

REVIEWS

Acta Poloniae Historica
107, 2013
PL ISSN 0001-6892

Jan Sowa, *Fantomowe ciało króla. Peryferyjne zmagania z nowoczesną formą* [The King's phantom body. A peripheral wrestle with the modern form], Kraków, 2012, Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 572 pp.

Although not an item of academic historiography, this book is an original and ambitious, in methodological terms first of all, attempt at reinterpreting a few important issues in the history of Poland between the sixteenth and nineteenth century. To achieve his goal, Jan Sowa has harnessed aspects of psychoanalysis and postcolonial theory, for the first time on this scale in the Polish literature. Unfortunately, although the author's central theses have been convincingly, or at least smartly, proven, his many detailed arguments arouse serious doubt: for the sake of theory, the unfitting facts tend to be notoriously neglected, the logic of the argument deserving much to be desired. This has no doubt been partly caused by the moralistic colouring of vast parts of this book, strongly emphasised by the author and permanently accompanying the no less extensive methodological-theoretical considerations.

The book undertakes a reinterpretation of the following issues: the civilisational and economic retardation between the sixteenth and the nineteenth century; the evolution of the political system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, with special focus on the nobility's 'golden freedom' ideology; and, finally, the ideological-political legacy of the Polish presence in – or, as J. Sowa puts it, colonisation of – the so-called Eastern Borderland area in the said period. Clearly, the book covers a broad array of topics, with a psychoanalytical-postcolonial interpretative key being the common denominator.

The first chapters are filled with considerations on the backwardness of Poland in terms of economy and civilisation, presented against the background of the development of manorial system. The author basically follows the findings of the most eminent Polish economic historians (Witold Kula, Marian Małowist, Jerzy Topolski, Jacek Kochanowicz), pointing that Poland's role at the time was one of a peripheral provider of raw materials for the Western Europe. The efficiency of corvee-farm economy decreased with time, whilst the thesis whereby Poland was in the modern period a 'granary of Europe' was much exaggerated: otherwise, it formed one of the foundations of the nobility's political ideology. To deconstruct and expose this ideology

seems to be the author's fundamental intention. Having quoted a series of well and long known facts testifying to a range of political-economic prerogatives of the nobility that was uncomparable to any other European country, and to the nobility's obsession about these rights being threatened by an *absolutum dominium*, the author comes to the conclusion that the Commonwealth was not a state in the proper meaning of the notion. Referring to Ernst H. Kantorowicz's thesis from his *The King's Two Bodies*, Sowa maintains that choosing the option of elective kings, the nobility essentially got rid of king as such, and made the institution of monarchy fictional. A fear of the imaginary absolutistic inclinations of this same 'non-existent' monarch and the ideology, founded upon this concept, of golden freedom and free election as the 'apple of the eye' of this freedom, is for Sowa the basis to claim that the 'murdered' monarch was an essential psychological demand; demonisation of the institution of monarchy was the way to compensate for the real want of it. This statement is underpinned, in the first place, with arguments drawn from psychoanalysis, mainly following Jacques Lacan's findings. Unfortunately, Sowa's penetrating considerations on psychoanalysis are supported with a historical material that is rather tenuous source-wise and, in any case, extremely general. As a result, it remains mostly unclear how literal our approach toward his aforesaid thesis should be – the thesis being derived from individual psychology and daringly transferred into the sphere of political ideology. In other words, it seems to be a spectacular and, doubtlessly, cognitively valuable metaphor, whilst as a reconstruction of the state of minds of Polish noblemen remains a plainly one-faceted proposal.

The author does not satisfy himself with the statement that the Commonwealth of the Two Nations was fictitious. He argues that the Polish nation in its nineteenth-century form is a phantasm, a "gesture of nostalgic return" to a reality that had never been there, one that has been "retrospectively constituted" after the Partitions – that, apparently, "traumatic encounter with the Real" (p. 412). The hitch is that in applying generalisations of this kind, one might find that European nations in their nineteenth-century shape were basically founded upon a similar gesture of resumption of the imaginary ethnic community. Unfortunately, Sowa completely disregards this, so strong as it is, trend in the modern reflection on the nation-formation processes and, to refer to a broader concept, on the 'invented traditions' (e.g. Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm). Answering the question what the *Commonwealth-that-was-never-existent* actually was, Sowa names it a 'Polish Borderland Company' – a sort of veil that covered the colonial venture of Polish nobility who strove to despoil and exploit the Eastern Borderland area (for not quite clear reasons, the author's remarks are confined in this respect to the territory of what is Ukraine today). The union with Lithuania, J. Sowa argues, has proved a suicidal undertaking for Poland, as it drove it for good into the vicious circle of backwardness – and, by winning the noble colonists

lands and influence, enabled the nobility's democracy to emerge, with its peculiar aberrations and a vision of own powerfulness that was rendered unreal. In other words, the Union allowed the nobility to cast a spell on themselves and on their state. True, all these statements have been known to Polish historiography for at least some 150 years, since the time of Józef Szujski – the fact the author seems not to be quite aware of.

The novelty consists here of the fact that, seeking support for his statements, Sowa resorts to an extensive body of the postcolonial theory, seeing in it an excellent key with which to interpret the history of Poland and, more broadly, the Central and Eastern Europe. On comparing the ownership conditions of the Polish nobility in the East against the Anglo-French colonialism, and moreover, the role the Eastern Borderland played in the Polish culture versus the concepts of areas of colonial penetration and their inhabitants, as known from the works of Edward Said (pp. 507 ff.), the author emphasises an oppressive nature of the social relationships in the Eastern Borderland territory (basically replicating the findings of Daniel Beauvois). The representations of the said territory in Polish culture, as Sowa argues in analogy to Said, are a mystification designed to conceal that brutal truth. Yet, insofar as this thesis could be recognised, again, as convincing on a general level, it befits to express the regret that this author has applied a postcolonial perspective to the history of Central and Eastern Europe in a schematic, if not, at times, thoughtless, manner. To give an example: in order to prove that the postcolonial theory is fully applicable with CEE region, he proposes the argument (pp. 458 ff.) that the 'chase for Africa' in the 1880s, which was caused, among other factors, by concrete technological inventions, had its counterpart in a 'chase for Eastern Europe' among Russia, Prussia and Austria, which lasted since the end of the 3rd Northern War till the Russian-Turkish war of 1877–8. Indeed, Poland was partitioned between those three powers then, Russia reinforced its rule over the Black Sea territory, whilst Austria – over a part of the Balkans. But a reverse process took place at that same time, with Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria regaining their independence, and Hungary gaining the status of a completely independent state with regards to its home affairs. To put it otherwise, however valuable and instructive the comparison of the policies applied by the powers (particularly) with respect to CEE against the Western colonialism might be, it only has a limited sense – especially with regard to the nineteenth century, when the dwellers of the 'colonised' lands gradually became, simply put, citizens of the local powers, whilst the metropolises' policies sought to unify them in a durable fashion with the 'centre'. This, in turn, proves completely incomparable with the contemporary situation in Africa, Middle East, India, or even Australia or Canada.

