-postkolonialnej-do-badan-nad-europa-postkomunistyczna>]

7 M. Riabchuk, *Colonialism in Another Way. On the Applicability of Postcolonial Methodology for the Study of Postcommunist Europe*, "Porównania" 2013, no. 13, p. 47-59.

8 A. Saifullayev, *Kolonializm "po naszymu", czyli o potrzebie zachowania ostrożności w używaniu metodologii postkolonialnej do badań nad Europą Wschodnią*. Polemika z Mykołą Riabczukiem, "Nowy Prometheus" 2015, no. 7, p. 77-90.

9 M. Studenna-Skrucka, *O książce „Ukraina. Syndrom postkolonialny”*, 26.05.2015, <http://eastwestinfo.eu/kultura/muzyka-literatura-sztuka/item/351-o-ksiazce-ukraina-syndrom-postkolonialny>, accessed: 31 May 2016

10 M. Pawłyszyn, *Postkolonialność jako metoda i mentalność*, [w:] *Postkolonialność-Tożsamość-Gender. Europa Środkowa, Wschodnia i Południowo-Wschodnia*, vol. 2, ed. A. Matusiak, Wrocław 2014, p. 78.

following a somewhat different tack than the published polemic, I would like to now deliberate over the appropriate character, as well as post-colonial interpretation, of the author of *Syndrom*.

#### Coloniser-colonised. The syndrome of post-colonialism in "syndrom"

In his book, Riabchuk quite extensively describes the relationship between coloniser and the subordinate society as colonised, placing Russia on the one side (coloniser) and Ukraine on the other (colonised). "Syndrom" is overloaded with searches for these relations; searching – along the line of the continuing imagined line for historical Russian-Ukrainian relations – characterized as a strategy of subordinating, manifesting "typical" notions of post-colonial studies, such as: "other(s)", "mimicry", "racism"<sup>11</sup> (sic!), "domination discourse", etc. A special place is reserved for the question of racism, absolutely inappropriate in the case of Russian colonialism on the Slavic territories of Eastern Europe. The allegory of juxtaposing the "black" Ukrainian language with "white" Russian, fixing it in the category of racism – even as a metaphoric reference to post-colonial theory – is a tool used to strengthen the feeling of a lack of opportunity of exiting the non-Ukrainian speaking of Ukrainians. The author contradicts his own self, claiming that the "difference between ruler and subject held language-cultural (and, of course, social) features. Nonetheless, it does not stop the author from allegorizing the Russian empire's language policy, which introduces the division of local "black" ("slave") language and "white" (Russian). What is more, Riabchuk goes further, unduly comparing the Russian speaking parts

of Ukraine, as a consequence of Russian policy, to Michael Jackson – somewhat "black", wanting to be "white" – "Only few had the courage to use the 'black' Ukrainian language, the remainder wanted to be 'white', like Michael Jackson"<sup>12</sup>.

Mykola Riabchuk devotes a large amount of space in his book to questions of language, proclaimed elements of colonial domination, and it is worth admitting that the policy of russification occupies a prominent place in analysis of post-colonial relations in Eastern Europe, and even in the entire space of the former empire. But this is a question which requires a wider and deeper analysis of not only internal but external discourses – Russian and Western. Language is just one, though important, instrument of subordination, composing the imperial discourse, which evidently cannot be called compared, or in any way be related to racism, since, then, the post-colonial theory is utilized. Riabchuk's "slavish", blackness, and inferiority of Ukrainian language is, in this case, merely emphasis of the perversion, trauma and ideological anti-colonialism of "Ukrainian" Ukraine in the face of Russia, which, in turn, is a symptom of post-colonial societies.

#### Anti-colonialism of discourse opposition

The author of "Syndrom", on more than one occasion, highlights the importance of post-colonial studies as an effective instrument of redefining social-cultural arrangements on the territory of the former Soviet Union, including in Ukraine. Nonetheless, in his texts, Riabchuk falls into a trap, saying that "an opportunity to deconstruct Russian-Ukrainian relations has presented itself, perceived

11 M. Riabczuk, *Ukraina. Syndrom...*, p. 57.

12 Ibidem, p. 58.

in categories of 'cultural slavery'<sup>13</sup>. Post-structuralism and profusely invoked post-colonialism do not present the possibility of deconstructing the composition of national-imperial relations between empire and colony. Post-structuralism studies discourses; following the path of Foucault, it studies discourses of power. In post-colonial theory, this type of "power discourse" is known as mechanisms of colonial engineering, forcing that which is pre-colonial<sup>14</sup> into oblivion and creating new social and elite discourses through so-called "narrativization" of the association: past-present. In other words, that which *de facto* has not been and cannot be is unable to be deconstructed – Russian-Ukrainian relations, due to the lack of discussion from the side of the parent state. Post-structuralism was adopted by post-colonial researchers as a tool to verify the discursiveness of the parent state towards its colony. However, there is a lack of mutual post-colonial resonance in post-structural thought, which Edward Said charged Foucault with in "Culture and Imperialism" (1993)<sup>15</sup>.

In "Syndrom", the author refers to confrontation between a series of discourses (national, imperial, imperial-creole) which make up one of the main obstacles to stabilizing the position of Ukrainians in the monolithic social corpus, a result of post-imperial overcoming. In the very centre of discursive conflict, Riabchuk constantly puts language as the main unit of resistance against imperialism. Creating, often pointing out, half pools discursive confrontations, which are fully the effect of the post-colonial state of Ukraine, is an updated thesis contained in "Two Ukraines";

and, going back to Marta Studenna-Skrywa's comments, a "binary division of Ukrainian society..."<sup>16</sup> And though the author himself often underlines the defect of post-colonial criticism resulting in a "victimization syndrome of Ukraine"<sup>17</sup>, more than once, he enters into an anti-colonial ideological fight, which does not fall under the post-colonial thought of the "inability to dispossess colonial inheritance"<sup>18</sup>.

#### Alternative centre, discursive war, heroes...

The disparity between the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe is based on the strong impact of Russian influence. It is a peculiar inability to mutually bid farewell to the joint experience of coloniser and colonised. Even speaking of the Baltic countries, we cannot avoid this statement, since the Russian speaking inhabitants of Latvia and Estonia exist in a symptomatic state of sentiment bordering on the impossibility of giving up the discourse of the former parent state. However, as opposed to the Baltic countries, Belarus and Ukraine were not absorbed into the political structures of the so-called "alternative patron" (centre). And, in fact, one of the mutual features of the aforesaid countries is building a traumatic image of belonging to European civilization, which, currently in the shape of the EU, is quite carefully approaching the question of accepting Belarus and Ukraine into its "family", for now. In essence, this trauma and pursuit of "Europeanism", or rather negating Ukraine's Europeanism with Europe's own, can be observed in the text: *Bandera a sprawa ukraińska* (Bandera and the Case of Ukraine). This text is a

continuation of the author's deliberations over the binary configuration of the Ukrainian community, amidst the backdrop of confronting the disavowal of fragments of the national past.

