

## REVIEWS

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Mikołaj Getka-Kenig and Aleksander Łupienko (eds.), *Architektura w mieście, architektura dla miasta. Społeczne i kulturowe aspekty funkcjonowania architektury na ziemiach polskich lat 1815–1914* [Architecture in the City, Architecture for the City. Social and Cultural Aspects of Functioning of Architecture in the Polish Lands, 1815–1915], Instytut Historii PAN, Warszawa, 2017, 244 pp., 25 ill., 10 diagrams

The book under review joins the tradition of socially-oriented research into nineteenth-century urban areas and their architecture. While this methodological orientation is presently the most popular perspective adopted for urban studies in Poland, having yielded several excellent publications on the country's major metropolises, it apparently "still is a rare phenomenon in the Polish soil", the editors argue in the introduction. Hence, they set for their book they have prepared an almost pioneering role of "opening the [Polish] history of art and architecture to social problems". Putting aside this blustering announcement, it has nonetheless to be pointed out that the volume's definite advantage consists in the contributions from scholars representing various disciplines of the humanities, forming altogether an interdisciplinary research space.

The volume encompasses eleven articles arranged into three sections. The scientific quality of the studies and their association with the subject-matter indicated in the book's title are quite diverse. The editorial work seems incoherent as the criteria for classification of the texts are rather poorly conceived; added to this is their casual arrangement within the subject units. While some articles clearly enter into a dialogue with one another, taking up similar threads or referring to the same notional categories, they are separated by texts not quite associated with them, which often makes it difficult to confront the research outcomes and see a clear emerging picture.

The first part of the book ('Debates around City; Urban planning, Biopolitics') contains three studies on theoretical concepts of urban area (town/city) formulated in the nineteenth and early twentieth century by the major participants of the period's 'city discourse' (architects, social activists, politicians, and hygienist physicians) and stemming from quite diverse stances. As it seems, the extensive text by Emilia Kiecko ('Some problems at the verge of the modern 'city building' trend in the Polish lands') would have fitted as the

section's opening chapter. The article outlines the key concepts which other authors elaborate upon in their respective articles. Kiecko takes as a starting point a critical review of the current state of research on the history of Polish urban planning concepts, with its overlapping ideas originating from various (mainly German, French and British) sources. Based thereon, she introduces the category of 'regenerative myth' as an interpretive key to understanding of the conception of Polish town planning theory, which helps her embed the latter in a broader socio-political context. The author stresses that the new concepts of urban construction stemmed at the turn of the twentieth century from a sense of deep crisis implied by intense urbanisation combined with quitting the traditional rules of shaping the urban space – the crisis the contemporaries found piercing. Hence, the then-modern urban planning recommended delving into the past, in view of reviving the best of its traditions – to be reread through the prism of the challenges of the time – as the antidote against the 'urban disease'. In the concepts of Polish theoreticians, this revival and regeneration was coupled, as Kiecko finds, with the national and identity-related values, and with the architecture and spatial form of urban areas being meant to be their vehicles.

In such a perspective, Kiecko analyses the programmes (authored by Antoni Lange, Alfons Gravier, Józef Polak, Jan Rakowicz, Ignacy Drexler, Józef Holewiński, Roman Feliński, and Artur Kühnel) aiming at rehabilitation of urban spaces through eliminating overpopulation and extreme poverty and seeking to upgrade the infrastructure in view of enhancing the functioning of the urban structure and ensure its harmonious development, part of which was improved health and sanitary conditions as well as aesthetics. By so 'curing' the space, Polish theoreticians intended, according to Kiecko, to attain moral and physical regeneration of inhabitants of towns and cities who were degenerated owing to the inhuman conditions prevalent in the space they lived in. This would have led to revitalised social relationships and eliminated tensions. Thereby, the concepts of modern urban planning were meant to be an efficient tool of bio-politics. Essentially, however, as Kiecko convincingly argues, the texts by Polish pioneers of modern city building reveal certain class-related or ethnic prejudices that imposed the removal of groups potentially threatening the ideal order of the reformed metropolises outside the limits of the projected reality. Therefore, in relation to workers or Jews, who allegedly were not able to meet the high hygienic standards (also, aesthetic and moral standards, in the opinion of certain authors) that were meant to prevail in modern cities, postulates were oftentimes posed that they be spatially separated from members of other classes, professions, or ethnicities. Kiecko brilliantly unveils the perversity of this narrative, which concealed the obscurantist, 'caste'-based spatial segregation that petrified the existing social hierarchies and divisions under the guise of 'modern' hygienic or health-centred arguments.

The other two texts included in the section are more monographic. The problem of dwellings for the poorest social strata in towns of the Kingdom of Poland is considered, in bio-political terms, by Kamil Śmiechowski ('The residential question in large towns of the Kingdom of Poland at the beginning of the twentieth century as a political issue'). The article analyses the changes taking place in the urban infrastructure improvement programmes in the time of the Revolution of 1905, in connection with the fiercely radicalised socio-political sentiments, followed by the proletarian revolt. As Śmiechowski notices, Adolf Suligowski in his publications from the late nineteenth century perceived the development of social housing (non-expensive but reliable) as a remedy for the hunger for dwellings, high prices of apartments and dreadful sanitary conditions; social housing was expected to revive free residential market and counteract profiteering in the construction industry. Since these recipes brought about no real improvement and did not prevent revolt, the idea was commonly expressed after the year 1905 that the housing market could only be efficiently regulated through proactive policies of municipal governments implementing appropriate institutional and legal solutions. And even though the Kingdom of Poland never saw a municipal government put in place before the First World War, the theoretical texts written irrespective of their authors' political sympathies perceived the housing question, as Śmiechowski remarks, as "one of the pillars of urban policy". The last article in this subject unit – 'Contributions of the hygiene movement to Polish urban-planning thought, 1850–1914' by Aleksander Łupienko – analyses in detail the association, indicated earlier by Emilia Kiecko, between the theoretical output of Polish hygiene movement and the emergence of the foundations of modern town planning. Łupienko traces how the opinions and statements of Polish hygienists evolved: at first, they were confined to proposing how to solve single health and sanitation problems afflicting the urban hubs; with time, they turned into a comprehensive vision of shaping of the city, the latter being approached as a multidimensional and dynamic organism. The author shows how the debates on methods of fighting dirt and diseases influenced the transformations of modern towns, how the awareness emerged of interdependence between problems such as removal of waste from the urban space, supply of clean water thereto, or ensuring access of sunrays and fresh air into residential interiors, on the one hand, and the need to alter the previous rules of architectural and urban-planning design (primarily, in terms of transport network structures, mutual functional and spatial relations between buildings, their cubic volumes, internal divisions, façade compositions, furnishings, and so on), on the other.

As declared by the editors in the introduction, the book's second part ('Public space in urban area and identity') investigates the ways in which identity – national, religious, class, etc.) affected the public space of towns or cities, particularly in the styles and symbols of architecture. The section starts

with an article by Daria Bręczewska-Kulesza ('Architecture taken advantage of as an instrument of Germanisation and new identity of town: nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Bydgoszcz as a case in point') describing the stages of transformation of Bydgoszcz from a 'Polish' town, originally incorporated by King Casimir III the Great and belonging to Poland-Lithuania continually until 1772, into a 'typical Prussian town' where intensive German colonisation soon yielded a change in the ethnic and religious relations, Prussian administration was introduced along with German names of the streets, town-planning and architectural solutions were modelled after the other German towns of the time. The article in question provokes certain methodological objections. Bręczewska-Kulesza certainly proves that the architecture of Bydgoszcz became in that time a 'tool of Germanisation' that, in effect, changed the town's cultural landscape, blurring its former visual identity and replacing it with a different one, stemming from the newly imposed authority and culture. The question remains open whether the Prussian authorities intentionally 'made use' of the town's architecture as a Germanisation instrument, as the author believes. Or, perhaps, what actually happened was that mainstream forms, deemed typically German, were used – as was common with towns then-recently incorporated in Prussia as well as those belonging to Prussia 'for ages' and thus not having to 'consistently' demonstrate anything. Bearing in mind that it is the context of elements of an architectural language that is decisive about their significance, reconstruction of the ideological dimension of the construction policy pursued by Prussian authorities would require being based on much broader research than the analysis of the forms and spatial situation of individual buildings as proposed by the author; such extensive investigation would cover archival documents and period's press, among other things.