Moreover, driven by his whistle-blowing passion, the author seems to fully identify the nobility's 'colonisation' of the Eastern Borderland with Polonisation. As evidence of how oppressive the 'Polish dominance' in that territory

apparently was, he quotes e.g. the fact that “both the November Uprising [1830–1] and the January Uprising [1863–4] manifested itself in Ukraine weakly and was virtually confined to the nobility centres” (p. 484). It would suffice to check up with any textbook on the nineteenth-century history of Poland to learn that the nobility in Ukraine were nowise burning to uprising, and that in the ethnically Polish lands the uprisings did not enjoy mass support from the non-noble populace. The author announces, within the same page, as a kind of revelation, that the nobility “purposefully removed a large majority of the Polish society beyond the limit of heterogeneity” (i.e. excluded it from a political nation), whilst not referring at all to the otherwise numerous relevant literature. Still, he draws no conclusion based on this observation with regard to the ‘Polonisation’ of the Eastern Borderland, and refrains from observing that in their will to remain an exclusive group, as the basis for their identity and status, the nobility could not ‘Polonise’ the peasant folk. The time for such ideas, which formed one of the ideological foundations of the National Democracy, came only a few decades after the abolition of serfdom and decomposition of the nobility as a heterogeneous group that set the tone and defined the ‘Polishness’, or things Polish, as a trait appertaining to the nobility on an immanent and exclusive basis. Speaking otherwise, what we are faced with is a significant confusion of the chronology and of class/social categories with ethnic ones.

To sum up this part of J. Sowa’s considerations, it may be found that the Eastern Borderland, with its multi-level matrix of para-colonial dependencies, lasting throughout the Partition period (the nobility as a social-economic elite versus the culturally and ethnically alien people – the nobility itself being an object of political-economic prosecutions from the tsarist system, which never ceased treating this class with a respect due to the ‘natural’ elite), seem to be an excellent premise for modifying and extending the post-colonial theory. However, the discourse of expiation, with its understandable but simplified ‘oppressors vs. victims’ opposition, conceals the multifacetedness of the domination and dependence relations in this area. Second, the history of Polish colonial presence in the Eastern Borderland area, as told by Sowa, is incomplete, while the sententious conclusions drawn by this author from it appear unilateral, since its bloody final – the physical extermination of the ‘lords’ in the USSR and the expatriation of the Polish people from the Eastern Borderland after WWII – remains completely concealed. This conclusion makes this history basically different from the history of Western colonialism, which was crowned by the weaving of an elaborate network of post-colonial interdependencies in economy, culture and politics of the subdued nations.

Fantomowe ciało króla is, without a doubt, an ambitious and original attempt at re-interpreting a number of key threads in the history of Poland, in the spirit of the psychoanalytical and postcolonial theory. The book is simultaneously pervaded by a fundamentally journalistic whistle-blowing

passion with respect to a downright unscientific but popular-textbook vision of history, in its sentimental-patriotic version. Hence the legitimate surprise that the author gave it a form of comprehensive dissertation overladen with methodology, whose language is moreover extremely impenetrable, at times downright incoherent. The number of clumsy terminological borrowings, syntactic, phraseological and lexical errors, as well as editorial deficiencies is almost puzzling. To paraphrase J. Sowa, there appears an impression that this book has been written in a 'non-existent' language: not Polish any more, but not yet English or French. This fact ought probably be interpreted as one more proof that characteristic of Polish literature is a prevailingly postcolonial condition, as this literature subconsciously endeavours to free itself from exclusion from the Metropolis, to which apparent confinement the Polish language and context has contributed.

trans. *Tristan Korecki*

Adam Kożuchowski

Luise Schorn-Schütte (ed.), *Gelehrte Geistlichkeit – geistliche Gelehrte. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Bürgertums in der Frühneuzeit*, Berlin, 2012, Duncker & Humboldt, 210 pp., series: Historische Forschungen, 97

This volume, composed of nine articles and edited by Luise Schorn-Schütte, is another interesting yield of the meetings, organised in the last several years by L. Schorn-Schütte, of an international team of historians dealing with creation and flow of information between political elites from Antiquity to our day (*Politische Kommunikation von der Antike bis in das 20. Jahrhundert*). A professor of modern history at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main, Schorn-Schütte is a consummate scholar specialising in political and religious relations of the early modern period.

Most recently, she invited younger scholars, mostly German and Polish, to join the discussion aimed at rendering the participants updated on the research in the educational standards and social function of the clergy in the confessionalisation period. The texts they authored have been complemented with articles written by the American researcher S. Amanda Eurich of the Western Washington University, Bellingham, and Patrizio Foresta from the Fondazione per le scienze religiose Giovanni XXIII, Bologna – an Italian historian dealing with the Jesuit Order's activities in Germany in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Such selection of the disputants has enabled to present quite a rich array of the interpenetrating religious and national mosaic that was typical to Europe in sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries, and the role played in this system by the clergy scholars. It was a lucky coincidence that topics researched from the standpoint of history of art (Grażyna Jurkowlaniec) or music (Beate Bugenhagen) appeared among the issues under discussion. The starting point was, all the same, the will to demonstrate the learnedness and erudition of the clergy, typical to the new period which made the high educational standard of pastors, priests or rabbis almost a distinctive feature of this particular stratum of the social elite. Competing based on education level, command of languages, erudite and scholarly argumentation skills, ability to write a learned treatise became one of the most important forms of proving the superiority of one religion over the others, also provided a foundation of the erudite education model, characteristic to the entire early-modern period. In the aftermath, the tradition behind such education materially influenced the system of university erudition of historians in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

The volume opens with a short introduction by the editor, specifying the purpose and briefly describing the texts forming the collection. Before focusing on the studies of the younger generation of scholars, it is recommendable to read the article by Wojciech Kriegseisen, a historian specialising in political and religious relations in Poland and northern Europe, presently Director of the Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN), Warsaw. His text on Calvinists in Poland poses the question whether the community was one of learned noblemen, or rather, learned theologians ('Kalvinismus in Polen: gelehrter Adel und gelehrte Theologen? Forschungsfragen', pp. 13–24). The author presents a whole catalogue of research questions, confronting his readers with the myth of religious tolerance – the myth that has been cultivated in the Polish historiography over dozens of years, often used as an excuse from researching into the factual image of confessional relations and religious negotiations in Poland and Lithuania. The allegedly immanent association between Calvinism and democracy has proved to be another research myth – in the European historiography, this time; as it cannot be said to be fully reflected in the sources, the myth has proved entrenched for good since the time of Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch. Tomasz Wiślicz of the Institute of History, PAN, draws (in his 'Shepherds of the Catholic flock: Polish parochial clergy, popular religion, and the reception of the Council of Trent', pp. 25–52) an outline of the development of rural piety in the post-Trent period, up to mid-eighteenth century, emphasising the special role of the clergy in the development of folk religious culture. The article exemplifies certain creating attitudes through analysing selected biographies and the works of four clergymen from seventeenth and eighteenth century.

Basing on an affluent archival resource (Landesarchiv Greifswald, Stadtarchiv Stralsund, State Archives of Szczecin, *et al.*), Maciej Ptaszyński of the Institute of History, University of Warsaw, shows ('Orthodoxie aus der Provinz und Buchgelehrsamkeit. Theologisches Selbstverständnis der evangelischen

Kirche in Pommern [16./17. Jahrhundert], pp. 53–74) a profile of the second generation of the Lutheran clergy in the Duchy of Pomerania which turned Protestant in 1535. This group was strongly influenced by their university studies done at the leading Lutheran educational centres such as Wittenberg, also Greifswald and Frankfurt an der Oder. Seeing themselves as defenders of the orthodoxy, the pastors clashed with the nobility as well as with the urban elites. The author's focus is on the prosopographic aspects, taking into account the age structure of the pastors in the years 1565–1620, with a breakdown provided in a table and in diagrams.