The war of discourses outlined by Riabchuk only proves the simplified scheme of "post-colonial" syndrome. The author sticks to the line of division, reaching for the "discursive" division of Ukraine in the East as a "Stalinist project of social-genetic engineering" and a reserve of *homo sovieticus*, as well as the West's not accepting the legitimization of Soviet rule and the Soviet way of life<sup>19</sup>. The author intensifies this thread in particular texts of the book, such as "Petlura and Petluran Lands: Between Glorification and Demonization"<sup>20</sup>; "Gogol and the Identity War"<sup>21</sup>.

In a note at the end of the book, Bogumiła Berdychowska points out that "the Riabchuk diagnosis of the Ukrainian identity condition is downright merciless"<sup>22</sup>, thus suggesting that Mykola Riabchuk departs from "standard" schemes looking for external fault. However, after reading *Ukraina. Syndrom postkolonialny*, the opposite impression appears. The theoretical framework of post-colonialism in Riabchuk's book is not an attempt to negotiate over identity characteristics, but rather an attempt at their negation. Riabchuk's post-colonialism is an attempt aimed at throwing off the Russian-creole "yoke" which continues to affect part of Ukrainian society, which omits defeating the hegemon's knowledge through its adaptation and metamorphosis into a post-modern form of community mentality.

*Syndrom* does not diagnose post-colonialism, but indeed possesses the character of a post-colonial work – one of the symptoms of such a society. Riabchuk's post-colonialism creates binary division within communities, dividing the product of Russian imperialism into simplified terms – good and bad, Ukrainian and creole. The post-colonial diagnosis of society in *Syndrom* is contained in accenting traumas and sacrifice of existence in the post-colonial and neo-imperial being. This in turn is a further codification of national regeneration tendencies, so characteristic of post-colonial states.

In closing, it is worth noting the positive substance of this book. The principal merit of its main idea is that it introduces the readers to a sphere of debate concerning post-colonialism in the region of Eastern Europe.

The post-colonial debate has reached an impasse. The "revolutionary-authoritarian" area of Eastern Europe has become mired among reinterpretations of the transformative capabilities of Belarus and Ukraine, which stand in the way of a multi-faceted debate about the whole region's post-colonialism. *Syndrom*, on the other hand, creates a field for discussion on the subject of new takes on reality, modes of remembrance, nationalisms and mutual experiences of the past/present of the region, which may contribute to concrete changes in the future.

13 M. Riabczuk, *Ukraina. Syndrom*..., p. 59.

14 D. Kołodziejczyk, *Postkolonialne odzyskiwanie*... p. 288.

15 Polskie edition: E. W. Said, *Kultura i imperializm*, trans. M. Wyrwas-Wiśniewska, Kraków 2009, p. 42.

16 M. Studenna-Skrucka, *O książce*..., op. cit.

17 M. Riabczuk, *Ukraina. Syndrom*..., p. 71.

18 M. Studenna-Skrucka, *O książce*..., op. cit.

19 M. Riabczuk, *Ukraina. Syndrom*..., p. 158-159.

20 Ibidem, p. 120-131.

21 Ibidem, p. 102-119.

22 Ibidem.

Adam Balcer

## Germany in the Face of Refugees – The Polish Image of Events and Polish-German Relations

In 2015, a large wave of migrants had significant influence on the internal situations in Poland and Germany, even though Poland accepted one of the smallest groups of refugees from the Middle East, while Germany accepted the largest in the EU. The reaction of the political elite and societies in both countries was decidedly different.

The matter of refugees is a very serious challenge for Polish-German relations. The differences relate to fundamental issues of each country's world view and political law. Finding a compromise between Poland and Germany in the matter will be very difficult.

### Reaction in Poland

In 2015, the question of Middle Eastern refugees affected Poland only to a very slight degree, as opposed to Germany. In the first three quarters of 2015, less than 10,000 people applied for asylum in Poland. Many of them were not even accepted for consideration by the Polish Office for Foreigners (OFF). Less than 2900 applications were considered in the first instance during this period. The level of positive decisions was one of the lowest in the EU (20% or less than 600 individuals). At the end of November, 3300 asylum applications were waiting to be considered in Polish government bureaus. Among those accepted for consideration in the first instance, Syrians represented less than 250 individuals. It is worth noting that in the 1990s, at one point, there were over 85,000 refugees from Chechnya in Poland. A portion of them were combatants, active in military operations. At the time, this matter made an insignificant impact in the Polish public debate.

2015 was an election year in Poland. Because of the election campaign, Ewa Kopacz's government recognized the matter of refugees as a very controversial subject. In effect, its stance was very disjointed. Before the EU summit to do with refugee relocation in September, the Polish government presented a united position with the other countries of the Visegrad Group, opposing the proposal of a quota system to divide refugees amongst EU countries. Poland declared its readiness to voluntarily accept groups of refugees, which with Polish society's serious aversion to this idea (more on this later) meant that, in fact, only a very small group of refugees would be accepted. The Polish side, not agreeing to accept refugees, justified its decision by the seasonal employment of 400,000 Ukrainians in the first half of 2015, whose number probably increased to 800,000 by the end of the

year. While giving credit to the openness of the Polish labor market and supporting the Ukrainian economy, it must be admitted that the vast majority of Ukrainians employed in Poland are not refugees from Donbas, but inhabitants of western and central Ukraine. They are classic economic immigrants, contributing to the economic development of Poland through their work. What is more, while mentioning the matter of aiding Ukrainian refugees, it is worth a reminder that Polish developmental aid, despite a meaningful increase, remained at a very low level in 2015 (0.12% GDP). On the other hand, Polish aid to Ukraine, although it decidedly increased, continues to remain insignificant bearing in mind Ukraine's needs and its importance for Poland and Polish economic potential. During a speech at the European Parliament on 19 January 2016, Prime Minister Beata Szydło declared that Poland had accepted one million Ukrainian refugees that no one had wanted to help. In reality, in 2015, two Ukrainians received refugee status in Poland following appeals. Twenty-four individuals were granted extended protection, while six received consent for tolerated residence.

At the EU Summit at the end of September 2015, Poland – as opposed to the remaining Visegrad Group countries – accepted a quota system with regard to refugees, though they did not agree for it to be permanent. Poland agreed to accept over 7000 refugees, following earlier verification. This sudden change of stance was difficult for Polish society to understand. The Polish government remained passive for a number of months. They did not attempt to convince Poles that refugees were not a real danger to the country's security, nor did they reference the moral arguments for accepting them, not to mention making the political case regarding solidarity with other EU countries and Poland's position in Europe. The matter of the consequences for the stability of the region of leaving around one million refugees in the Balkans almost did not appear at all.