The doubts mentioned here grow more emphatic when juxtaposing Bręczewska-Kulesza's article against the subsequent one, penned by Krzysztof Stefański ('The case of Łódź: architecture as the means of expressing ethnic and religious identity').<sup>1</sup> The researcher offers a showcase analysis of the Łódź's cosmopolitan architecture as a reflection of the complex ethnic, religious, and social situation of the town, second only to Warsaw in importance within the Kingdom. Stefański presents the construction initiatives taken, primarily, in the sphere of sacred architecture by the major communities inhabiting Łódź – the Evangelicals, Catholics, Jews (Orthodox and Reformed), and the Orthodox – that emphasised their rank in the city's life by the location, scale, and richness of forms of the temples they founded. The author stresses

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<sup>1</sup> The author builds upon his earlier findings described in the books *Architektura sakralna Łodzi w okresie przemysłowego rozwoju miasta 1821–1914* (Łódź, 1995) and *Jak zbudowano przemysłową Łódź: architektura i urbanistyka miasta w latach 1821–1914* (Łódź, 2001).

that their architectural style most frequently ensued from references to the cultural traditions of the ethnic groups concerned, which had to do with the fashion prevalent in their environment, prestigious considerations, trust in architects imported from their 'country of origin', etc.; hence, given the economic dominance and intensified construction activity of the local German community, the architecture of Łódź resembled the one of Berlin the most', as the period's press described it. For a long time, the choice of a style did not stand for a national manifestation; instead, it marked the identity and rendered the local communities culturally distinct, without a tint of ideology. According to Stefański, ethnic tensions became reflected in the discussions over the architectural form as late as toward the end of the nineteenth century, culminating on the occasion of the competition for the design of St. Stanisław Kostka's Catholic church, when enormous controversy aroused around the winner, a German architect of the Lutheran confession.

The subsequent article, by Mikołaj Getka-Kenig ('The architectural form and counteracting symbolic exclusion in urban public space: the case of the Kościuszko Mound')<sup>2</sup> complements the present outcome of research in the ideological and formal origins of the Cracow monument to Tadeusz Kościuszko (the author does not refer the reader to any related publication, though). The article first analyses the discussions around the decision to form the planned monument into a mound that would imitate the 'ancient' mounds of the legendary King Krak(us) and his daughter Wanda, highlighting the arguments that seemed decisive for those involved in the monument's erection, as far as the choice of the benchmark was concerned. The arguments included the durability of the material form of the primeval graves and the fastness of their accompanying memory recorded in folk legends, all this combined with the democratic collective effort that led to the heaping up of those graves (the Krak mound having been made "of lumps of earth thrown by the soldiers' hands onto the leader's tomb") as juxtaposed with a 'democratic' element that was already then dominant in the Commander-in-Chief myth. In the arguments put forth, the author notices and excerpts a 'peasant thread' which is coupled with direct attempts to get the peasants involved in the building of the monument (by inviting them to participate in the fundraising action or the solemn inauguration of the construction project) and the plans to set up a 'Kościuszko' settlement around the Mound, to be populated by selected 'rural families' who had 'fought under him (i.e. the Commander)'. Getka-Kenig aptly reads all these declarations and gestures

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<sup>2</sup> As the author remarks, his article is based on an excerpt from a chapter of his doctoral thesis, published in the book form as *Pomniki w Księstwie Warszawskim, Królestwie Polskim oraz Wolnym Mieście Krakowie w latach 1807–1830: komemoracja wizualno-przestrzenna a problem zasługi we „wskrzeszonyj” wspólnocie narodowej* (Warszawa, 2015).

as a symbolical admission of peasants to co-participate (in a controlled and limited manner) in the national community, which coincided in time with the reform of peasant relations undertaken by the authorities of the Free City of Cracow, thus being part of their far-reaching policy. Yet, the argument whereby one of the reasons why the initiators and builders of the Kościuszko monument resolved to shape it into a simple mound was their consideration for the perceptive potential of the 'intentional' peasant recipient seems too farfetched (and sounds ahistorical), in fact.

In spite of its title ('Russian military barracks and the development of Kingdom of Poland's cities in the nineteenth century'), the subsequent article, by Mariusz Kulik, deals to a limited extent with the influence of barrack complexes on the development of the towns in which they were situated (save for a brief passage on the Warsaw Citadel, which proposes no new findings or conclusions, though). Instead, it is an interesting study showing the military, legal, economic, transport-related, and spatial determinants behind the construction of Russian barrack complexes in the Kingdom's towns, and discussing the binding guidelines regarding the form, size, or functional and compositional layouts of such complexes, which rendered such developments prevalently normalised. The last study in this subject unit, authored by Małgorzata Hanzl, corresponds with the article by Krzysztof Stefański, as it explores the peculiarity of districts populated in the nineteenth century by Jewish people, the Jewish ethnic and religious identity being epitomised, in Hanzl's view, not by public architecture (as in Stefański's concept) but by the form of urban structure ('Semantic aspects of urban structures. A case study of districts populated by Jewish people in nineteenth-century central Poland'). Making use of the methodological tools elaborated for the use of modern research into the morphology of town, the author seeks for the relationships between the culture of everyday life as typical of Jewish communities from the areas of today's Masovian and Łódź Voivodeships and the urban structures of those fragments of cities and towns, larger and smaller, populated by these communities. Aware of the enormous diversity of the lifestyles of the period's Jews (depending on their material status, religiosity, method of earning a living, background, and so on), Hanzl spotlights the places inhabited by those groups cultivating traditional Jewish culture with the most intense characteristics typical of the community. The researcher finds that the traditional Jewish quarters, concentrated within a restricted area and founded upon a strong sense of community, characteristic of Jewry, were distinct against their non-Jewish counterparts with their dense population and density of development, fragmented irregular land plots, and more intensive use of public space in that some domestic activities were transferred into backyard areas, walkways, streets, and market squares. Focused around venues of key importance to the community (synagogue, house of study, ritual baths, marketplace, etc.), individual development quarters gained a dense network

of internal connections that facilitated and stimulated social contacts. As Hanzl notices, this specific character of traditional Jewish areas, ensuing from a singular social organisation of their dwellers, perceived by the other 'city citizens' as a lack of spatial order, was thus one of the sources of anti-Jewish stereotypes mentioned by Emilia Kiecko in her above-described study.

The underlying criterion for selection of articles for the volume's part three is not quite clear ("private space in public buildings [*sic*] and residential houses in Cracow and Warsaw"). It did not provide a very useful tool for arranging the material in an order, and hence the last unit looks extremely casual and inconsistent. For whatever reason, the excellent study by Kamila Twardowska ("Modernisation and identity of urban space. The architecture of Cracow municipal primary schools in the later nineteenth/early twentieth century") opens the section, though in terms of content it certainly belongs to the group of articles on identity discourse in the urban space. It discusses the network of public schools erected by Cracow authorities for the most indigent social strata in terms of a major upgrade-oriented investment project before the First World War, and based on the architecture of these buildings shows the attempts made at the turn of the twentieth century to redefine the cultural identity of Cracow, in which the previously dominant element of tradition was enriched with the element of modernity. References to stylistic forms perceived then as indigenous (and, moreover, evoking the best times of Cracow's education) as well as the rich narrative details expressing the 'Polish' character of Galician schools coexisted in the architecture of these institutions with the solutions coming across the period's ideas of the socio-cultural function of schools as an institution, which were shaped in line with the 'modern' postulates of the hygienic movement and indications of the progressive pedagogical thought (quiet location, greenery surrounding the area, playing area delineated, spacious and well illuminated classrooms, glamorous halls, wide and bright traffic routes, quite a number of restrooms and shower booths, taps with drinkable water in gymnasiums and playgrounds, and so on).