A different universe of the erudition of the Jewish Diaspora in the 'Old-Polish' period – sixteenth to eighteenth century – is portrayed by Maria Cieśla of the Institute of History, PAN (in her cross-section article 'Geistige Führer oder Angestellte? – Die jüdischen Rabbiner im Alten Polen', pp. 75–88). This text is mainly based on the reference literature, but it also makes use of archival sources (the Radziwiłł Archives). The sixteenth–seventeenth-century rabbis enjoying the funding provided by their religious communities and, not infrequently, undertaking business activities on their own, in many cases proved capable of ensuring considerable economic independence for themselves. The position achieved by the most eminent of those rabbis enabled them to critically confront themselves – clearly, in the field of erudite theological polemic – with clergymen of Christian denominations. With the economic and political regression, the rabbinical education standard clearly deteriorated since the late seventeenth century, whereas the function of rabbi was increasingly strongly related to the local system of dependencies between patrons and clients.

The astonishingly miserable educational standard was characteristic about the first generation of Calvinist (Huguenot) pastors in Béarn, the French province located at the foot of the Pyrenees. This is portrayed by S. Amanda Eurich in her essay ('Between two worlds: Literary, learning, culture and the Calvinist clergy of Béarn', pp. 89–112). She made use, among other things, of the unpublished synodal deeds from 1594–1623, kept at the Bibliothèque de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français. The conclusions she draws appears to be by no means correspondent to the broadly popular and, it turns out, erroneous conviction that the Calvinist milieu was characterised by a particularly high education standard. Apparently, the phenomena known from a later period tend to be transferred to the sixteenth-century relations. The poor level of education among the first-generation Calvinist clergy had to do with a slender development of the Calvinist domestic university teaching. This appeared in contrast to the tertiary education developing in the northern and central Germany, or even to the semi-higher schools, of which there was quite a number in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth area. The location of Gascony and the country's destitution, as a whole; Béarn, situated far from scientific and economic hubs – simply, somewhat neglected province – formed part of it. The province's long-lasting liaisons with Aragon, and its

broadly disseminated use of the local Provençal dialect, Occitan, additionally hindered the inflow or production of appropriately educated Calvinist clergymen. It was only in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century that the standard of education began gradually improving, primarily because the local clergymen started associating themselves with the urban legal and juridical milieus and a high-tier Huguenot gentry who offered satisfactory political influence and education background.

The Lutheran clergy elite of the sixteenth-century Basel proved much better educated: they were perfectly integrated with the main exponents of the urban elites, political and economic alike. This milieu, which owing to its education achieved so significant a position in the social hierarchy, is portrayed by Andreas Wendland from the ProCredit Academy, Fürth-Weschnitz ('Städtische Geistlichkeit und reformierte Traditionsbildung. Zur konfessionspolitischen Verortung von Basels "Dienern am Wort" im 16./17. Jahrhundert', pp. 113–32).

The epoch's trends were also followed by other Catholic environments of the Trent revival period. Patrizio Foresta ('Gelehrte Seelsorger: Jesuiten und ihr Selbstverständnis', pp. 133–54) shows this process as he tracks the activities of Petrus Canisius (1521–97), a Dutch Jesuit, one of the most influential figures of the first Counter-Reformation period in Germany. Foresta has made use of old prints and of the resources of the German Jesuit Province (Archiv der deutschen Provinz der Gesellschaft Jesu, Munich).

The article by Grażyna Jurkowlaniec, Institute of Art History, University of Warsaw ('*Cracovia altera Roma*. Medieval Images, Medieval Saints, and the Shaping of Urban Piety in Cracow of the Seventeenth Century', pp. 155–84), is different in its character. Corresponding, to an extent, with T. Wiślicz's text, it shows the clergy's influence on the formation of certain forms of piety. Based on relevant old prints and, primarily, iconographic records and preserved monuments of art, the author has shown the role of those clergymen who claimed that "Cracow is the Rome of the East". This has been reflected also in appropriate equipment of the churches and in the iconographic programmes. It is regrettable, though, that the annexed reproductions, of rather poor quality, cannot serve as a valuable iconographic source.

The last article in the volume is by Beate Bugenhagen of the Institut für Kirchenmusik und Musikwissenschaft, University of Greifswald ('Gelehrte Musiker? – Kantoren und Organisten im frühneuzeitlichen Stralsund', pp. 185–95), and poses the question of the educational condition of cantors and organists working in Stralsund churches. The town's population in the seventeenth–eighteenth century was 10,000 to 12,000–13,000; Stralsund was the major urban centre in Mecklenburg, and second only to Stettin in the so-called Swedish Pomerania area. The author emphasises a relatively high social status of church musicians, which generally corresponded with the role of music in the liturgy, and with its important place in the education of elites

in the early modern period. Apart from name and locality indexes attached, the book is closed with the profiles of the authors (pp. 197–201) – a very useful means of rendering the reader better acquainted with the outputs of the contributing researchers, particularly those younger ones, not very well settled yet in the scholarly landscape of the earliest years of the new century.

Describing volumes being collections of texts written by various researchers, casually put together, not infrequently comes as a torment to the reviewer. Conference papers often tend to comprise average-quality texts, texts already known from somewhere else, or poor ones – along with excellent, well-documented texts which reveal novel research aspects. This is not the case, by any means, with the book in question. This set contains articles representing, all of them, a high content-related quality, all forming quite a transparent panorama of the social phenomenon under research. The reader has thus received quite a decent survey of the research state-of-play, getting familiar with the results of the recent studies. Several large research projects, whose outcome will be worth getting acquainted with, have been heralded on the occasion. In her introduction, the editor announces that subsequent volumes are expected to follow, resulting from ‘working colloquiums’ whose topics will include, for a change, religion and politics in the learned bourgeois discourse of the sixteenth to eighteenth century, and patriotism in Europe. We will surely be curious to get acquainted with them.

trans. Tristan Korecki

Edmund Kizik

Carl Christian Wahrmann, *Kommunikation der Pest. Seestädte des Ostseeraums und die Bedrohung durch die Seuche 1708–1713*, Berlin, 2012, Duncker & Humboldt, 394 pp., series: Historische Forschungen, 98

The year 2012 abounded in a number of respectable publications related to the origins, course and effects of the last great European bubonic plague pandemic in between 1707/8 and 1713, which expanded over a vast area of Central-Eastern and Northern Europe. Apart from occasional collections of papers delivered at the conferences in Rostock (2010) or Gdańsk (2009),¹

¹ Carl C. Wahrmann, Martin Buchsteiner and Antje Strahl (eds.), *Seuche und Mensch. Herausforderung in den Jahrhunderten. Ergebnisse der internationalen Tagung vom 29.–31. Oktober 2010 in Rostock* (Historische Forschungen, 95, Berlin, 2012), for a review, see Edmund Kizik, *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 105 (2012), 219–26; Edmund Kizik (ed.), *Dżuma, ospa, cholera. W trzechsetną rocznicę wielkiej epidemii w Gdańsku i na ziemiach Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1708–1711* (Gdańsk, 2012).

the 300th anniversary of the disaster instigated the publication of monographs dealing with specific detailed issues, such as e.g. religious attitudes displayed during the mortal threat (2010).² The latter include a doctoral thesis presented by Carl Christian Wahrmann at the Rostock University (2011), investigating into the flows of information between the towns endangered with the plague, and the influence of the information policy on the preventive measures taken by the local authorities in correspondence with the identified gravity of peril. The author has made himself known by his earlier works, mainly on the great plague.³ C. C. Wahrmann is co-editor of the aforesaid volume of the Rostock conference papers (2010); his article published in this collection excels among the other texts in the originality of the issue touched upon, and in the extensive source base used.⁴

For the purposes of his doctoral dissertation, Wahrmann has studied the flow of information and knowledge in the great plague period, focusing his attention on the five major cities of the south-western Baltic Sea area: Lübeck, Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund and Greifswald, located relatively not far from one another. These hubs, spaced rather evenly several dozen kilometres between each other along the coastal line, over a space of ca. 120 km, were in the past one of the most important Hanseatic towns of the so-called 'Wendish quarter'. In the early eighteenth century, they were medium-sized towns, of some 10,000 inhabitants each. Lübeck, the Reich's Free City, actually had a population of above 24,000; Stralsund, the second largest, was half the figure.