The agreement to accept 7000 refugees was met with the decided objection of the main opposition party, Law and Justice (PiS), which won the parliamentary elections at the end of October. Fearmongering using Islam and refugees, identifying them with terrorism, violence and rape, was one of the (though not the key) reasons for PiS's election success. During the campaign, many rightist politicians and journalists cynically took advantage of fear of Muslims and refugees to accumulate political capital. In Jarosław Kaczyński's famous speech in the Sejm, the leader of the largest Polish party announced that in Sweden fifty-four zones were ruled by Sharia law, while he acknowledged refugees as carriers of unknown dangerous diseases. The rightist weekly "W Sieci" presented Ewa Kopacz, the then prime minister, in a burkha strapped with an explosives belt. Following the Paris attacks, the new PiS government declared the possibility of withdrawing from this obligation. However, in 2016, they finally agreed to accept a maximum of 400 people. The Polish government announced that they would mostly be Christians, who according to Polish politicians represent the main victims of genocide committed by Islamic State. In reality, Christians represent a decided minority of Syrian conflict victims and are underrepresented in relation to the entire population. Secondly, Islamic State is responsible for a much smaller number of victims than Assad's regime and recognizes Shiites, "Sunni- Apostates" and Yazidis as groups *a priori* sentenced for extermination, as opposed to Christians.

PiS's argumentation in the matter of refugees is not internally cohesive. On the one hand, PiS claims that 7000 Muslim refugees are a serious danger for Poland's security, as they could be the source of terrorist attacks. Aside from identifying refugees and Islam with terrorism, PiS politicians claimed that the refugees were entirely different culturally and would never integrate. They also argued that allowing a small group to enter would cause a domino effect culminating in the arrival of many, many more refugees. On the other hand, PiS said there was no point accepting them, as refugees wanted to go to Germany anyway and wouldn't stay in Poland. As a result of PiS's argumentation, the thesis appeared that Germany must be in a situation of mortal danger; with one million refugees on its territory and over 4.5 million Muslims living there.

It is possible that the ruling party will take advantage of this fear of Muslims and refugees in the future, especially since these fears are one of only a number of issues supported by a majority of Poles in a deeply divided country. In 2015, in all the studies dedicated to refugees from the Middle East, a decided majority of Poles was against receiving a group numbering more than 20,000 (0.05%). The terrorist attacks in Paris strengthened the already negative attitude of Poles towards refugees. In December 2015, the number of people opposed to accepting the 7000 refugees (see below) increased by 13%, compared to October. Currently, 64% of respondents are against receiving a portion of refugees arrived from the Middle East to the EU, while 30% of respondents are for it. Only 5% of those surveyed by CBOS feel that Poland should allow them permanent residence. In a study conducted in January 2016, the result was nearly identical. Most Poles (66%) were favorably disposed to the government's efforts to refute the previous agreement regarding refugee relocation among member states, agreed to by the previous government. Only 21% would be critical of this type of possible action by the government<sup>1</sup>. Earlier support for receiving refugees was – in the case of the overwhelming majority of respondents – agreement for only a very small group to come to Poland. In a study conducted at the end of September 2015, less than 40% of Poles agreed to receive refugees, among whom almost 30% agreed to a maximum of 2000 refugees, 35% no more than 10,000 and just 10% a maximum of 20,000. However, only 10% supported receiving more than 20,000 refugees, while over 15% had no opinion<sup>2</sup>. Bearing in mind the arrival of a very small group of Middle Eastern refugees in Poland in 2015, the reaction of many Poles to accepting 7000 of them should be acknowledged as a display of collective hysteria. In a survey conducted in October 2015 by IBRIS (Institute of Market and Social Research), 45% of Poles answered affirmatively to the question: "Is Poland threatened by Islam in connection with the influx of immigrants from the Middle East?" Among youth, almost 80% of respondents were of this opinion.<sup>3</sup> It can be presumed that these misgivings have increased in the last few months due to terrorist attacks, as well as the events of New Year's Eve in Germany (over 1000 incidents of minor theft, sexual molestation, mainly perpetrated by refugees and immigrants).

1 CBOS: 5% Polaków za przyjmowaniem uchodźców z Bliskiego Wschodu, onet.pl, <http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/cbos-5-proc-polakow-za-przyjmowaniem-uchodzcow-z-bliskiego-wschodu/1qehkx>

2 <http://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/polacy-o-uchodzicach-sondaz-dla-faktow-tvn-i-tvn24,582002.html>

3 <http://www.polskieradio.pl/5/3/Artykul/1525523,Sondaz-polowa-Polakow-nie-boi-sie-islamizacji-Ponad-40-proc-widzi-zagrozenie>

The hysterical reaction of many Poles can be explained by the homogenous religious nature of Poland, so unique in Europe, as well as the increase of nationalistic attitudes in Polish society. Non-Christians represent but a microscopic portion of Polish society. The example of Germany shows that lack of regular inter-personal contact with Muslims clearly influences peoples' attitudes towards them. Germans from the East of the country – where besides Berlin, the Muslim community is very small – have a decidedly more negative attitude towards Muslims than Germans in the West, where they have been living with immigrants from Turkey and the Balkans for a few decades. Public opinion polls and the statements of many politicians leave no doubts that Poles possess very limited knowledge on the subject of Islam. In surveys conducted in 2014 by IPSOS research group on the subject of lack of knowledge of one's own country and the world in EU countries, Poles took second place, behind Italians. Asked the percentage of Muslims within Polish society, they increased the level to 5%, tens of times more – much more than residents of EU countries where Muslims are more numerous.

The matter of refugees and Islam has been taken advantage of – propaganda-wise – by the far right, whose views gained the support of a portion of Poles in the public space. On 11 November (Independence Day), around 70,000 people took part in an anti-Muslim march held by nationalists in Warsaw. This was the most participants in history and over twice as many as any anti-Muslim demonstration held by PEGIDA in Germany (a country of more than double the population of Poland). Smaller demonstrations, numbering a few thousand participants each, took place in other cities. On the internet, by no means anonymously, many Polish citizens espoused views which are recognized as hate speech and exhorting violence, punishable by law.

### Reaction in Germany

In 2015, in absolute terms, Germany definitely accepted the most refugees and immigrants of all EU countries. According to the Bavarian Minister of the Interior, by December 2015, on the basis of facilitated and sped-up procedures, one million people were registered. However, some experts believe the number is smaller, due to multiple registrations of a major portion of these people, both in Germany and in other countries. The reception of so many people had a serious effect on the political scene and social mood; conducive to polarizing society. Nonetheless, this did not extinguish the belief of most Germans in the necessity to offer aid to refugees – in other words, individuals escaping war or persecution, without regard to their religion. Chancellor Angela Merkel played a key role in the refugee crisis. From the moment the crisis exploded to the present, she has been against closing the German border and blocking refugees from arriving in Germany. Merkel was the locomotive behind the German open door policy towards refugees from Syria (suspending the Dublin Protocol), which is currently home to the bloodiest conflict in the world. As Merkel stated at a party conference in December 2016, the refugee crisis “was a situation which put our European values to the test, as never before.” But granting them aid “was “no more or less than a moral imperative.”<sup>4</sup>

Merkel paid a high price for her very principled stance on the immigrant issue politically. Support for her fell from 75%<sup>5</sup> in April 2015 to below 50% in November. The weakening of the immigrant wave in December positively influenced Merkel's support rating, which rose to close to 55% in December 2015. However, a fall in her ratings can be expected after the events of New Year's Eve in Germany. Merkel remains in third place in terms of the most popular politician in Germany. Chancellor Merkel met with the greatest opposition from her ally, the Bavarian CSU, and its leader Horst Seehofer, who attempted to build a front against her in the CDU, as well. The CSU's attitude was resultative of the fact that it is more conservative than the CDU, and its area borders Austria, which is a gateway for refugees and immigrants coming through the Balkans. Within the CDU, Merkel was criticized by party leaders, including Wolfgang Schäuble, who is currently the most popular politician in the country. Merkel was able to overcome internal opposition, taking advantage of – among others – centrist and leftist parties, as well as agreeing to certain concessions with internal-party critics (for example: agreeing to clear-cut action to decrease the number of refugees and securing EU borders at the party conference, as well as reintroducing the Dublin Protocol). Her strong position within the party was confirmed by the annual CDU conference, where she gained the support of the mass majority of delegates in December 2015.