The section's next article, by Emilia Ziółkowska, tries to reconstruct the structures of family life of Warsaw bourgeois families on the basis of spatial and functional arrangements of the premises they occupied ('The functional programme of residence interiors and the model of Warsaw bourgeois family between the Uprisings [i.e. 1831 to 1863]'), showing how patriarchal models of life were reflected in benchmark designs published by Polish architects (Adam Idźkowski and others) as well as in buildings developed for specific families – villas, palaces, and residential houses. The traditional division of roles in the family, regardless of nationality or religion, was primarily expressed, in Ziółkowska's opinion, in the layout and size of the individual rooms and in the separation of the space that corresponded with the private/family life, which was the women's domain, from the professional and representative sphere, reserved for men. The closing text, by Piotr Kilanowski ('The set-up

of residential storeys in Warsaw downtown tenement houses in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century'), discusses the spatial layout of various types of tenement houses, depending on the shape of the land plot they were founded upon. Based on penetrating archival and field research, the study appears to be almost entirely material-oriented. Somewhat incidental to the considerations on diverse residential conditions on the different storeys of Warsaw tenement houses, remarks on the scale of the period's social stratification do appear, but the presented results definitely call for a deeper interpretation, in line with the assumptions of the present edition.

Although it contains a few poorer-quality texts, the book under review is an important contribution to the development of the research on towns and cities in nineteenth-century Poland. Regardless of what the introduction announces, no new methodological framework has been imposed to such research, and no breakthrough analysis proposed; yet, the spectrum of issues subjected to scientific reflection has been enlarged and some essential findings formulated, particularly as far as the theory of nineteenth-century urban planning is concerned. All in all, the book should be regarded as a very good starting point for further studies on the phenomenon of modern city at the time it became taking shape.

trans. *Tristan Korecki*

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Frank Hadler and Matthias Middell (eds.), *Handbuch einer transnationalen Geschichte Ostmitteleuropas*, vol. 1: *Von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2017, 685 pp., 3 ills; series: *Transnationale Geschichte*, 6

This first, and pretty extensive, volume of an ambitious publication comes as a result of long years of effort of the researchers associated with the Leipzig-based Geisteswissenschaftliches Zentrum Geschichte und Kultur Ostmitteleuropas (recently renamed as the Leibniz-Institut für Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Europa). The editors have set two tasks for themselves: firstly, probe, with use of selected case studies, to what extent the history of East Central Europe can be expressed in a transnational concept; secondly, systematise the knowledge on the existing research into the subject-matter in question. As they declare in the introducing section, 'East Central Europe' refers in their book to the Habsburg Monarchy territory and the Polish lands under Partitions. Apart from the question how much historically legitimate such a concept is (the study focuses on the latter half of the nineteenth century, the time by which the associations between the former eastern borderland of what had been Poland-Lithuania with the rest of Polish lands had grown

quite tenuous), the term is not used consistently in the book. The Baltic governorates (*guberniyas*), Byelorussian and Ukrainian lands are referred to incidentally; ethnicities such as Jewish, Romanian, or Serbian are almost inexistent – whilst they did populate the Kingdom of Hungary's area. Some of the authors omit, as a rule, the imperial centres – that is, actions taken by Germans and Austrian Germans. Others, particularly in the texts dealing with activities of states, do not employ such a limitation. The chronological framework spans from the middle of the nineteenth century to the year 1914, the period referred to as the 'first globalisation'. The issues addressed fit within what used to be associated, a few methodological turns ago, with the notion of modernisation. These include territorialisation (the state or non-state factors 'winning' and controlling a space), migration, economy, and emergence of international organisations. All these topics reappear in the (much less sizeable) second part where the current state of historiography is discussed for each of the topics and research postulates proposed.

The reading of the book implies mixed feelings. Starting with the positive ones, most of the studies contained in it are very successful and full of interesting, offbeat pieces of information. This is one of the reasons why they are really close to the ideal of transnational historiography, which the authors are willing to attain. The chapters such as Michael G. Esch's on migrations, Beata Hocks's on culture and arts, Uwe Müller's on economic interrelations in the region, and Katja Naumann's on internationalisation of humanitarian aid and fight for women's rights, perforce extend to sections of the respective extensive issues. The selection of the material and the unavoidable gaps are excusable, the narration being fluent and logical. The communication between the chapters is not as clear, though. There are almost no reciprocal references; some authors have a predilection for methodological reflection (Hock) while others do not (Naumann); attempts at extracting interesting pieces of information with use of 'capsules' have been made most inconsistently. The linking factor is, definitely, the authors' sensitivity to gender issues and a critical attitude toward the earlier historiography, apparently focused on national and state-centred narratives.

Compared with the abovementioned articles dealing with specified historical problems, the essay on territorialisation by Steffi Marung, Matthias Middell, and Uwe Müller seems less fulfilling. The subject, sketched extremely broadly, is discussed on a hundred pages, which repeatedly makes the authors utter superficial and clichéd statements. The overtheorised formulations of rather simple arguments are at times exasperating (for example, that '*die imperialen Ergänzungsräume*' were in East Central Europe not overseas colonies, as a rule; p. 46). Such flaws are perhaps due to the imprecise formulation of the topic. 'Territorialisation', similarly as 'transnationality', is a relatively fresh notion. The juxtaposition of these notions makes the authors move within a research field without clearly defined limits.

Part two describes the output of historians who have dealt so far with the problems under discussion, with particular focus on those who exceed the framework of national histories. The articles composing this section correspond with the more extensive studies in part one. The current state of research is discussed by the same authors who have outlined the respective topics in the preceding section. While the informative quality of these texts should be rated highly, the actual use of the bibliographical information provided will be made somewhat difficult owing to the spelling errors (of which, let us remark, part one is virtually free). More importantly, the proposed reception of the earlier research seems somewhat exclusionary; for instance, it does not at all refer to the achievements of East Central European researchers inspired by the *Annales* circle. Although most of the local studies produced within this current concerned modern age (and problems of feudalism, such as the 'secondary serfdom'), rather than the nineteenth century, the studies of Witold Kula or Henri Stahl did extend into the era of interest to the *Handbuch...* authors. Iván Berend and György Ránki seem to be the only exceptions to the (sad) rule. A more severe lack is, seemingly, the fact that studies on comparative history of ideas, fairly vividly developing in the recent decades, have been completely ignored. The transfer of ideas and transnational associations of their propagators were discussed in the exquisite studies by Denis Sdvižkov, Maciej Janowski, or Balázs Trencsényi.<sup>1</sup> Some of them were published in a German translation or were originally written in German – as in the case of Sdvižkov (who, as well as Janowski, has made contributions to *APH*). Likewise, the absence of the *History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe* (co-authored by Trencsényi, Janowski, Mónika Baár, Maria Falina, and Michal Kopeček; publ. Oxford, 2016) – the work which has proved groundbreaking for regional studies in a transnational perspective – has to be taken note of. While the book was published recently and could have escaped attention of the *Handbuch...* editors, let us remark that the publication in question refers to some other, even if yet-uncompleted, transnational East Central European history projects, definitely less interesting, to my mind, than the aforesaid study. Among the local research traditions ignored by the editors is comparative historiography of nationalism, open to transcultural questions in the works by, notably, Józef Chlebowczyk and Henryk Wereszycki.

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<sup>1</sup> Denis Sdvižkov, *Das Zeitalter der Intelligenz: Zur vergleichenden Geschichte der Gebildeten in Europa bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen, 2006); Maciej Janowski, *Polish Liberal Thought Before 1918* (Budapest and New York, 2013); *Coping with Plurality: Nationalist and Multinational Frames of Mind in East Central European Political Thought, 1878–1940*. Thematic issue of *East Central Europe*, 2–3 (2012), ed. by Maria Falina and Balázs Trencsényi; *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, xlvii, 2 (2000), an issue of Polish-language sociological and cultural-studies magazine focused on the intelligentsia and intellectuals.

The community of Slavic humanists – the figures such as Josef Dobrovský or Zorian Dołęga-Chodakowski – which emerged in the former half of the nineteenth century is, after all, nothing else than an example of transnational history of East Central Europe.