Wahrmann has conducted his archival research in the affluent, well-preserved collections of the municipal archives of Lübeck, Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund, Greifswald (including the latter's university and country archive – the Landesarchiv) as well as in the state archives of Schwerin, and Schleswig, and the Rigsarkivet of Copenhagen. The query's outcome and the way the research resource has been used deserve recognition and testify to a high standard of the research design and techniques applied; nonetheless, they may be found somewhat single-sided, which makes the study methodologically imperfect, in a way. The author has not ventured to refer to the well-preserved archive materials of the Baltic towns which were at that time the major

² E.g. Liliana Górska, *"Theatrum atrocissimum fatorum". Religiöse Pestbewältigung in Danzig 1709* (Tönning, 2010).

³ The bibliography and the text comprise references to five articles published in regional periodicals; see the author's bibliography in Clio online: Fachportall für Geschichtswissenschaften, <<http://www.clio-online.de/forscherinnen=2346>> [Accessed 15 May 2013].

⁴ Carl C. Wahrmann, "'nachdem aber die nachricht eingelauffen, daß die contagion sich in Copenhagen u. in andern orten sehr ausgebreitet" – Gerüchte über die letzte Pestepidemie', in Wahrmann, Buchsteiner and Strahl (eds.), *Seuche und Mensch*, 77–97.

exporters of cereals and other groceries and forestry commodities in the whole region – i.e. Szczecin (Stettin), Gdańsk, Königsberg, and Riga. This is why the study omits the information flowing from/to the towns that, owing to their situation at the estuaries of grand rivers, performed in the regional information system a much more important function than Wismar, Greifswald or Stralsund, portrayed in the book. Connected via the Oder River with its background area, Stettin handled the commercial operations of the Brandenburg March and the western Greater Poland. Gdańsk and Elbląg (Elbing) handled the Vistula-River trade with Poland, Königsberg – the Lithuanian trade, Riga – Lithuanian and Russian trade on the Narva, and Reval (Tallinn) – Russian trade. The authorities of all those cities carefully monitored the situation in their economic background and supply areas. This was the case also with the towns receiving the cereal exports, such as Swedish hubs in the northern Baltic shoreland (e.g. Stockholm, Gothenburg), where the situation's development and the progress of the plague was tracked. This is why the criterion for selection of the urban hubs in question should have been their importance for the economies and trade. Instead of being limited to one region, several areas, possibly of diverse political geographies (Sweden, Poland, Prussia), should have been taken into account. The criterion of intensity of contacts based on maritime and inland waterway shipping is of importance too. In fact, the annex listing the respondents of Lübeck (i.e. Annex II, pp. 376–9) makes it apparent that the most important cities Lübeck corresponded with were Gdańsk and Königsberg, rather than the not-quite-distant Wismar or Greifswald. Moreover, investigation into the circulation of information in the markets of Amsterdam and London, the main clients of the Baltic exports, would possibly have proved more beneficial in terms of evaluation of the Europe-wide circulation of information. Hence, the selection and the reasons given for it by the author (pp. 19–21) are not fully satisfactory. Contrary to what Wahrmann states, neither from a social nor even a legal standpoint can the aforesaid cities be seen as representative for the entire Baltic region; if so, only for a part of it. Therefore, the title phrase *Seestädte des Ostseeraums* (sea cities of the Baltic area) appears too extensive, not corresponding with the study's content or the selected source material. The precise phrase, aligned with the content, would thus be, *Seestädte des südwestlichen Ostseeraums* (sea cities of the southwest Baltic area).

Apart from an extensive introduction (A: 'Einleitung', pp. 11–54), the book has three chapters. The first (B: 'Das System der Pestmaßnahmen'), adopting the systematics proposed by Martin Dinges,⁵ outlines the preventive

⁵ Martin Dinges, 'Süd-Nord-Gefälle in der Pestbekämpfung. Italien, Deutschland und England in Vergleich', in Wolfgang Eckart and Robert Jütte (eds.), *Das europäische Gesundheitssystem. Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede in historischer Perspektive* (Stuttgart, 1994), 23.

actions taken by the municipal authorities in view of counteracting the penetration of infected people into the municipal jurisdiction area, the forms of eradication of the detected foci, the institutionalisation of the measures and actions taken, and the basic rules of supra-regional coordination of actions.

The second (C: 'Einsatz und Wirkung von Medien', pp. 90–207) and the third chapter (D: 'Exemplarische Pestkommunikation', pp. 208–325) form the core of this study. Chapter C describes the sources and techniques of acquiring information about the occurring perils as well as the methods and techniques of further dissemination of such information. The author discerns direct sources, being pieces of information acquired by questioning, interrogations of witnesses and suspected individuals, gathered at church services or other prayer assemblies, or during collections of alms for those affected by the epidemic. The indirect sources discussed include: private and institutional correspondence, reports, decrees and ordinances of the authorities, minutes of meetings, supplications or petitions, medical treatises, newspapers – the latter including various letters of advice, brochures or leaflets. Wahrmann seeks to take a quantitative approach toward the variety of sources used, showing the outcome in the form of diagrams or charts. He has also identified a third category of sources of information on the pestilences, covering objects designed to isolate humans and things: quarantine sheds situated along public roads, as well as warning gallowses erected for the time of plague at the frontiers and along the main inland and water routes leading to cities. Affixed to the said gallowses (*Pestgalgen*), to the 'plague boards' (*Pesttafeln*) or pillories were copies of edicts warning that the capital punishment was impossible for infringing the quarantine, selling goods not subject to quarantine, smuggling individuals holding no health passports into the towns, *etc.* Albeit this particular aspect is very interesting, let us emphasise that erection of such deterring giblets has been confirmed by the sources for Rostock alone.