Merkel took the odium of fear and social dissatisfaction connected to the migrant crisis on her own shoulders. During its course, support for the ruling Christian Democrats (CDU) fell from 42% in April to 36% in January 2016. This negative downward trend was halted at the end of November, along with the weakening of the refugee influx. However, a further fall in support for the CDU took place in January after the mentioned New Year's Eve events. In polls conducted by INSA, support for the CDU fell to 32.5%, though this survey centre is connected to the far right AfD party, and its election prognoses significantly differed from the actual results of the last election.

However, in response to the large wave of refugees, support for the populist-nationalistic Alternative for Germany (AfD) significantly increased. Already at the end of August 2015, the party's support rose an average of 3–4% in polls, which indicated the party could potentially pass the election threshold of 5%. Currently they possess 10% support. The rise in popularity of this formation declined with the decrease in migrants, but then increased over the events of New Year's Eve. The issue of refugees was also the source of tension between federal and state authorities. At the beginning of September, Germany decided to introduce state quotas for the distribution of asylum seekers. However, after just a few days, the scale of refugee influx was so great, that the states began to criticize the quota system.

The mass influx of refugees and migrants triggered two opposing reactions from German society. On the one side, it caused mass mobilization of a large portion of society wishing to aid refugees. On the other hand, it resulted in an increase in fear

5 “Wenn einer sagt, ich kann nicht so viel, gebt mir ein bisschen Zeit, haben wir in Europa immer eine Regelung gefunden”, so Merkel konziliant. “Wenn aber jemand sagt, das ist nicht mein Europa, wenn da Muslime im Land leben, dann muss ich sagen: Das sind Sachen, die kann man nicht verhandeln.” <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/angela-merkel-beider-evp-merkel-kanzelt-osteuropaeer-ab-a-1056731.html>

4 Stefan Wagstyl, Angela Merkel wins CDU backing on refugee policy, Financial Times, 14.12.2015, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/8a597384-a268-11e5-bc70-7ff6d4fd203a.html#axzz3yRFcEVti>

due to the large wave of refugees, anti-refugee demonstrations and acts of violence by the far right. German society, despite the rise of anxiety before the influx of such a large group of people, did not change its positive opinion (despite a certain weakening of support) for receiving people running from areas where armed conflict is ongoing. In a study conducted in October 2015, by the Allensbach Institute for “*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*”, a decided majority of Germans was for receiving people who had gained refugee status, as well as the quick deportation of people deemed economic migrants.

German society was prepared to give support to refugees and their involvement in volunteer work on such a large scale meant Germany was better able to deal with their arrival. At the beginning of August, in a poll conducted by the Forsa Institute for the weekly “*Stern*”, 60% of Germans declared their readiness to aid refugees. At the end of October 2015, 10% of Germans were ready to immediately accept a refugee into their own home, with the number rising to 46% if the stay was financed. 43% said they would not accept refugees in their own home under any circumstances. In a poll conducted by the Evangelical Church and published in the weekly “*Focus*” in December 2015, 51% of Germans declared their readiness to support a refugee camp near their own home. 11% of those polled stated that they had already helped to care for and house refugees, while the same number stated that they were doing so currently. On the other hand, 37% said they had donated money for refugees in the past, while 48% declared that they would be prepared to do so in the future. What is more, 13% of those polled agreed to accept refugees into their own homes. Despite the many problems related to the influx of such a large group of people, Germany did not support the idea of cutting themselves off from the world. In November, just 16% of Germans were for building a wall on the border with Austria, while almost 80% were against it. In this respect, Germans significantly differed from Hungarians. The difference becomes even more obvious when we consider that Hungary, unlike Germany, was only a transitory destination.

The much more positive attitude of Germans towards refugees compared to Poles, results from the fact that Islamophobia is much weaker in Germany than Poland. In a survey conducted by the Pew Research Centre in spring 2015, close to 70% of Germans had a positive attitude towards Muslims living in their country (close to 25% negative). In Poland, the proportions were nearly reversed (55% negative, 30% positive). Also, the public debate in Germany appeared much different than the one held in Poland. It was much less emotional and decidedly more substantive. Besides various misgivings, the debate also mentioned the matter of benefit to the German economy and German society connected to receiving a couple hundred thousand refugees. Although not fully representative, polls conducted in Germany among Syrian refugees showed them to be much better educated than migrants from many other countries, as well as in comparison with the Syrian average. The German media also underlined Syria distinguishes itself in the Arab world with regard to the degree of secularization.

However, the influx of the large wave of refugees did lead to a clear rise in fearfulness in German society concerning the consequences of accepting such a large population. At the beginning of August, over half of Germans deemed that the number of

refugees arriving in Germany was not too great. More than 40% held an opposing view. The large increase in the number of refugees in September and October, simultaneously caused an increase in anxiety, as well as a negative attitude towards receiving them on a mass scale. At the beginning of November, half of Germans feared that too many refugees were arriving in Germany, while 48% held an opposing view. Compared with September, the number of people fearful of too many arrivals increased by 12%. Still, at the end of September, most Germans (almost 60%) were convinced that the country would be able to handle the wave of refugees, while 40% did not. In October, the clear increase in the number of refugees caused the number of Germans who believed the country would handle the crisis to decrease to 45%, while over half of Germans stated that the country would not cope. In December, when the wave of refugees decreased, 51% of Germans stated that Germany would, in fact, handle the crisis, while 46% did not. An identical trend was observed with the conviction that Chancellor Merkel was pursuing correct policy with regard to refugees. The New Year’s Eve events caused that from December 2015 to January 2016, the number of people who felt that Merkel was not handling the crisis rose from 49% to 56%, while those who felt she was handling it fell from 47% to 39%. Still, in August, 45% of Germans felt the arrival of refugees to be beneficial to Germany, while 33% did not. In January 2016, over 40% stated that it was not beneficial, while almost 40% said it was beneficial.