In the Introduction, the editors declare their interest in “cross-border movement of people, goods, ideas, and capital”. The negligence of the above-specified research traditions and entire issues (the history of the intelligentsia; internationalisation of German and Austrian universities before the First World War; borderland sociology, in the spirit of Chlebowczyk), however disagreeable, would in itself give no good reason for being overcritical. Any author may refer to the tradition of his/her liking. In this particular case, though, we come across a creative continuation of research on East Central Europe and a critical evaluation of this research. Once the authors complain about scarcities and gaps in local historiographies, they can be expected to be genuinely knowledgeable of them. Otherwise, they can expose themselves to a similar accusation.

All in all, there are strong as well as weak points to the book in question. In a simplified wording, the publication is ‘strong’ where experts in concrete historical problems are given the floor; it goes ‘weaker’, though, where it attempts to merge these threads into a logical whole or assess the corresponding research tradition. Such a distribution of advantages and disadvantages provokes the question whether the editors have made the luckiest possible choice as far as presentation of the outcome of the team’s work is concerned. Used in this context, the word *Handbuch* (‘handbook’) suggests two possible options: either the book provides theoretical and methodological guidelines for practicing research in a given field (in this case, transnational history of our part of Europe); or, it constitutes a history of the sort in itself, in a more or less complete form (as is the case with the numerous *handbooks* published by Oxford and Cambridge University Presses). The present *Handbuch* meets neither condition: the reader will not learn much about the methodology of transnational research, whilst the concrete studies are confined to pretty narrow specimens of the past, however interesting they might be. A more reasonable and honest approach would perhaps have been to name the book a ‘collective volume’ or ‘anthology’, rather than ‘handbook’.

Almost any attempt at instilling an en-vogue notion such as ‘transnational’ into the barren soil of East Central Europe deserves respect and support, particularly from and among historians of the region. A hope may be entertained, shared with the volume’s editors, that their attempt is not the last. The contributors are definitely competent and display a potential necessary for producing more publications of the sort. It would be excellent if a better use could be made of their expertise when preparing the subsequent volumes (spanning the period until 1945–8, and until 1989).

Małgorzata Litwinowicz-Drożdźiel, Iwona Kurz, and Paweł Rodak (eds.), *Ekspozycje nowoczesności. Wystawy a doświadczanie procesów modernizacyjnych w Polsce (1821–1929)* [Exhibitions of Modernity. Exhibitions and the Experience of Modernisation Processes in Poland, 1821–1929], Wydawnictwo Neriton, Warszawa, 2017, 446 pp.

There is a scene at the beginning of *Mansfield Park* by Jane Austen where two young ladies of the mansion – Maria and Julia – refuse to understand and accept the apparent lack in education of their younger cousin, poor and shy Fanny. For the affluent and more self-confident girls it is obvious that they must know “all the map of Europe, the principal rivers in Russia and the difference between water-colours and crayons” as well as the names of Roman emperors, planets, and metals. Typically for Austen, the irony and ambiguity intertwined in the scene may also suggest the picture of young women collecting and using their wide, yet seemingly unnecessary knowledge, against a child who just wishes to be a child.

The above-mentioned litany, however, uttered without missing a beat and apparently being an indispensable part of every young lady’s education, seems to match the contention of Małgorzata Litwinowicz-Drożdźiel, who in the introduction to *Exhibitions of Modernity* states: “A human being of the nineteenth century feels peculiarly obliged to present wide knowledge of every aspect of reality in any particular moment of their life” (p. 13). This peculiar feeling drove a group of researchers of the Institute of Polish Culture, University of Warsaw, to examine the ideas behind exhibitions organized in the Polish lands in the long nineteenth century, and to focus on modernisation, entertainment, and the very condition of Polish society; which – being deprived of its own state and authorities – found itself in a great endeavour of having to mould its own ways to comprehend the fluctuating reality (with the Great Exhibition of 1851 before their eyes).

In the Polish context we can speak about ‘common’ exhibitions, e.g. not only gatherings of participants from across the partition borders and/or from different areas of production, but also including agricultural, industrial and craftsmanship exhibitions. They spanned the period between 1821, when the first ‘common’ exhibition was organized in Warsaw, to 1929, the year of the great Poznań National Exposition, organized after Poland had regained its independence. In the collected articles the objective is to analyse the unsolvable – both for the historical actors involved and contemporary readers – tensions: between the wishes in projects and visions of the social and educational role of exhibitions, and the reality, which often did not match the envisioned ambitions and momentum; between entertainment, when for city dwellers the exhibition area turned into a funfair and a cabaret of

curiosities, and disappointment, mostly of the intelligentsia. Most importantly, a profound feeling of melancholia dominates the narratives, whereby despite the huge efforts of the organizers the visiting crowds seemed reluctant to absorb the enlightening force of the exhibitions.

Although the publication does not dedicate a separate section to analysing the previous research, we can easily deduce that the topic has not been particularly popular among Polish historians.<sup>1</sup> The successive exhibitions served, however, as milestones of Polish modernisation; an opportunity for a national self-examination and an incentive to discuss the role of the emerging intelligentsia, the spatial planning of cities, or educational or hygiene problems. Being the first such a complex monograph on the subject, the publication here reviewed allows us to look at the Polish nineteenth-century society from a broad new perspective.

The urban triptych of Warsaw – L'viv – Poznań, placed at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the book respectively, forms a convenient framework to move between exhibitions not only spatially, but also notionally. In the text by Igor Piotrowski, Warsaw of 1885 (the capital of the Kingdom of Poland at that time) seems to be a peculiar laboratory of a rapidly modernizing city. L'viv of 1894 (the capital of the Galicia province), described by the same author, turns into a field of self-reappraising the society, whether (or not) it passed the exam of patriotic maturity under the foreign government. Finally, Poznań of 1929 (the capital of the Greater Poland province in the independent interwar Poland, formerly under Prussian governance), is described by Agata Koprowicz as an arena of clashes between the independence celebration with its intoxicating atmosphere of a funfair, and trying to make sense of the wonders and perils of a modern, twentieth-century city.

Since sight and seeing dominate the other senses in the authors' perspective, the acts of exhibiting, watching, and visiting become cultural performances. Also, the context of a "culture of attraction" (p. 17) is a valuable interpretation tool. The idea of attracting the visitors' attention helps the reader understand how the bare numbers, statistics, and odd-looking inventions of the nineteenth century can become something absolutely fascinating. This is why, apart from the exhibitions themselves, it's worth studying the very objects accompanying them.

The exhibition catalogues described by Pawel Rodak, often consisting of hundreds and thousands of pages, represent the impossible effort to subjugate the flux of exhibition items into lists, groups, and tables. Moreover, the act of visiting the exhibition very much resembled the reading of a book itself – it followed a certain direction from the beginning to the end, equipped the

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<sup>1</sup> Worthy of mention however are the books by Anna Drexlerowa *Wystawy wytwórczości Królestwa Polskiego* (Warszawa, 1999) and *Polska i Polacy na powszechnych wystawach krajowych* (together with Andrzej Olszewski) (Warszawa, 2005).

visitor-reader with information, and taught and entertained at the same time. Photography – this modern curiosity which stops the time – described by Iwona Kurz was mostly a utility, an advertisement, or a souvenir, inseparable from the commodity it represented. There was, however, more to that picture, as Polish photographers, who often travelled abroad with their work and won prizes and medals, faced a dilemma: Do they represent their native people in a patriotic attempt to document their achievements, or do they just represent their own entrepreneurship and services? Lastly, a painted ‘view’ described by Małgorzata Litwinowicz-Droździel is a paradoxical attempt to enclose a vision of a modernizing society in the form of antiquated postcard. It presents an ancient and ‘everlasting’ Polish landscape, at the same time demonstrating its progress. The analysis of the ‘view’ also provokes another interesting question: What does it mean that an exhibition is ‘common’ without an actual commonwealth?

Obviously, the exhibitions were not only inanimate objects behind the thick glass of a showcase, but represented the whole spectrum of social, cultural and political phenomena between (as Agata Sikora describes it) *manufacturing* the experience of modernity in the earliest exhibitions to *subjugating* it within the limits of the exhibition.