The no-less-comprehensive Chapter D focuses on analysis of the content of the circulating information, whilst exemplifying it appropriately. The first subchapter specifies groups of people most heavily suspected of, or responsible for, dissemination of the sickness. Their appearance in the urban jurisdiction areas has always been associated with an increased public threat, which was primarily owed to 'vagrants', who partly formed the margins of society – e.g. Gypsies or alien beggars; also, petty vendors, who in most cases were identified as Polish Jews; and, soldiers or marauders. The following subchapter deals with postal communication in the time of the heaviest threat. Analysis of the alleged influence of the weather factors on the appearance of the plague is proposed in the next section. In the last subchapter ('Regional bedeutsame Einzelereignisse', pp. 283–325), the reader's attention is attracted by the events of the second stage of the Northern War: the appearance in the Swedish Pomerania of the troops from the withdrawn Swedish

corps commanded by General Ernst Detlof von Krassow, together with the courtly companions of the expelled Polish king Stanislaus I Leszczyński. The latter stayed in Stralsund, then a Swedish town, together with his surrounding people, between October 1709 and September 1711. When the threat from Russia increased and the situation of Stralsund grew uncertain, the court moved to Sweden. The march-past of soldiers from the areas of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth overwhelmed by the plague aroused, no doubt, a legitimate care of the authorities of the towns concerned. Wahrmann gives very decent evidence of the hopeless attempts at keeping down the demoralised soldiers, while pointing out to overly limited possibilities of the municipal authorities in ensuring the impermeability of sanitary cordons or an elementary order during the plague. The image of the trouble Stralsund had with accepting the Polish court (together with the Queen Mother), who after Charles XII's defeat wandered around from one place to another, constantly on the move, forms an interesting contribution to the numerous biographies of King Stanislaus Leszczyński, whilst also enriching Polish historical documents with new interesting sources.

I have read C. C. Wahrmann's book with mixed feelings. The study presents a number of research aspects in reference to the individual towns in an interesting and well-documented manner. The author has studied a rich source material, on which he reports in an exhaustive fashion; yet, he remains somewhat constrained by the research micro-perspective assumed. I would not deny that the results of his analyses can be extrapolated to other regions and Baltic-area towns, but even so, such a procedure would need being relevantly proved and evidenced based on the sources – especially that it was not only the bubonic plague that united the entire region under a threat. Another cataclysm that affected the region's southern part was the Great Northern War (1700–21). The plague of 1708–13/14 was yet another calamity, along with the severe winter of 1708/9, the period's hardest. The influence of this winter on the society's health condition is taken into account, whilst the study deals the hostilities rather incidentally.

Complete negligence of the Polish reference literature in the research survey is a serious drawback of the study (see pp. 11–17).⁶ This might clearly be explained by the focus on the five towns, yet it was the Commonwealth territory that was affected the heaviest and the longest by the war and plague, which from the area of Ukraine was dragged on to the other provinces of the state involved in the Northern War, and subsequently, to the whole of Central-Eastern Europe. The pieces of source information quoted by Wahrmann often mention Jews from Poland, passages of troops and marauders from the Commonwealth's territory; this issue is not commented upon whatsoever, though.

⁶ This is not to be replaced by the works of Juliana Górska and Piotr Kociumbas, published in German and mentioned in the study's bibliography.

The author did not reflect on the question whether 'Polish Jews' was an informative topos, or they really formed significant groups. No reference made to the study by Andrzej Karpiński of 2000⁷ and to the literature list compiled therein is astonishing, all the more that references made by German historians of the younger generation to publications in Polish have become a standard over the last two decades. Wahrmann's book discusses the course of events in Poland based on the English literature (p. 40, fn. 103; pp. 59, 85), or textbook literature (pp. 299 ff., 310 ff.). Regarding the context, the failure to take into consideration the by-now-classical works of Polish economic historians concerning, e.g., maritime-shipping-based contacts between the Prussian ports of Gdańsk, Elbing/Elbląg, Königsberg, Memel/Klaipeda (e.g. the statistical studies by Czesław Biernat, Stanisław Gierszewski, Andrzej Groth), merely ensues from the decision having been made. A noteworthy thing, these studies are mostly composed of shipping statistics in a tabular form and with multilingual descriptions, which makes them relatively easy to use.

Let us propose a few detailed remarks in order to correct this author's findings. There is no information known to us which would confirm the supposition that the Swedish army was responsible for having brought the plague to Gdańsk in 1708 (pp. 40-1); the plague did not appear in the town's vicinity in 1707 (p. 5) but only in 1709. The plague was moving from the Vistula tributaries all the way up to the river's estuary, alongside the commercial contacts (floating of cereals and forestry products). Map no. 1 (p. 42) remarks that the plague ended in Poland in 1709, whereas in fact it continued at least till 1711; in Elbing, it lasted till the first months of 1710. Contrary to what we can read in Wahrmann, King Stanislaus Leszczyński did not flee from Gdańsk before the plague (p. 318), as he never visited the city at the time; Gdańsk, besides, tried to stay neutral in the conflict. Together with his loyal troops and von Krassow's corps, Leszczyński operated in Greater Poland area; after Charles XII was defeated, he retreated via Poznań and the Brandenburg territory to Stettin where the royal family had been residing since 1705.

The reference to Thucydides's work and to archaeological research (of bones) concerning the period in question (p. 44) in an intent to prove that a considerable number of the dead cannot be regarded as victims of bubonic plague but rather, of diseases of a different etiology (pp. 44-5), is unnecessary. Demographic estimations of losses deduct, as a rule, the average numbers of the buried of a several years' period, as recorded in 'ordinary' years, from the number deceased in a given town. As he discusses the special, symbolic gallowses erected for the time of plague, the author is wrong while saying that permanent gallowses were placed in the central squares of towns (p. 202).

⁷ Andrzej Karpiński, *W walce z niewidzialnym wrogiem. Epidemie chorób zakaźnych w Rzeczypospolitej w XVI-XVIII wieku i ich następstwa demograficzne, społeczno-ekonomiczne i polityczne* (Warsaw, 2000).

In fact, such giblets were, as a rule, built outside of a city, as they were designed for infamous punishment, whereas the hanged persons' corpses either remained non-removed or were buried after some time.

In spite of some criticism I have not spared to the study and its author, it is a work that presents a number of hitherto neglected research aspects. This author has recognised and rendered historians acquainted with quite a portion of source material. In the micro-optics of the several western cities of the south-western Baltic coastal area, the book of C. C. Wahrmann shows the circulation of information quite well and convincingly; many of the discussed phenomena have been richly documented with source quotations. Therefore, I should have no doubt that the work under review forms another important step toward the development of a large interdisciplinary and, hopefully, international synthetic study on the bubonic plague pandemic that occurred in 1707–14 in the central part of Europe.

trans. Tristan Korecki

Edmund Kizik

Jan Krzysztof Witczak, *Historycy rosyjscy wobec rewolucji bolszewickiej i rzeczywistości radzieckiej w latach 1917–1938* [Russian historians facing the Bolshevik revolution and the Soviet realities in 1917–1938], Toruń, 2012, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 675 pp.

Expressing an opinion on a – forgive me the Russian phrase – *tolstaya kniga* (a real thick book!), running some seven hundred printed pages, poses a real challenge to the reviewer. The reading is made no easier as the author advocates the somewhat anachronistic formula of compiling the footnotes at the end of each chapter. Let me add straight away that the references and notes are extremely numerous (over 2,000) and extensive, making up almost a third of the text's volume.

Jan Krzysztof Witczak has undertaken a subject that fits history of historiography, in the classical depiction of the concept. The focus of his interest is a milieu of Russian historians and their attitude toward the October Revolution and the Soviet state after 1917. This issue has marked its intense presence in the last two decades in the Russian historical afterthought; earlier on, it was dealt with to a larger extent in the Western historiography, remaining just touched-upon by Polish scholars, for a change.