In response to fears connected to refugees, a temporary and partial renaissance occurred in the popularity of the anti-Islamic social organization PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West). Thanks to the large influx of migrants, one of the October demonstrations gathered around 20,000 people. By comparison, the largest PEGIDA demonstration in January 2015, gathered 35,000 participants. In spring 2015, on average, a couple hundred demonstrators would attend each rally. After a peak in October, by December, the level of people attending had returned to the spring 2015 averages. In October 2015, only 8% of the German population supported PEGIDA, while 85% viewed the organization negatively. For comparison, in one poll in December 2014, 30% felt demonstrations against Islamization to be justified, while 13% were prepared to take part in them. Neo-Nazis became visibly active against refugees. According to data from the German police, in 2015, until the beginning of December, there were over 800 law violations directed against refugees, over four times more than in 2014. Among these violations of the law, the majority included: anti-immigration propaganda (leaflets, posters) inciting hate, acts of vandalism (graffiti) and destruction of property in shelters and places adapted to serve as such. Over 70 acts of arson (both successful and unsuccessful) also took place; an increase of over 11 times, when compared to 2014. Over 60 incidents of direct aggression against refugees (beatings, non-aggravated assault, etc.) occurred. However, none of them were of a serious nature (life-threatening or crippling). Thus, it can be stated that German society’s reaction to the influx of over one million people was rather calm.

The refugee issue has become another major controversial subject in Polish-German relations, besides issues concerning energy, European integration, or the sphere of security. It demonstrated the fundamental differences of Polish and German attitudes

toward Muslims, not to mention the attitudes of their politicians. For a decided majority of Poles and the ruling party, the key criteria for accepting a refugee should be his religion, not his personal experience. For most Germans and their political elites, this type of discriminatory approach is unacceptable. Merkel very clearly stated in October at a closed meeting of members of the European People's Party: "If someone says: I can't accept that many (immigrants), give me a bit more time, we can always find some solution in Europe. However, when someone says that this isn't my Europe when Muslims live in some country, then I have to say that these are matters on which we cannot negotiate."<sup>6</sup> According to the Chancellor, *a priori* rejecting Muslim refugees negatively affects the credibility of Europeans in the world, and this type of attitude hinders the fight for human rights in the Muslim world. Merkel rhetorically asked: "How can we strive for the freedom of Christians in the world when we say that we won't admit Muslims and mosques?" Merkel highlighted that as a result of her own experiences in East Germany, she doesn't understand the "closed" attitude of inhabitants of Central Europe, including Poland. "It is comical that precisely those who should be happy at the end of the Cold War, think that they can isolate themselves from globalization." This world-view aspect of the Polish-German conflict has only been understood to a limited degree in Poland, where perception of the refugee problem was dominated by the aspect of security. The next important matter dividing Poland and Germany, is the permanent quota system proposed by Berlin in the case of further refugees (which would be flexibly applied). It has been firmly rejected by Warsaw. Even the voluntary acceptance of 7000 refugees was perceived by PiS as a German dictate and an attack on the sovereignty of a member state. This process began during the Polish election campaign. On their cover, the Pro-PiS weekly "W Sieci" pictured refugees as the Taliban stylized to look like the famous photograph of Wehrmacht soldiers ripping the Polish eagle from the frontier barrier in 1939. Party leader Jarosław Kaczyński stated that the problem of refugees is singularly a matter for Germany, which in proposing the quota system was attempting to impose its stance on others. Reporters sympathetic to PiS point-blank accused Germany of attempting to Islamize Poland and impose a "multi-kulti" dictatorship on the Vistula. According to PiS politicians and members of the media connected to them, Merkel, because of her *Willkommenskultur* is the main politician responsible for the refugee crisis. This is unfounded, because in 2015, the decided majority of refugees began heading for Europe before the "opening" of the German border. In Poland, the responsibility of Russia and her allies in the Middle East in causing the wave of refugees through military operations is little reflected on. Such an emotional attitude towards Germany and Muslims signifies that attempts to find consensus between Warsaw and Berlin in the matter of refugees may be very difficult.

6 <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/angela-merkel-bei-der-evp-merkel-kanzelt-osteuropaer-ab-a-1056731.html>

Paweł Purski

## A Year of Law and Justice's Eastern Policy

**The Law and Justice (PiS) party's year in government brought many negative surprises in policy, both at home and abroad. The government of so-called "good changes" did not spare Poland's Eastern policy. Although many observers expressed the hope that PiS would actively continue the Promethean policy of the late Lech Kaczyński, this did not happen. The year of PiS's Eastern policy is lost time which has deepened negative tendencies. The most disturbing is that the Polish sphere of national interests is subordinate to the logic of internal policy, especially historical policy.**

### How consensus disappeared

During the years 1989–2014, Polish Eastern policy was characterised by consensus with regard to priorities. The idea was to mind relations with our eastern neighbours and strengthen their stability, as well as simultaneously help them to become predictable and friendly partners for Poland, as well as the European Union. The necessity to separate foreign policy and historical policy was underlined. Difficult matters of history, possessing enormous potential to create divisions between these young states and Poland, were pushed into the background, focusing instead on economic and political cooperation. As it later turned out, the discovery by Poles of historical policy as a tool of internal policy<sup>1</sup> was one of the reasons that *kresy*<sup>2</sup> circles came to prominence, whose main postulate was the "dignified" remembrance of the genocide of Polish citizens in Wołyń by OUN/UPA units in 1943–1944.

In the two big debates regarding Polish Eastern policy in 2001 and 2008, the participants –including Bartłomiej Sienkiewicz<sup>3</sup>, Bogumiła Berdychowska<sup>4</sup>, Radosław Sikorski<sup>5</sup>, Paweł Kowal<sup>6</sup> – did not argue whether Eastern policy should be conducted, but rather how active and independent Poland should be, as well as Poland's place in Europe – should it be in what is called the "West", joined with Brussels, or should we remember our "Eastern" origins? The participants of the debates cited the heritage of

1 Politicians discovered anew the power of historical narratives following the spectacular success of the Warsaw Uprising Museum in 2004. From that time on, Poland fell prey to a specific history-mania, which despite its shallow nature, has great potential for mobilizing society and the voting public.

2 Prior to World War II, the name given to the former eastern borderlands of Poland.

3 B. Sienkiewicz, *Pochwała minimalizmu*, "Tygodnik Powszechny", 24–31 December 2000.

4 B. Berdychowska, *Giedroyc nadal aktualny*, "Tygodnik Powszechny", 4 March 2001. 2001.

5 R. Sikorski, *1 września – lekcja historii*, "Gazeta Wyborcza", 28 August.

6 P. Kowal, *Cienie Piastów*, "Nowa Europa Wschodnia", 2009, no. 6 (VIII), p. 27–43.

“Parisian culture” and attempted to creatively interpret it. However, it is fruitless to search their words for appeals to abandon our eastern neighbours to the guardianship of Russia, which at the time was “getting up off its knees”.

The first cracks in this consensus only appeared in 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and attacked Donbas. Politicians and experts suddenly discovered “hybrid warfare”<sup>7</sup>, its main element consisting of strategic propaganda activities. Thanks to the exploitation of social media, far right circles could easily circulate pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian content in Poland. Their postulates found much understanding in the party of Janusz Korwin-Mikke and the political grouping of musician Paweł Kukiz. Kukiz himself communicated with the radical *kresy* circle of Fr. Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zaleski, for whom the genocide of Poles in Wołyń by OUN/UPA units has been the main issue in relations with Ukraine for years. The controversial clergyman proved on more than one occasion that for his particular goals he is prepared to sacrifice Poland’s long-term interests and security.