The nineteenth-century Polish press provides particularly interesting insights into the debates about the social functions of the exhibition, their conduct, conclusions, and morale derived from the ‘lesson’ – and these debates occurred regardless of the place (the capital city or a province) or scope (common or agricultural) of the exhibition. Sikora’s article frames the fascinating question of the emerging Polish intelligentsia, their goals, discussions and ambitions, and the tension between their programmes and reality being one between order and chaos, when the flaneur’s stroll turns into a complex epistemological endeavour. An important text by Jakub Jakubaszek breaks the ‘capital-centric’ tendency and describes the organizational efforts outside the main Polish cities. Providing this perspective, intertwined with the ambitions and attempts of the provincial intelligentsia, the author broadens our understanding of modernisation efforts in general. Finally, Joanna Kubicka’s text about a spectacular project carried out in *Przegląd Tygodniowy* (one of the main Polish newspapers of that time) – the publication of (presumably fictional) accounts of a humble Polish craftsman from the Paris exhibition in 1867 – shows the power of the modernization dream to bend and shape reality itself.

Lastly, the exhibitions provide an unusual and unique space in which to present groups or areas which so far have been ignored or disregarded. Alicja Urbanik-Kopeć writes about exhibiting the fruit of women’s labour, which ironically changed from a seemingly empowering tool to actual reinforcement of the traditional image of a woman in Polish society. Separating women’s labour in special ‘female pavilions’, often displaying impractical items like

“pictures made of goose feathers” or “blankets patched from old cloths” and presenting ‘women’s’ work alongside that of shoemakers or engineers made it look more like a showcase of curiosities, where “pictures made of moss, magazines and jams are intertwined with books by Eliza Orzeszkowa” (pp. 282 & 287). Another ‘empowering’ strategy could be observed in the exhibitions of sports and presentations of new, more democratic disciplines like cycling or rowing, as described by Piotr Kubikowski. An interesting aspect of them was showing the half-naked human body in action (male athletes performing complicated gymnastic figures together was not only the performance of perfectly coordinated human bodies, but also a public display of sweating male bodies touching each other). Lastly, the empowering modernity is presented in the idea of a city organized according to the rules of hygiene and having a ‘healthy’ structure. Antiquated scenography of the Greek-like city of Hygeopol, which appeared in Warsaw in the late 1880s, with its pompous and picnic-like themes – “a Doric gate, sculptured allegories of Concordia ... together with cattle vaccines, beer and the performance of a circus acrobat-diver” (p. 315) – best illustrated the dissonance between great ideas and the every-day reality of cities..

Overall, the *Exhibitions of Modernity*, with its broad range of sources, fresh and interdisciplinary perspectives, and intriguing collection of illustrations is a very interesting and informative publication. Without detracting from the great efforts of the research team, it is nevertheless worth mentioning a few details which form small cracks on this overall positive picture.

First and foremost, one would desire to see the authors of the texts engaged in more dialogue and discussion, or even arguments, with each other, given that occasionally not only the same problems but also the same sources reoccur. Keeping in mind the team and seminar style of work (the publication is supposed to be something more than just a collection of separate articles bound together under a broadly expressed topic), the mutual ignoring of each other’s efforts seems to be artificial. In order to present the bigger picture, I presume that the authors want us to read the whole book and not each article separately. Possibly however, they decided to leave it to the reader herself.

Also, given the broad reservoir of illustrations it seems oddly inconsistent to insert a picture which in no way corresponds with the text on a given page. This is not a dominant tendency, but striking enough to expect a little bit tighter control of the material, both textual and visual. On the other hand, I can understand that external factors could have had the final word here.

Lastly, similarly to their historical characters who did not always control the flux of the exhibition, the authors do not always control the form of the text – in this situation the paraphrasing and rewriting of citations (often extensive ones) seems to be redundant and a waste of space (so valuable in the form of a scientific paper). In general however, the flow of reading is

smooth and uninterrupted. Unfortunately the text about sport exhibitions by Piotr Kubikowski differs from this positive tendency. It is even more disappointing given that the cultural history of sport is still a rare topic in contemporary Polish historiography. While reading his article, one has the impression of an uncontrollable flood of text and ideas, with too-extensive footnotes, which cannot hold together the new information and personas as well as the sophisticated syntax of the author. Citations are not reproduced or interpreted, but just paraphrased. All of this gives the impression of a broken and unnecessarily complicated composition. Finally, Piotr Kubikowski's summary is of considerably smaller size, which additionally is an almost completely rewritten deliberate fragment from the previous part of the very same work (to divert our attention, one word has been changed), and this recycling of the author's own work and is the last nail in the coffin of the reader's attention.

Summarizing, the whole project – together with the accompanying website and the recently closed exhibition in the Warsaw Zachęta Gallery – *The Future Will Be Different* – offers a fresh and original view on the Polish nineteenth-century society. It focuses on the society rather than national struggles for independence, and skilfully tries to balance between the abstract visions and the everyday life of modernising cities.

Marta Michalska

Aneta Prymaka-Oniszk, *Bieżeństwo 1915. Zapomniani uchodźcy* [*Beżenstvo/Refugeedom 1915. The Forgotten Refugees*], Wydawnictwo Czarne, Wołowiec, 2016, 368 pp.

A record of one's emotional reaction is perhaps not part of what is 'canonical' and desirable for a scholarly review of a historical publication. However, the book I would like to dwell for a while about is not quite one of them. I am glad, at times utterly satisfied indeed, with most of my reading assignments related (more or less directly) to my profession; yet, it is really an extraordinary situation that a book would make me moved to tears. Recently, I had such experience with Timothy Snyder's *The Red Prince*, and most recently, with the final pages of *Bieżeństwo 1915* by Aneta Prymaka-Oniszk. I basically do not consider arousing strong emotion (which is often used as a master-key in case the author is unable to embrace the issue being dealt with) to be an efficient support in the educational process; as such, it evokes association with politics of memory rather than history. However, in this particular case, I do find it completely legitimate.

I already had come across the issue termed *beżenstvo* (this Russian term is roughly translatable as 'refugeedom'), standing for the evacuation of civilians from the borderland between the Kingdom of Poland and Russia. Yet, the books

I read – *Tułaczy los. Uchodźcy polscy w imperium rosyjskim w latach pierwszej wojny światowej* [The wandering lot. Polish refugees in the First World War time] by Marek Korzeniowski, Marek Mądzik, and Dariusz Tarasiuk, and Dorota Sula's *Powrót ludności polskiej z byłego Imperium Rosyjskiego* [Polish people return from the former Russian Empire], which mostly reported the activities of aid organisations and diplomatic relations, are scientific and do not offer an easy reading. The book under review comes as an excellent complementation. The author, a journalist and reporter, exhaustively describes the long-lasting epeopee of the refugees, from the expulsion in 1915, temporary abode in the depths of Russia, and attempts to find a way back home – the way which, for so many, took long years to complete. Even longer-lasting were the political, social, and cultural consequences of the ejection and the return. The main, historical, narrative is intertwined with the thread of (non-)memory of the occurrence, a story of its varying role and presence in the identity of numerous Polish nationals, including (or, perhaps, primarily) in our day.

Prymaka-Oniszk is well aware of what she writes about. A native of Podlachia (Podlasie), she has worked out a book based on years of her work on documenting the memory of the *beženstvo*, a series of interviews, and a dedicated website. The 'clip' that 'fastens' the beginning and the conclusion of the book – the image of a girl (the author when she was a few years old, and, later on, her own daughter) listening to a story told by elderly women – which I found so moving, is a clear sign of the author's emotional involvement. It is a personal, intimate story. The author makes herself, to some extent, one of its protagonists. She avoids going sentimental, though: instead, the book is passionate, displaying the sort of passion which is so welcome in any type of writing.

The ordeal of the residents of the territory which forms today the eastern borderland of Poland came in the aftermath of the crushing defeat incurred by the Tsarist Army in May 1915 in Austrian Galicia. In result of a meticulously prepared and excellently delivered offensive operation, the joint German, Austrian and Hungarian troops managed to break the enemy's defence near Gorlice and seize the Galician territory within two months, folding up the whole left flank of the battlefield. To avoid a disastrously prevalent encirclement, the Russians resolved to leave the Kingdom's area, taking away with them every single thing that could be removed – offices, higher schools, libraries and museums, facilities, factory machines, and raw materials. In order to turn retreat into victory, as they did a hundred years earlier, the soldiers were ordered to leave scorched earth behind them, burning down the villages, the crops and cultures, and driving the cattle and the people forth with them. In face of an impending complete havoc of the country, resulting from the protests raised by the Kingdom's most influential entrepreneurs and aristocrats – members of the Central Civic Committee, the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian army, Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolayevič, withdrew the

evacuation decision. However, this instruction was ignored owing to fear and panic that had permeated the troops and the civilians.