The mutual relationships between historiography and a totalitarian state, which the Bolshevik Russia doubtlessly was, form one of the key topics focusing the interest of researchers studying the historical thought of the

previous century. If the phenomenon of historiography be viewed on a comprehensive basis – that is, taking into account the historians' milieu and its representative institutions, the theoretical and methodological assumptions accompanying the historiography, and the image of history created within its scope – of special interest in this context seems to be the relations between 'a repressive science', on the one hand, and 'a repressed science', on the other. As the vicissitudes of Russian scholars pointedly show, it often fell as their lot to recognise themselves, or encounter one another, at both sides of the 'historiographic barricade'.

J. K. Witczak's study has purveyed a combination of the two perspectives. Analysed are the biographies and outputs of researchers – those identifying themselves completely with the Marxist-Leninist programme advocating a restructuring of historiography, those who assumed an expectant position against it, as well as those historians whose attitude toward the Bolshevik experiment was hostile from the very outset. This being the case, one finds that the author has taken up a subject matter of importance, one that is present in international literature and proves important for Polish historians as well, as it evokes the totalitarian experience of our native historiography – from the Stalinist era.

The author has founded his considerations upon an admirable source base. It was probably for reasons beyond his control that, as he admits, he has not managed to penetrate post-Soviet archival collections. Yet, his use of a considerable number of published Russian documents, specialist press, as well as texts written by the historians of his interest, gives the author a good character. It is worth bearing in mind, too, that in a majority of cases, we deal here with original Russian documents, monographic studies and articles never translated into Polish. As far as the reference literature is concerned, it seems that the author has neglected none of the publications of importance for his considerations. Still, the classical study by Georgii Vernadskii, *Russkaya istoriografiya* (official Russian edition: Moscow, 1996), comprising e.g. suggestive profiles of Russian émigré historians, has not even been mentioned in the bibliography.

The Western literature should have been taken into consideration a much greater deal. It is not only because of my task as a reviewer to insist that the bibliography should have mentioned, and the study made use of, the books by Jane Burbank, François Furet and Anatole G. Mazour (just to quote the most important of them)¹. Of the Polish authors, I should mention in this context the studies by Gwidon Zalejko and Jarosław

¹ Jane Burbank, *Intelligentsia and Revolution: Russian Views of Bolshevism 1917–1922* (New York, 1986); François Furet, *Le passé d'une illusion. Essai sur l'idée communiste au XXe siècle* (Paris, 1995; Eng. edn: *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet [Chicago, 1999]); Anatole G. Mazour, *Modern Russian Historiography* (2nd edn, Princeton, 1958).

Bratkiewicz.² The former has attempted to adapt Thomas Kuhn's category of paradigm to the research into the phenomenon of Soviet historiography, in an interesting way that has so far been rarely employed, at least in the Polish literature. The latter said author discusses, in a competent manner, the ideological background behind the transformations of the Soviet historical thought.

The work by J. K. Witczak is of a chronological and problem-related character. The foreword section clarifies the author's purpose, described as "an attempt to present the relations between the Soviet authority, getting formed due to the victory of the Bolshevik revolution, and the leading representatives of the Russian historical science of the years 1917–38" (p. 5). An interesting typology of attitudes the Russian historians adopted in face of the Bolshevik upheaval is also preliminarily drawn, and followed up as the study unfolds. The author convincingly explains the chronological framework for his analyses. While the initial date, 1917, would not arouse much controversy, the conclusive one – 1938 – is much more disputable; still, the date the famous *Brief course* was published is indeed an extremely important caesura in the history of Soviet historiography. Admittedly, the preset time limit is not rigidly observed by the author: he goes back to the second half of the nineteenth century and the pre-Revolution period, and refers to the time of war and the years the Stalinist system declined (roughly, up to 1956). I will resume this thread as I go on with my remarks.

The first chapter (An outline history of Russian historical science between the middle of the nineteenth century and 1917: schools, main trends and their exponents') is introductory. The author displays his erudition and proves how well-read he is; the question arises, though, is such a section necessary at all? If yes, should it have been this voluminous (over 100 pages)? I am fundamentally doubtful about it; the author's argument that writing about historians such as Evgenii V. Tarle or Mikhail N. Pokrovskii in the period after 1917 necessarily implies referring to their biographies from before the Revolution and analysing their output from that period, has not convinced me. To my mind, if the purposefulness of the chapter in question is defensible at all, the chapter ought to have been much abridged, and the reader referred to a rich reference literature.

Chapter Two ('The form and transformations of Soviet historical science in 1917–38') and Three ('Russian historians facing the Bolshevik Revolution and its aftermath, within and outside the Soviet state') are key for the subject-matter in question. Chapter Two shows the metamorphoses taking place in the Soviet historiography in the period of author's interest. The

² Andrzej Zybertowicz (ed.), *Interdyscyplinarne studia nad genezą kapitalizmu*, iii: Gwidon Zalejko, *Marksistowski paradygmat badań historycznych* (Toruń, 1993); Jarosław Bratkiewicz, 'Stalinowska nauka historyczna – zamówienie polityczne', in *idem*, *Wielkoruski szowinizm: w świetle teorii kontynuacji* (Warsaw, 1991), 75–92.

proposed meticulous analysis has enabled to grasp, I believe, the primary threads related to the institutional sphere, theoretical and methodological assumptions of the Bolshevik historical writing, as well as milieu transitions. Following the literature's findings (B. A. Chagin, V. I. Klushin), it is aptly stated that the Bolshevik authority nowise possessed from the very outset a ready-to-use novel historiographic model. Instead, such a model was emerging by trial and error, also resulting from the transformations taking place in the political-ideological sphere as the regime was becoming solidified. I would nonetheless suggest that the chapter's contents have been slightly rearranged: I believe that the appropriate starting point would be the proposed analysis of the ideas of the leading Bolsheviks (Lenin, Bukharin, Trotskiï and, subsequently, Stalin) on the role of history in the new state, followed afterwards by a portrayal of the organisational changes, theoretical directives binding for the milieu, and alterations in the image of the history of Russia and general history. This would have made the narrative even clearer, and founded on a logical pattern. Since a pattern of this kind is missing, the reading at times arouses a sense of chaos, with the numerous threads getting torn, and then resumed by the author in various sections within the chapter.

Chapter Two is definitely the best part of this book. With use of a biographical key, a broad typology of attitudes assumed by the milieu is presented. Consequently, the author discerns between: (i) enthusiasts of the 'new order' (for instance, M. N. Pokrovskiï, N. M. Lukin); (ii) loyal collaborators (A. E. Presnyakov, V. I. Picheta); (iii) independent scholars who "maintained ... quite a distinct distance toward the ardent advocates and sworn enemies of the revolution" (N. A. Rozhkov, B. A. Romanov); (iv) opponents of the Bolshevik experiment (S. F. Platonov, A. A. Kizzeveter); (v) historians who switched from a "real negation to a pro-Bolshevik enthusiasm of a make-believe sort" (E. V. Tarle, B. D. Grekov). This typology has enabled the author not only to cross the limits of a black-and-white schema appearing sometimes in the literature but also enabled him to show the real, rather than devised, drama of the choices the Russian historians faced since the late 1920s. Parts of this chapter piercingly describe the ambience of dread, fear of one's own life, care about the relatives, all of which became an irremovable fragment of the Soviet everyday reality in the time of Stalin's incrementing autocracy. Quotes from the interrogations held by OGPU [secret police] investigators in the so-called 'Academic Affair' are shocking evidence of infirmity of some and audacity of others. Really and truly, one is reminded of Arthur Koestler's excellent novel *Darkness at Noon* – being, as is known, a fictionalised account of Bukharin's fortunes.