### Double election 2015

During the two election campaigns of 2015 (presidential and parliamentary), PiS painstakingly avoided any declarations whatsoever which might have been interpreted as passive and ambiguous with regard to Russia. The declarations of PiS’s main candidates were marked by dynamism, in contrast to the static, even sleep-inducing position of Civic Platform (PO) politicians. In rare moments of discussion regarding Eastern policy, Bronisław Komorowski and the PO government were accused of passivity and inadequate concern for Polish security. The words of Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz became the shameful symbol of this policy, most likely treating the advice of her political advisers too literally and answering a question regarding the conflict with Ukraine with the following: “Poland should behave like a sensible Polish woman. Our security, our country, our house, our children! That’s what is most important!”<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, presidential candidate Andrzej Duda highlighted that he was the continuator of the Promethean legacy of Lech Kaczyński, who died tragically. On the other hand, the PiS candidate for head of government, Beata Szydło, deftly cut herself off from PO’s passive Eastern policy. In contrast to the played-out prime minister of the weakening PO, Szydło presented herself as an active, courageous woman with a concept for governing.

Just after taking power, the winner of the presidential election Andrzej Duda, encouraged by his foreign policy advisers, attempted to attach Poland to the Minsk Format – talks between France, Germany, Ukraine and Russia regarding the resolution of the conflict in Donbas. Following the initiative’s spectacular failure, as if offended, he withdrew from realising active Eastern policy. During the short cohabitation with the PO government, he focused on criticising Ewa Kopacz and supporting PiS in the parliamentary elections. Following PiS’s victory, Andrzej Duda continues to realise a passive presidential model

<sup>7</sup> I am skeptical with regard to the term “hybrid warfare”, as it is in fact a euphemistic definition of regular military operations.

<sup>8</sup> Broń na Ukrainę? „Wie Pan, jestem kobietą...” Pierwsza wypowiedź Kopacz i pierwsza kompromitacja, wpolityce.pl; <http://wpolityce.pl/polityka/214485-bron-na-ukraine-wie-pan-jestem-kobieta-pierwsza-wypowiedz-kopacz-i-pierwsza-kompromitacja>

based on a representative role without any plan for Eastern policy, which is accompanied by chaotic foreign policy initiatives.

### Primacy of historical policy over security

PiS’s priority is historical policy. To begin with it only concerned the so-called “cursed soldiers”, members of Polish resistance movements that continued their armed struggle against the communist government after the end of World War II. It is of course natural that this policy started to widen and spread. The next step was expressing appreciation for *kresy* circles – migrants from the Polish eastern borderlands and their descendants. How PiS politicians perceive the *kresy* myth can be seen in their legislative initiatives and their justifications for them. The myth of a *kresy* identity, separate from Polish identity, is currently being reanimated. Stories of the Polish *kresy* paradise are ultimately intended to be the holy creation myths of a new Poland in PiS’s programme – the *kresy* are a mythical land flowing with milk and honey, where all nations once lived together in peace under enlightened Polish rule.

A cursory knowledge of history is enough to know that such a vision is not only false, but also harmful<sup>9</sup>. The practical realization of this vision was the amendment of legislation concerning the Polish Card, which became an extension of Poland’s immigration policy, paying homage to the principle that citizenship is not nearly as important as the most minute, frankly, undefined element of “Polishness”.

This shift in the direction of historical policy brought specific consequences in relations with Ukraine. The matter of genocide against Polish citizens in Wołyń by Ukrainian nationalists from OUN/UPA in 1943 came to the foreground, obscuring even the ultimately, moderately successful attempt to aid Kyiv in the conflict in Donbas. In July 2016, the Sejm passed legislation in which it point-blank designated the murders in Wołyń as genocide. Inasmuch as there cannot be any serious doubt in terms of the legal classification of this act, it is necessary to note the fact that all that is needed for such a designation is a political decision, and what is more, undertaken in the specific context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The discussion between Polish and Ukrainian historians has been ongoing since the beginning of the 1990s. In later years it was accompanied by agreed-upon political gestures. Nonetheless, there were also one-sided declarations on the part of Ukraine, such as President Yushchenko’s decree awarding the title of national hero to Roman Shukhevych, later repealed by the Ukrainian Supreme Court based on a motion filed by Viktor Yanukovich. Nevertheless, this was an exception to the rule and turned out to be an attempt at saving face by the extremely unpopular Yushchenko, and not a significant switch of Ukrainian policy with regard to Poland.

The legislation of the Polish parliament regarding the genocide in Wołyń, without providing context and in addition only accepted by Poland, was correctly qualified as a concession on the part of PiS to the extreme far right, mainly represented in the Sejm by the Kukiz ’15 formation, accompanied by the silent approbation of PiS MPs.

<sup>9</sup> P. Purski, *Wielka Polska Katolicka*, Eastbook.eu, <http://www.eastbook.eu/2016/03/22/wielka-polska-katolicka>

The shift to historical policy has also had another, interesting consequence. Polish history is difficult, full of failure and great sacrifice. This overlaps with PiS's internal narrative of a besieged fortress. All of this caused that PiS began positioning Poland in the international arena as a victim<sup>10</sup> of foreign state intrigues, regimes and ideologies. Polish victimhood is a fact and requires suitable commemoration, but the story of Poland which our politicians and diplomats are spinning abroad is different. If Poland is to be associated with omission and everlasting problems, then it will finally end up a self-fulfilling prophecy. Poland is a great and proud country, which initiated the transformation from communism to a functioning liberal democracy – until recently, this was the binding narrative regarding Poland. It was conducive to our “soft power” influence in relations with Ukraine or Moldova, but disrupted our relations, if only with Belarus. The story of Poland as an eternal victim is not advantageous to our foreign policy, because, frankly speaking, who would want to do business with an indefinite loser?

At the moment, Lithuania is not a part of Poland's Eastern policy, but it is historically perceived this way, because of the ULB (Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus) tradition and the fact that it was part of the Soviet Union. Despite mutual interests and both countries' membership in the European Union, relations with Lithuania are not good, and the blame falls on both sides. The main problem is discrimination of the Polish minority by the Lithuanian government. On the other hand, this minority fulfils an ambiguous political role, and because of its too cosy relationship with Russia, is treated with a good dose of suspicion by the Lithuanians. This is an inherently faulty circle, as the more Lithuania discriminates against the Poles, the more they orientate themselves towards cooperation with Russia. This could be fixed by a change in Lithuania's electoral law, so that Poles would always have some representation and would not have to enter into tactical alliances with the Russian minority. There is in fact no opposition to the thaw that PiS has initiated with Alexander Lukashenko's regime in Belarus. The far right does not protest, despite the fact that it sees discrimination at every turn in Ukraine or Lithuania, or the flourishing cult of Stepan Bandera. In the meantime, it is precisely in Belarus that the issue of persecuting the Polish minority – to a much greater degree than in Lithuania – has not been resolved. Why is this only seen as a problem in Lithuania, but not in Belarus? The answer, once again, lies in the shift towards historical policy. We have practically no historical issues with Belarus. This is why Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Development and Finance, Mateusz Morawiecki's visit to Minsk and his meeting with Belarusian dictator, Alexander Lukashenko, abounded with many economic declarations, but was completely devoid of any promises concerning improvement of the Polish minority's situation.