What came in consequence of this move, and is mentioned in just a couple of paragraphs in other books on the First World War or the Polish minority in Russia in the Revolution years, has finally been described exhaustively, interestingly, and movingly, with skilful use of all the possible tools offered by the genre of historical reportage. The standpoint is constantly shifting, as is the general description of the political, military, and social situation, whose aspects are depicted – judging by the content and the reference literature – in a substantive and explanatory fashion, never taking dominance over the strand of the story. Images from the rich mosaic of individual life stories are ready at hand, drawn from the broad array of memoirs, diaries and recollections, mostly Belarusian and Russian (in language terms), probably never published before in Polish. The narrative softly shifts from one genre to another – from historical narrative through to reportage, essay, and individual, if not intimate, notes and remarks, all this emphasised by the dynamic composition, made up of short paragraphs. This is a great advantage of this book, as it allows to show the scale and complexity of the phenomenon being described – in the map of Europe and Asia, and along the temporal axis of the entire last century.

Refuge is central to the first chapters. In the villages of the regions of Białystok, Chełm, and Łomża, the ambience was gradually and inexorably thickening in the summer of 1915, earmarked with the signs of an impending catastrophe. The climate was the first element that turned against the people: a drought pervaded the area from the spring until late in July, combined with July freezes, damaging potatoes and cattle fodder; then, in the harvest season, it was raining every day, for a change. And then, the battlefield came over. Those who avoided the mobilisation, younger or elder, were come over by the ditch-digging impressment. Compulsory requisitions of cattle and produce soon informed the decision to flee. The nearby forests and landed estates got filled with fugitives telling stories of atrocities of the war and ruthlessness of the retreating Cossacks using knouts to drive out the dwellers from their farms they were setting on fire. The image of the cruel Frenchman chopping off villager women's breasts and piercing children or babies through with bayonet, until then prevalent in the collective memory, was replaced by the *Germanets'* (German soldier), all the macabre details preserved. The Orthodox clergymen, obedient to the authorities' instructions, threatened the churchgoers, at the service's end, with the enemy and persuaded that they escape. At last, soldiers, demoralised with the retreat, approached. Even if a household or a whole village remained unharmed by fire, even if the crops were not destroyed root and branch, the military-men tried to take with them everyone who could bear arms. Women, children, the elderly, deprived of provisions and livestock, and of grain for next year's crop, a roof over the head, or even men who could put food on the table – or, simply overwhelmed by fear and

propaganda – were hastily packing up their carts, harnessing the horses, and wheeling off eastwards.

Not all of them, though, as we are expressly told. Contrary to their Orthodox counterparts, Catholic clergymen, who identified Polishness with the abode, agitated for not leaving. Most of the Poles – Catholics, simply put – decided to stay and wait out the passage of the front in the woods, or some extemporaneous hideouts. Only the landowning gentry and the nobles, persuaded by the assurances of receiving a compensation for their abandoned or damaged estate, decided to refuge; yet, the fate of this particular group would be different than what fell to the lot of a majority of the refugees. Fairly well-off and well-organised, soon attended by various Polish committees extending their aid on them, they spent the rest of the war not quite far from their places of residence, and returned home relatively early. Also the Jews did not move off – those who were lucky enough to survive the first wave of displacement, which was provoked then, in 1914, not by a calamity or defeat but by the anti-Semitic attitude prevalent among Russian soldiers and officers, which made them perceive Jews as spies, traitors, and assassins. As a result, the *beżenstvo* wave was mainly joined by the Orthodox people – which will be of quite significance to how the whole story ends.

The evacuation – chaotic, unprepared, and basically illegal as it was – turned into a panic-struck flight, which in turn turned into a humanitarian disaster whose scale is hard to grasp. Prymaka-Oniszk offers us an ‘insider’ description, letting speak those who had first-hand experience of the perils and misfortunes occurring: the witnesses, participants, and victims of the unfolding tragedy. With a great number of first-person-singular utterances, our hundred years’ distance from the events being described shrinks, thereby all the more strongly emphasising their universal and ever-topical nature.

The refugees are moving along on horse-drawn carts loaded with everything that had fallen to hand whilst hurriedly leaving home, formed into groups linking dwellers of the same villages, quickly merging into columns – several-kilometre and, later on, several-dozen-kilometre long. Some two hundred thousand people got stuck in a giant hold-up formed on the road in the vicinity of Kobryń: a mass of people and animals impossible to feed, or even give drink to. The refugees first eat up what they have taken with them, then buy food for themselves, and lastly, steal it. They are like locust, devouring fields of crops into nothing, steal fence timber from villages to get firewood, empty wells and even puddles of water. In such circumstances, death comes on the first night after the flight. Soon, as hunger emerges, weather deteriorates, and contagious diseases, chiefly typhoid fever and cholera, erupt due to the lethal sanitary conditions, death starts taking a horrific toll. Nobody has counted the exact number of residents of western peripheries of the Empire who left their homes; for certain, two million, perhaps even three million. A third of them did not survive the refuge, a half of these victims being children.

The image of their sufferings – famine, diseases, death, and (perhaps even worse) loneliness and fear – resulting from getting lost and confused, abandonment or death of the parents, horrifying as it is, introduces us into yet another aspect of the refugee epos. Leaving the home village behind put an irrevocable end to thousands of small worlds that since time immemorial had had their own, primeval laws (apart from the serfdom abolished half a century before). When moving on, everything which is time-honoured becomes subject to a test, challenged, rejected; the mores and morals loosened. People pray without their popes, fast on holidays and get drunk on ban days. Intimidated and docile at first, they begin to exponentially demand aid, grumble, and protest at the sight of their own suffering and indifference of authority representatives. They raise their fists. Sober husbandmen have to steal to survive; young peasant women who have lost their family or offspring fall victim to procurers. Unable to feed their children, parents give them off to strangers, abandon them or, in the worst case, kill them. There is no time to bury the dead in this constant movement. Corpses are left over by dilapidated roads or thrown into barns underneath which, once filled up, fire is set.

In his *Imperial Apocalypse: The Great War and the Destruction of the Russian Empire* (2014), American historian Joshua A. Sandborn argues that the dramatic development of the revolutionary situation in Russia was an effect, rather than the cause, of the collapse of the country of tsars, and the refugee crisis seems to be a good example of it. Incompetence, arrogance, foolishness and cruelty of decision-makers had all led to a situation where, long before Bolsheviks came to power, institutions and social order of the old regime broke down entirely. The revolution that was soon to overwhelm the refugees, who were eventually distributed, in cattle cars, to the edges of the Empire, only came to confirm this.

A reporter-style description of the realities of life, and death, of the refugees in the tsarist and, then on, anarchised or Bolshevik interior, which is the topic of the subsequent part of the book, is diametrically different from what has been written on it so far. The previous authors were mostly attracted by the public aspect of the *beženstvo* – the rescuing and life-saving actions among the refugees, as well as the religious, educational, political, and military activities. Consequently, the selection of sources, including official reports and all sorts of memoirs, the latter produced mainly by individuals involved in such actions, implied that the affair was usually reported on from the standpoint of a member (of either sex) of the upper social groups: bourgeoisie, landowners, or intelligentsia, most of whom defined themselves clearly as Poles. Prymaka-Oniszk consistently sticks to the perspective of a Ruthenian peasant. Out of the dramatic, tragic, but oftentimes heroic struggle for physical survival, obtaining a place to live, job, or education in an alien and increasingly inimical environment, there emerges the other subject-matter, perhaps even more important than the *beženstvo* – namely,

the issue of identity. It will grow pretty evident in the last section, which deals with returning home.