A dissertation of this sort normally ends with a conclusion. In this particular case, the proposed conclusion definitely leaves a sense of want. It only runs four pages, footnotes included, and thus remains blatantly disproportionate in relation to the remaining parts of the work. One gets the impression that once such an extensive treatise has been written, the author lacked the force

or idea to write an adroit, attractive and well-conceptualised summary. It is also a pity that the author has not ventured inserting subchapters within his large chapters, which would set the individual threads in an order and facilitate the reading of the comprehensive texts.

It is good that an annex has been attached offering selected bibliography of the major works of thirty Russian historians who appear in the book. An extensive subject bibliography and a name index, are much helpful instrument with a work of this sort.

In sum, in spite of the critical remarks, I believe that the proposed construction of the study is correct and, more importantly, well materialised with regards to a majority of the contents.

The reading of J. K. Witczak's book induces to formulate a few general, polemical reflections. First, the text is definitely too lengthy, and wordy at times. In my view, some of the sections could have been made briefer and revised without a material damage to the interpretation of the main topic. Instead, the treatise would gain in readability and attractiveness.

Second, I should like to focus on certain methodological deficiencies of this book. The author too often limits himself to discussing and quoting the sources, the conclusions appearing in his narration usually refer to the findings already present in the literature. The impression is that his care about the research methodology, precise rendering of the facts related to the biographies of the historians in question, have blinded the author to the fundamental issues. These would include, to my mind, the following questions: (i) What were the basic constituents of the Bolshevik historiographic model? (ii) Did the historical afterthought evolving in the Stalinist period still bear the traits of scientific discourse, or was it merely a *pure* ideology that had a part to play in the game for power? (iii) What were/have been the consequences of the Bolshevik scientific policies for the historians' milieu in the Soviet Union and in today's Russia?

I am perhaps trying to set too high standards for the author, but these matters seem to me to be of key importance for learning any meaningful lesson from that 'coerced marriage' of the historians and the totalitarian authority in the twentieth century. This lesson would be of importance also to Polish scholars – both those remembering the short experience of Stalinism, which was incomparably less severe for the milieu (as is proven by the study in question), and those writing of these events today, including the undersigned. Thirdly, the reappearing statement that there has been a continuity between the pre-Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary Russian/Soviet historiography, albeit never explicitly proposed, appears dubious. In the conclusive section, Witczak states, in a polemic with Paweł Wiczorkiewicz's opinion:

in spite of the enormous, undisputable and severe losses incurred, the progress of creative thought was successfully continued, even if with indirect reference

to the various creditable traditions preceding the October – say nothing of the *rather frequent, purely Soviet achievements in this field* (p. 613; italicised by R. S.).

While not fully sharing the view of the late Warsaw historian, who wrote about the annihilation of Russian intelligentsia and the ‘de-cerebration’ of Russia that resulted from the Bolshevik upheaval, I should think that also Witczak’s thesis seems poorly documented and not quite convincing. Unless we accept N. N. Vanag’s claim from the early 1930s that the Party now needs in the historical front a *Bolshevist Ilovaïskii* (p. 384) – if I am allowed to switch to an ironical tone for a while.

The issue has a broader dimension to it, as a matter of fact. The interpretation of the transformations taking place in the Soviet Union – launched in the trendsetting country and later followed by the other historiographies of the communist bloc – whereby the said transformations were primarily seen in terms of continual historiographical tradition, has deliberately *marginalised* the influence of Stalinist or Marxist-Leninist historiosophy. I am convinced that the theory of social-economic formations, with all its accompanying methodological or ideological implications, has played the key part in superimposing the Bolshevik patterns upon the Russian historiography and, subsequently, the historiographies of Central and Eastern Europe. The said theory functioned as a general-historical schema that not only set the sense of the history of each of the countries concerned but was also decisive about the rules binding with respect to its formation. What I have in mind is, for instance, the directive which told historians to deal with specified, rather than any other, problems; references made to the ‘classical’ authors’ writings in the explanation procedure, *etc.* Historical researchers were, in most cases, allowed no creative role to play in the Stalinist period; their rank and place were (pre)determined by the doctrine’s framework. Using Mikhail Heller’s concept, they were but the ‘cogs in the wheel’ – to deliberately sharpen the argument. This is how nothing else but an (intentionally) totalitarian character of the changes in the Soviet historiography is called into question. Stalinism strove for eliminating all the other discourses of the past, save for the Marxist-Leninist one. It was therefore not merely a type of courtly historiography, as some would approach it, but as if an inherent feature of the Stalinist historical science (or perhaps, politics). Therefore, anything that was creative and unorthodox in the Soviet historical thought before 1938 (I would refer here to the output of e.g. Sergeï F. Platonov or Dimitriï M. Petrushevskii) and later on as well (just to recall the fortunes of Aleksandr M. Nekrich or Aron Gurevich) was deliberately and consciously pushed off to the peripheries and eliminated from the mainstream historical thought.

As for the detailed remarks, I doubt whether one may consider apt the comparison of the liquidation zeal the Bolsheviks manifested in the 1920s with regards to history, against Paul Valéry’s known opinion from a later

period which challenged the cognitive and didactic values of historical knowledge (p. 156). The fragments describing the ethical dilemmas of Mikhail N. Pokrovskii, who “with a heavy heart received the news of the bloody struggles between the Whites and the Reds” and wrote at the same time, on behalf of the Bolsheviks, that “renouncing terror is merely a palaver”, sound somewhat bizarre when quoted with no commentary from the author. So it goes with the other instances, wherever a citation is quoted but the need to express a critical opinion neglected.

The study contains a certain number of stylistic and editorial errors, incoherent or erroneous spelling of the names, sometimes erroneous versions of publication titles; this does not speak in favour of the proofreaders, enigmatically mentioned in the masthead as ‘teamwork’. The bibliography placed at the end of the book should have included N. Berdyaev’s *The Russian Idea* and A. Blok’s *The Last Days of Imperial Power* in the ‘Sources’ rather than ‘Secondary Works’ section.

The critical remarks I have delineated do not affect my generally positive opinion on J. K. Witczak’s book. In Polish literature, it is the first such extensive attempt at describing the vicissitudes of the milieu of Russian historians after 1917. The author has doubtless put a lot of effort to systematise the basic facts, conscientiously reconstructed the biographies of the leading Russian historians, and added a number of new sources to Polish historiographic research. It happens at times, though, that this author finds it difficult to see the forest for the trees; this may be primarily due to an ‘annalistic’ style of narrating. I should think that it is a synthetic, summarising glance at the phenomenon of Soviet historiography that I miss most about the Poznań historian’s book.

trans. *Tristan Korecki*

Rafał Stobiecki

Andrzej Czyżewski, Sławomir M. Nowinowski, Rafał Stobiecki, and Joanna Żelazko (eds.), *Bez taryfy ulgowej. Dorobek naukowy i edukacyjny Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej 2000–2010* [No preferential treatment: The scholarly and educational output of the Institute of National Remembrance, 2000–2010], Łódź, 2012, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej. Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Oddział w Łodzi, 494 pp., series: Biblioteka Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej, 27

Bez taryfy ulgowej is a volume of studies and materials related to the conference held in December 2010 on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN). The Institute is one of

the major institutions dealing with the most recent history of Poland, and doubtlessly the most controversial one. The volume is unique as it is not merely a report on IPN's operations but also a summary of its scholarly and educational activities, with an attempt at a critical revision of the issues the Institute deals with. It also documents the controversies aroused in the Polish historical milieu by the fashion historiography is practised by the IPN-labelled scholars – although the authors' intention was no doubt to view the output in question with a distance. This task has seemingly been carried out incompletely: the texts comprised in the volume are all substantive, focusing exclusively on the scholarly facet of the Institute's activity, and yet almost all of them appear classifiable with the two distinct camps of enthusiasts and critics of this activity.