### Faceless Eastern Policy

Poland's Eastern policy has lost its face. It is currently unknown who to call to discuss relations with our neighbours in the East. Traditionally – since Aleksander Kwaśniewski, who literally and symbolically was guided by Jerzy Giedroyc's doctrine in his activities – the most active figure in Eastern policy was the Polish president. This

<sup>10</sup> On 13 October 2016, Paweł Kowal spoke of this during a conference entitled “Polish Eastern Policy”, at the castle in Wojnowice, near Wrocław.

is nothing unusual, since the president, as commander-in-chief of the military, has prerogatives in the sphere of security policy, while Eastern policy and security policy are tightly connected. The countries to the east of Poland are an area of strategic security for Poland, among other reasons, because it is so important to maintain good relations with them and keep non-democratic, imperialistic Russia at bay. An especially commendable position on Eastern policy was maintained by the late President Lech Kaczyński, who actively engaged in relations with our eastern neighbours. He deactivated one historical bomb after another and increased cooperation on energy policy. Unfortunately, there was a lack of willingness to cooperate on the part of the PO government, and ultimately his tragic death in the government plane crash near Smolensk meant that he was unable to complete the work he had started.

Bronisław Komorowski was also active in Eastern policy, especially in relations with Yanukovich's Ukraine. His calculation of partnership with the infamous former Ukrainian president was, despite criticism, the only sensible option at the time, because it was directed at pulling Kyiv closer towards the EU. No one imagined that the former Ukrainian president's corruption was so great that he would even be prepared to sell his own country in return for even greater opportunities to abuse his office.

Andrzej Duda's Eastern policy does not exist. The president accepted a presidential model which is based on subordination to PiS's leader, Jarosław Kaczyński, as well as the more powerful members of the government. Andrzej Duda's only international relations initiative stalled as a result of basic incomprehension of Polish historical terms such as *Intermarium* or ABC. In the end, the initiative was dubbed Trójmorze (Three Seas), but until now, its political effects have been miserly. In a business sense, perhaps something will come of it, thanks to EU funds and the promotion of cooperation between countries by the European Commission. Interestingly, the Three Seas concept received practically no response in Poland as a separate policy, besides in niche circles which politically support Andrzej Duda and are counting on the fact that he will eventually gain political independence. President Duda's engagement in foreign policy – especially Eastern policy – is simply artificial and this is unfortunately quite perceptible. He also has nobody around him who might understand Eastern policy and not reduce it to aiding Poles in the East, or celebrating another state or religious ceremony.

Witold Waszczykowski, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, also seems less than interested in Eastern policy. This is a result of the fact that, just like his predecessor, Radosław Sikorski, he is much too active in commenting on Poland's internal policy. This is also not helped by the fact that the PiS government has entered into conflict with the EU concerning disadvantageous changes in the Polish Constitutional Tribunal. As a result, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is often involved in putting out fires created by the leader of PiS, Jarosław Kaczyński, or politicians such as Antoni Macierewicz. Included in Minister Waszczykowski's so-called “Exposé”<sup>11</sup>, the proposal to reform the EU Eastern Partnership Programme has still not taken shape and remains a promise which, with the

<sup>11</sup> Information from the Minister of Foreign Affairs regarding the task of Polish foreign policy in 2016: [https://www.ms.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/wiadomosci/minister\\_witold\\_waszczykowski\\_o\\_priorytetach\\_polskiej\\_dyplomacji](https://www.ms.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/wiadomosci/minister_witold_waszczykowski_o_priorytetach_polskiej_dyplomacji).

current level of exhaustion and impatience felt by Poland's neighbouring EU countries and its institutions, will most likely not be settled anytime soon.

Minister Waszczykowski is attempting to intensify cooperation within the framework of the Visegrad Group. However, joint interests with Hungary are coming to an end, especially at a time when consecutive tempting offers are being dangled in front of Budapest by Moscow. It seems that ultimately Poland is hostage to Prime Minister Orban, who could break free from the alliance with Poland and agree to further procedural steps violating the rule of law with regard to Warsaw. On the other hand, the Czech Republic and Slovakia do not want the destruction of the EU or to create the impression that they are anti-EU, marching in line with problematic Hungary and increasingly unpredictable Poland. The joint interests of the Visegrad Group are negative in the sense that they rely on opposing the EU's migration policy. This matter will most likely either be forgotten or in large part resolved, and then the framework for cooperation will dissolve. For these reasons the Visegrad Group is a very distant, if not entirely unreal, prospective as the engine for Polish Eastern policy.

As well, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs demands that questions be asked about the place of Eastern policy in the thought-processes of PiS politicians. The Ministry contains two secretaries of state: Konrad Szymański is responsible for European policy and his rank is understandable, perhaps it even ought to be increased, creating a Ministry of European Affairs – especially important following the Brexit vote, at a time when more and more questions regarding the shape of the EU abound<sup>12</sup>. The second secretary, Jan Dziędziczak, is not responsible for Eastern policy, but for contacts with Polish diaspora communities and historical policy. This gives insight into PiS's priorities. The question of Polish minorities in the East, as well as history, strongly influences Poland's Eastern policy, so inevitably Dziędziczak tackles relations with our eastern neighbours. Dziędziczak is an experienced politician, while Eastern matters are handled by the undersecretary of state, who is a career civil servant. This only deepens the tendency that structurally and formally, Polish Eastern policy is reduced to historical policy. The fact that Polish Eastern policy is carried out by one individual with the rank of undersecretary is a mistake, which was also committed by previous governments. It must be clearly stated once more: Poland's Eastern policy is the domain of our security and should occupy an appropriate place in the state's structure. Historical problems, which often turn out to be chimeras and the result of years of Polish neglect of the East, cannot obscure real interests.

It should fairly be stated that PiS has somewhat pulled the brakes on the *kresy* impulses of its politicians and more extreme movements. Not long ago, the Speaker of the Sejm, Marek Kuchciński, cancelled a parliamentary conference on supporter movements of Polish autonomy within Lithuania, which – no doubt with the intent of provocation – was organised by representatives of extreme nationalist groups. The fragile left-overs of consensus to do with Polish Eastern policy rest solely in the hands of Jarosław Kaczyński. If he disappears from politics, the door to pro-Russian and foolish Eastern policy will stand

<sup>12</sup> T. Krawczyk writes more interestingly about this in: *Rewolucja prezydenta, "Rzeczpospolita"*, <http://www.rp.pl/Publicystyka/311239888-Krawczyk-Rewolucja-prezydenta.html?template=restricted>.

wide open, and in this matter, PiS will succumb to internal division (if it at all survives the departure of such a strong personality in one piece).