Most of the refugees had their way closed up for years by the war – worldwide and civil. The Polish-Russian repatriation agreement, signed after the peace treaty in spring 1921, opened yet another chapter of their tribulation, rather than putting an end to it. Even if legal, travelling from the most diverse edges of the Soviet Union took really long; like six years earlier, it was marked with corpses of the dead – those who died of hunger or epidemic typhoid. When the exhausted repatriated persons reached the borderline, either of the two halting-place facilities set for the purpose – one at Baranowicze and the other one at Równe, there was nobody to bid welcome to them there, part from propagandist banners. Most of them were Orthodox Ruthenians, returning from a revolution-struck country, which made them double-suspicious in the authorities' eyes. But it was not the inspections and luggage searching for illegal communist publications, or interrogations to screen their histories with the Country of Soviets that posed the greatest threat for them: it was typhoid fever – the illness, and the quarantine as the method of its eradication – that was lethal to them. Having left the wagons and passed the border control, the returnees had to get registered and medically checked. The sick were referred to a hospital, and the healthy to a compulsory ten-day stopover, for which they were put to a barrack, tent, or simply in the open, depending on their fitness. The halting place at Baranowicze could house some eight thousand people; not much less than that got out of the wagons every day. There was nowhere to accommodate, feed, or cure them. In the winter of 1921–2, the 'facility' turned into a concentration camp and the dwelling and hospital barracks into dying rooms from which every day a few dozen naked and chilled corpses were taken away and dumped on a pile. These facts have already been reported; Dorota Sula quoted the detailed figures: at Baranowicze alone, the death toll took a total of 1,468 lives within one month – in November 1921. Prymaka-Oniszczak illustrates the statistics with eyewitness accounts and, even more shockingly, photographs from a Polish weekly she has gained access to.

The reasons for why the returnees were treated badly were numerous: scarcities of money, basic necessities, organisation(s), and workers. The scarce officials in place were unprepared for their roles, low-paid, exhausted. Ragged, haggard, with lice swarming on their bodies, the *beżency* must have been disgusting to them, and they feared falling ill. But there was a political reason behind the dislike. The author quotes Władysław Grabski and Władysław Glinka, political and social activists who organised aid committees for the refugees, themselves having fallen victims to the expulsion. Watching the dramatic scenes unfolding before them in the summer of 1915, they identified the difference which, in their opinion, had become apparent between Polish refugees and the Ruthenian *beżency*. When the former remained part of the

Polish national community, driven by a collective instinct and thought – the heart and the brain – even under the most critical circumstances, the latter brought to their mind an impermeably dark and savage tribe, turned by the decision of their masters into a despairing crowd of expellees, thoughtlessly thrusting forward, hostile against their own companions, and ruthlessly trampling those who were too weak to go on. A similar, deeply nationalistic, idea of refugees is apparently shared by many Poles; Prymaka-Oniszk makes a clear suggestion that the way they were dealt with, the moment they cross the border and further on, might stem from such an attitude.

Back ‘good old’ home, but in a different country now, most of the *beżency* had to face years of poverty. They returned with their hands empty, ‘to the bare stone’ (as the colloquial phrase had it); once they somehow settled in, a crisis came over, gnawing especially for the rural communities – and combined with the burdensome, discriminating Polonisation action. Orthodox churches were turned into Catholic churches or closed down; the military settlers, like some new colonists, received the largest grants of land, at the expense of the locals. When after the Coup of May 1926 and the temporary weakening of the local power apparatus the common people were getting mobilised socially, culturally, and politically, the authorities replied with brutal repressions, legitimising the action again in terms of ‘eradicating the Bolshevism’. The Orthodox, the wartime refugees among them, were politically oppressed and economically emaciated in the Second Republic. Till its very last days they remained ‘second-class citizens’, marginalised and disadvantaged. The history of their expulsion and repatriation has shared their lot, according to Prymaka-Oniszk. Whether this is fair is an open question.

The book’s subtitle is *Forgotten refugees*, and stands for what is probably the least original section in this study. The formula of ‘forgetting’ or ‘oblivion’ frequently reappears in the context of presence of the First World War events in Polish collective memory, suppressed by some much more politically useful myths related to Polish-Russian war, the Second Republic’s affairs and, above all, the combat and martyrdom of Polish people during the Second World War, which has made everything else fade and retreat. Having read the section a few times, I did *not* get the impression that the memory of the refugees has ever been effaced – wherever it has ever counted. Perhaps, for the reason I will specify below, it hid amidst understatements, but has never been forgotten, let alone suppressed: its importance is apparently prevalent.

The way Prymaka-Oniszk describes the phenomenon, the *beżenstvo* and its consequences forms, after all, the key moment of formation of the local identity of the Orthodox population of the eastern interwar Poland. It was for the first time in history that they were ripped off from their ages-old dwellings on such a mass scale (earlier on, very few left to seek labour abroad), and cast into the wide world where their sense of belonging was subjected to painful verification. Paternalised – as the ‘*Ruskis*’ – and then persecuted by the

Poles, then rejected by the Russians as 'Poles', they began asking themselves who they actually were. While the author poses this question directly, but gives no answer – albeit the answer is apparently banal and plain: they are 'from here', they are 'the local ones'; now, they have grown aware of this. Out of a great war, migrations of peoples, a revolution, the grinding wheels of nationalisms set in motion – those *beżency* who managed to survive have extracted their 'localness'. The history of this expulsion is the founding legend of this status, a legend that is so greatly important to the generation of the author's grandmother. Now, the book under review, showered with awards, has enabled this (hi)story to resound anew. *Bieżeństwo 1915 ...* is a praise of local identity, encouraging at the moment when miasmas of nationalism are blowing again from behind the extreme horizon-line of a forest or the meander of a river.

trans. *Tristan Korecki*

*Łukasz Mieszkowski*

Robert Blobaum, *A Minor Apocalypse: Warsaw during the First World War*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, and London, 2017, 320 pp., bibliog., index, ill., maps

The First World War in the Polish lands is a topic that has long been neglected by historians. This fact was apparently explainable in a few ways, most typically by pointing to the events that followed the war. First, the bloomers and biffs of the years 1914–18 were overshadowed by the legend of the fight for independence and Polish-Bolshevik War. Two decades later, the trauma of another world war caused that the memory of the previous one grew almost completely pale. The situation started recently changing, as is testified by this biannual, where new releases are reviewed and discussed on an ongoing basis. Some of these more recent studies on the First World War in the Polish lands deserve mention in the context of the book under review – its author either makes direct references to them, or his subject and its take are close to those presented there. In specific, Arkadiusz Stempin and Jesse Kauffman have resumed the topic of German occupation in the Kingdom of Poland<sup>1</sup>. Katarzyna Sierakowska has extracted the dramatic experiences of the Great War militants in the Polish lands from snippets of accounts and

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<sup>1</sup> Arkadiusz Stempin, *Próba 'moralnego podboju' Polski przez cesarstwo niemieckie w latach I wojny światowej* (Warszawa, 2014), *idem*, 'The Imperial German Board of Archives in Warsaw: A Paradigmatic Example of the 'Moral Conquest' Policy in the Polish Territory during the First World War', *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 113 (2016), 139–68; Jesse Kauffman, *Elusive Alliance: The German Occupation of Poland in World War I* (Cambridge, MA, 2015).

memoirs<sup>2</sup>. Marta Polsakiewicz, in turn, has proposed an attempt at interpreting the wartime history of Warsaw, the first such in the last several dozen years<sup>3</sup>.

The book by Robert Blobaum, a West Virginia University professor and noted expert in the history of the Polish territories in the former half of the twentieth century, touches upon each of these issues, in diverse proportions. As in Polsakiewicz's study, the city of Warsaw is the central character; as in Stempin and Kauffman, the focus and the narrative actuating factor is the tension between the German occupation authorities and the various groups of people under the occupation: middle-class Poles, Jews, workers and the unemployed, women, and so on. In any case, Blobaum's book resembles the study by Sierakowska the most: common to both is their author's interest in individual experience and sense, problems of everyday life and material situation of ordinary men-in-the-street to whose lot it fell to eat a less and less digestible wartime bread. This particular characteristics makes the book interesting not only to specialist scholars but also to residents of Warsaw fond of the past of their city.