The Institute of National Remembrance was established by the *Sejm* (Parliament of Poland) of the Republic of Poland in 1998, and commenced its actual activity two years later, surrounded by a climate of political dispute, with a view to settle accounts with the recent communist past of Poland. As regards IPN's strictly scholarly activity, its statutory mission consists in research into the history of Poland in the years 1939–90 – the time of the two totalitarian systems, with a primary focus on problems of political repression, activities of the institutions delivering such repressive measures, and the social resistance coming as a response. Although partly modelled after the Gauck Institute of Germany, is actually unique worldwide. It consists of four divisions: research, archival work, vetting (since 2007) and prosecutorial. The functioning of IPN is founded upon its custody over the archives of the communist political police – the Security Service (SB) and the Security Office (UB).

The use of those archives, the ways of their disclosure, and the vetting of former agents and prosecution of political crimes from the People's Republic of Poland (PRL) period have aroused a number of controversies and disputes in Polish public life in the last twelve years. Unanimously associated with the political Right, IPN has a party to those disputes – particularly during the rightist government's term in 2005–7 and the time Janusz Kurtyka was in office as the Chairman (he was killed in the Smolensk plane crash in April 2010). This has no doubt affected the Institute's activities, as many historians of rightist views were attracted, especially of the young generation, who set as a goal for themselves to 'rewrite' the history of Poland in an anti-communist spirit. This was accompanied by sententious slogans, voiced till this day, advocating the need for doing justice to victims of communism, if not to equate communism with Nazism in historical research and, more broadly, in the social consciousness. This very ideology, which is explicitly or implicitly manifested in many a scholarly publication logoed by IPN, has been subject to expert criticism by professional historians and is reflected in the texts contained in the volume under review.

A separate issue, which is still connected with the Institute's ideological profile, is the methodological standard of scholarly studies written in this institution. In general, the critical opinions comprised in this volume (expressed e.g. by Rafał Stobiecki, Sławomir M. Nowinowski, Andrzej Friszke) focus on the unidirectional character of these studies with regard to their sources: they are preponderantly based on the UB and SB archives. Many among them are fragmentary also because their authors have only focused on the materials produced by the communist political police, or purposefully quit the idea of using the sources of different types, assuming that this police organisation was essentially best informed about what was going on in the society they supervised. Critics stress that such an approach was many a time declared by IPN-affiliated historians, without much awareness of the specificity of police sources, with indifference shown with respect to a broader interpretative context, and with an ideological and whistle-blowing passion of their authors, which is hardly reconcilable with the ideals of historical unbiasedness or just an analytical astuteness. Hence, the image of the PRL that, in the opinion of the Institute's critics, emerges out of the works of the historians associated with IPN, neglects, in practice, the vast areas situated outside the black-and-white opposition of 'repression' vs. 'resistance' against the communist regime.

Seen against this background, of interest is Andrzej Nowak's article titled 'The tragedy of IPN', with its attempt at defending the methodological assumptions of the Institute's research. Referring to the flagship works of narrativist theory of historiography (Hayden White, Frank Ankersmit), Nowak argues that there is a need for researching into the most recent history of Poland along the lines of a 'tragic' paradigm: as a clash of the irreconcilable reasons of the 'perpetrators' and 'victims'; he holds up the historiography dealing with the Holocaust issues as a model for the communism scholars to follow. An obvious weak point of such ascertainment, otherwise theoretically hard to challenge, is the fact that the criticism of IPN's historiography refers, to a considerable extent, to the problem of the archaic assumptions of this historiography, in the spirit of a nineteenth-century positivism, oriented toward determination of the unquestionable 'truth' about the past, which would be told from the standpoint of the paradigm of a national history – being, by definition, unique and morally undisputable.

The authors of *Bez taryfy ulgowej* have embarked on a systematic review and critique of IPN historians' research on a series of issues, such as: the German occupation during WWII; the conspiratorial activities in the Stalinist period; the political life in the PRL; the political emigration after 1945; the Catholic Church in the PRL; and, the Jewish and Ukrainian issues. As regards the aforesaid ideological problems, the emphasis put by IPN historians on the period 1944–56 seems to be of note. It is combined with an apologetic attitude of several authors of the studies under analysis toward

the so-called 'Cursed Soldiers' (partisan troops that fought against the communists), including the factions which referred to the extreme-rightist ideologies. Interestingly, the accusations of Right-oriented profiling, so strong in relation to IPN's historiography dealing with the communist heritage, are rather poorly confirmed in the area of research into ethnical minorities. For instance, as to the very controversial issue of Polish-Ukrainian relations, IPN-affiliated historians fall in most cases outside of the radical-martyrological current of Polish historiography.

Furthermore, the authors of the essays under review draw our attention to a generally fragmentary character of studies on the PRL – not only those pursued by IPN but generally, in Poland after 1990. Against the background of a great number of exiguous monographs, they have noted a strikingly small number of synthetic works, dealing with longer periods or larger territories (countrywide synthetic studies are hardly any, which is true also for biographies). Tomasz Szarota stresses that IPN studies clearly seem to neglect the German occupation period, which again seems to be reflecting a broader trend in the recent Polish historiography. Some of the authors identify the reasons in the decentralised structure of the Institute: the organisation carries out a lot more local investigations, conditioned – or rather, inspired – by the local archival resources, than large-scale, methodologically in-depth, countrywide projects. IPN historians explain this referring to, among other things, their Institute's social mission, its research being oriented toward arousing the local historical memory, also in response to the appeals of local milieus – e.g. former political opposition activists.

The present analysis of IPN's scholarly output is complemented by the essays on the periodicals edited by the Institute (e.g. *Biuletyn IPN, Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość*) as well as on the institution's educational and exhibition activities. Again, remarks are made on an ideologically biased and methodologically sparing character of IPN's scholarly publications – although there are notable exceptions the authors have obviously focused their attention on. Violetta Julkowska's account of IPN's educational activities is probably the volume's most commendable critique of the Institute's doings: her critical remarks actually boil down to a postulated deepening of IPN's cooperation with teachers, to whom it extends its offer. The volume is concluded by three essays (one of them by Łukasz Kamiński, current Chairman of IPN), under the common title of 'What kind of an IPN Polish historiography needs?' In brief, apart from appeals for rectification of the aforementioned negligences, the postulates expressed by the authors come down to the formal-and-legal issues, such as intensify scholarly cooperation with other relevant centres, or shift greater funding to grant-financed research open to persons from outside the Institute.

In sum, the book offers, roughly, an analysis of IPN's scholarly output which would be expected owing to its title: extremely critical, both with

regards to its ideological purport and, primarily, thematic scope and substantive level. It is worth emphasising once again that, as most of the authors have observed, the Institute's scholarly output in the research on the most recent history of Poland does not fundamentally diverge, in the two latter mentioned aspects, from the countrywide standard. In other words, these studies have overall been done on the level of detailed, fragmentary findings, whereas attempts at general-and-sectional, intellectually and methodologically deepened synthetic studies have so far been scarce and unique.

trans. Tristan Korecki

Adam Kożuchowski