### Way to deal with the European Union?

The PO government based Polish Eastern policy mainly on the strength of EU appeal, believing that this political project was, if not everlasting, than at least durable enough not to quickly descend into crisis. These calculations turned out to be mistaken, as the EU did indeed find itself in crisis. Poland achieved its apogee of weakness when a seat at the negotiation table in Minsk could not be found for Warsaw in the settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian War in Donbas. Though some individuals tried to argue that this was a good thing, since Poland should not legitimise decayed compromises, it nonetheless seems that the fact that Warsaw has no influence on its neighbourhood, not to mention that no official EU representative had a seat at the actual table – but the leaders of the two strongest economies in Europe – is in itself disadvantageous for Poland. This is the backdoor, quiet introduction of a great power concert, at which Poland can only be the client of stronger states.

Nonetheless, as an area of aspiration for the inhabitants of countries of the former Soviet Union, the EU continues to possess serious power of appeal, despite Russian propaganda, which memorably presents Europe as "Gayropa" – the nesting place of amorality and chaos. Abandoning the myth of "returning to Europe" and creating an alternative based on fragile interests and unintelligible identity values of countries of the Visegrad Group or "Three Seas", does not strengthen Poland's Eastern policy. On the contrary, it is naivety itself to think that in the realm of conservative values, we will win out over the Russian story of *Russkom Mire*. Russia possesses every instrument and tool of propaganda, including the strong presence of the Orthodox Church, to spin tales of the spiritual foundation and Slavic unity on the territory of the former Soviet Union. Polish Eastern policy possesses suitable strength if it is backed by the authority of the EU, in other words the promise of order, peace and prosperity. Poland's activity should not head in the direction of sawing through the branches it is sitting on, because our strategic solitariness dispossesses us of aces in the game with Russia.

This should not conceal the fact that the EU currently does not offer what made it so appealing: prospective membership. Right after joining the EU in 2004, Polish politicians perfectly understood that they should promise their eastern neighbours at least some foggy chance of EU membership, because for Poland this was a motivating sphere of aspiration and the engine driving change. At the moment, there can be no talk of prospective membership, because the EU is in crisis following Russian aggression in Ukraine and the Brexit referendum. Replacing this with association agreements – technical documents and not a political vision of development and entrance into a stable, better world – is just political ersatz reduced to a technocratic dimension. What is needed is grand policy. If it is not rooted in a wider reflection of Poland's role in Europe and in light of the aforementioned tendencies, Polish Eastern policy will always be limited to a debate on history and not how to realize Polish national interests, or how to find ourselves in a comfortable environment, surrounded by friendly countries.

The author's believes that despite everything, a major discussion on Polish Eastern policy is necessary, because we have allowed ourselves to fall into a moment of dogmatic napping, which has made it so easy for foreign and security policy to fall into historical resentment and ad hoc, petty party interests. Let us not delude ourselves: our partners in the East have not helped us. For the first time in years we have to genuinely, existentially fight for Promethean Eastern policy. For this reason, we should not fear getting into disputes. Let us be substantive but determined, because we cannot allow ourselves mistakes in the sphere of Poland's security. Let us learn to once more get excited about Polish Eastern policy, let us tell thrilling stories and let us float brave prognoses and visions of the future.

Reaching for the classics of Polish post-war political thought will aid in defending against attacks on Promethean Eastern policy: Józef Łobodowski or Juliusz Mieroszewski regularly took part in erudite polemics with equally venerable politicians from the nationalist camp, such as Jędrzej Giertych. Many of these arguments continue to be of significance, but perhaps the most important was formulated by Włodzimierz Bączkowski just before World War II. In his now famous words: "We are not Ukrainophiles", he contained the credo of Polish realism regarding Polish foreign policy. We cannot allow for a Ukraine that will fall into the hands of Russia, because then we are the next stop on the Russian nation's road to realize its great historical mission they call "gathering Ruthenian lands". Those who claim that it is easy to come to terms with Russia at the cost of recognizing its sphere of influence in countries of the former Soviet Union are naïve. Their views openly harm Poland's *raison d'état* and the security of Polish citizens.

# NOWY PROMETEUSZ

P Ó Ł R O C Z N I K N A U K O W Y



*NOWY PROMETEUSZ* JEST CZASOPISEM SPECJALISTYCZNYM, DOTYCZĄCYM STOSUNKÓW POLITYCZNYCH, KULTUROWYCH, GOSPODARCZYCH I WYZNANIOWYCH NA OBSZARZE EUROPY WSCHODNIEJ, AZJI ŚRODKOWEJ I BASENU MORZA CZARNEGO.

INSPIRACJĄ DO STWORZENIA CZASOPISMA BYŁY TAKIE TYTUŁY JAK: *PROMÉTHÉE*, A NASTĘPNIE *LA REVUE DE PROMÉTHÉE* WYCHODZĄCE W PARYŻU W LATACH 1926 – 1940 DZIĘKI WSPARCIU ÓWCZESNYCH POLSKICH WŁADZ. PROMETEIZM, CHOĆ DZIŚ Z OCZYWISTYCH WZGLĘDÓW NIE AKTUALNY W ORYGINALNYM ZNACZENIU JAKO IDEOLOGIA I PRAKTYKA POLITYCZNA, MOŻE STANOWIĆ WZÓR ROZWIJANIA BADAŃ I POPULARYZOWANIA WIEDZY O EUROPIE WSCHODNIEJ, AZJI ŚRODKOWEJ I BASENIE MORZA CZARNEGO W POLSCE.

NA ŁAMACH *NOWEGO PROMETEUSZA* BĘDĄ PUBLIKOWANE, INICJOWANE M.IN. PRZEZ REDAKCJĘ, DEBATY Z UDZIAŁEM POLSKICH I ZAGRANICZNYCH EKSPERTÓW NA TEMATY ZWIĄZANE WIELOWYMIAROWĄ OBECNOŚCIĄ POLSKI NA WYŻEJ WYMIENIONYCH OBSZARACH. ZAMIESZCZANE BĘDĄ RÓWNIEŻ MATERIAŁY DOTYCZĄCE WAŻNYCH DLA POLSKI PROCESÓW TRANSFORMACJI RÓŻNYCH DZIEDZIN SPOŁECZNEGO I POLITYCZNEGO ORAZ ROZWOJU RELACJI TYCH PAŃSTW ZARÓWNO Z ZACHODEM, JAK POMIĘDZY SOBĄ. CZASOPISMO BĘDZIE ŹRÓDŁEM WIEDZY I MIEJSCEM DLA DYSKUSJI NA TEMATY HISTORYCZNE ORAZ PLATFORMĄ SŁUŻĄCĄ WZBOGACANIU WIEDZY I UZUPEŁNIANIU TRADYCJI POLSKIEJ MYŚLI POLITYCZNEJ Z OKRESU MIĘDZYWOJENNEGO. *NOWY PROMETEUSZ* STAWIA SOBIE ZA CEL PRZYBLIŻANIE POSTACI, KTÓRE W RUCHU PROMETEJSKIM I POLITYCE TEGO OKRESU ODEGRAŁY ISTOTNE ROLE.

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