The opening introductory section summarises the present state of research and the historic sources used in the study. The first chapter describes the first year of the War, the time when Warsaw was still under the Russian occupation. The following section analyses the lamentable condition of the economy and the dramatically deteriorating living standard of the locals. Chapter three analyses the policies pursued by the Municipal Council and the Civic Committee, the bodies that increasingly desperately strove to improve the disastrous situation and avoid a humanitarian catastrophe. Chapter four, a very interesting section, deals with Polish-Jewish relations. The subsequent chapter deals with the gender dimension of Warsaw's wartime history, with a focus on politicisation of women. The sixth, and last, gives illustrative examples of the culture wars within the urban space: fighting crime and alcoholism, and of quasi-political mass actions such as the 1917 'Barefoot Movement' in Warsaw (which I will refer to again here). The book is concluded with a concise summary section.

In sketching a panorama of the town affected by recurring waves of afflictions and calamities, Blobaum makes references to the other studies on large cities during the Great War – notably, Belinda Davis's book on Berlin and Maureen Healy's on Vienna<sup>4</sup>. This perspective incites one to ponder on

<sup>2</sup> Katarzyna Sierakowska, *Śmierć – wygnanie – głód. Ziemie polskie w latach Wielkiej Wojny 1914–1918* (Warszawa, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Marta Polsakiewicz, *Warschau im Ersten Weltkrieg. Deutsche Besatzungspolitik zwischen kultureller Autonomie und wirtschaftlicher Ausbeutung* (Marburg, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill, 2000); Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge, 2004).

the specificity of Warsaw, which was the third largest town in the Russian Empire and Europe's largest occupied city, along with Brussels. What is it that Warsaw could offer to astonish visitors from those other cities?

Although the Polish territory became the epicentre of the East Front warfare, while the bloody clashes were occurring in the close outskirts of Warsaw (in 1915, the city went through its first air-raid bombing) the warfare did not directly affect the city. No seriously severe clashes took place there during the retreat of the Russian troops in 1915 or during the withdrawal of the Germans in 1918. As a side comment, it is this peaceful character of the political change taking place in the area of Warsaw that Blobaum considers to have been the reason why the city entered into independence rather quietly – as opposed to Lwów or Kielce, Warsaw dwellers did not greet their independence with a pogrom of Jews, in spite of increased anti-Semitic sentiments during the war.

While the war and warfare had no direct effect on the city, the ongoing developments did affect its social structure. Although Warsaw underwent a feminisation process, similar to that of Berlin or Vienna, this was not due to conscription of local males but was caused by the labour migration, Germany being the most frequent destination. The migration was propelled, for one thing, by the policy pursued by the occupiers who endeavoured to acquire labour force for their industries; for another, it resulted from a collapse of manufacturing output occurring in Warsaw and the resulting enormous unemployment. As a result, the city in those years was home to a mass of people directly unaffected by the war but quickly thrown into destitution because of what was going on around them. The pauperisation was progressing at a pace that could astonish even the most severely exhausted Berliners and the Viennese, as it went beyond the limits of all the other cases in point known at the time. Moreover, much like Vienna, Warsaw offered shelter to thousands and thousands of refugees who had to be fed too. The city was at the brink of a disaster over these years.

The severe humanitarian and economic crisis was, obviously, nothing peculiar to Warsaw. Dying of hunger in the street was no less frequent a sight in Warsaw as in Vienna, for that matter. However, certain features of the phenomenon did prove unique. Going the rounds in the war years, Warsaw underwent an energy and transportation crisis typical of the other Russian cities and experienced a collapse in food supplies, as characteristic of the Central Powers. The effects of all those disasters should have theoretically been counterbalanced by joint action of the municipality and the central government. However, in this respect Warsaw was put into a critical situation. In the first year of the war, the Russian authorities, though incompetently, endeavoured to support the activities of the Civic Committee, which represented the city's political elite. However, in the summer of 1915 they embarked on disassembling the local machines and other equipment – a disastrous venture,

combined with devastation of Polish industry and infrastructure. The Polish local government tried its best to restrict the devastation, in which respect it stood up in opposition to the central government. As for the Germans, although they preserved the Committee and enabled democratic election of the municipal government, they contributed to exacerbation of the crisis – instead of pacifying it. The most devastating to the inhabitants was the ban on importing foods from the localities outside Warsaw. Requisitions were carried out not to the benefit of the locals in need but of the occupiers instead. Polish municipal authorities were repeatedly put in a very awkward position: on the one hand, with the growing mass of paupers that had no choice other than to use the social assistance and, on the other, without funds available to support such aid. As a result of the occupiers' economic policies, the city's budget virtually completely collapsed – previously, for several years, drawing bank loans to help itself out of the situation and deprived of its normal sources of income.

The war brought about exacerbated social differences, everywhere; and yet, Warsaw remained specific in this respect. Whereas in Berlin and Vienna, the strength-gaining workers were at the centre of such conflicts, in the city affected by industrial destruction the front lines were set differently. Charity kitchens in Warsaw served meals dedicated to the 'intelligentsia' so that intellectuals or officials be protected from unwanted contact with the jobless, most of whom were redundant servants. However, irritation was largely caused by the National Democrats and their approximate parties. The actual background was political mobilisation of Jews during the war, which led to reviving the phantasms of a 'Judeo-Polonia' state. Blobaum skilfully demonstrates the anti-Jewish nature of the social conflicts, which might have not always been clear at first glance. A good example of the scholar's perceptivity is the aforementioned action, which consisted in demonstrational marching barefoot in protest against high prices (of shoes, in that particular case). In theory, it was a social opposition movement against economic exploration of the country under occupation. Given the specific local conditions, the sting of the protest was primarily targeted at the 'profiteers' – that is, Jewish shoemakers – while the apparently anti-German actions turned into continued action of boycotting Jewish retail outlets.

The Warsaw of 1914–18, as depicted by Robert Blobaum, was perhaps the most heavily affected by the war among European metropolises, with – to reaffirm – no heavy fighting having occurred within its limits across the period. Terrible deprivation encompassing more and more residents overshadowed all the other spheres of life: politics and culture, which were under revival after the withdrawal of the Russians; the renewed University and University of Technology, being once the fields of primary interest to historiographers. These miserable living conditions fuelled exacerbation of the once-prevalent conflicts; the scores of wrongs were expanding. Apparently, the shared

experience of deprivation did not bring people closer to one another but rather extended the interpersonal distances. The growing tension, with anti-Semitic sentiments coming to the fore, found vent in forms apparently distant from any political conflict. The revived Poland had on its shoulders the weight of wartime destruction; added to that was accumulated reciprocal dislike between groups of its citizens.

There are two great questions that heavily weigh over the Blobaum study, which the author does not shun (which is commendable of him). The first of these questions seeks to verify the pattern once introduced in the First World War historiography by Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius in his excellent monograph on the Ober-Ost, another area of the German occupation<sup>5</sup>. In brief, it is about the role of the occupation experience during the first of the World Wars for the attitudes and behaviours the Germans displayed during the second. In respect of the areas of Byelorussia, Lithuania (partly) Latvia and the east of Poland, which altogether formed the area under German military occupation, Liulevicius identified the connection between the German's earlier contact with the local people – particularly, Jews – and the Holocaust. Contempt, hatred, and a sense of strangeness amassed in the years 1915–18 were discharged, in line with this interpretation, after the year 1939 – with the most disastrous and atrocious effect on the people of the East of Europe. Blobaum has joined those historians of the Polish lands who reject the analogy evoking resemblance of the Ober-Ost<sup>6</sup>. The German experience of the occupied Warsaw basically did not make the occupiers' anti-Semitism severer; yet, it certainly added to the exacerbation of conflicts between the Polish majority and the very strong Jewish minority.

The second great question becomes more explicit in respect of the central character – the city of Warsaw. Comparing the incomparable – the sufferings of the people under the first, and then the second, occupation – is focal here. Basing on the available statistics, Blobaum resolutely states that during the Second World War – until the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 and the ensuing destruction of left-bank Warsaw – the civilians' standards of living was higher compared to that during the First, if measured by access to food, lower mortality rate, higher birth rates and other civilisation-related indicators. The German control over the trading in foodstuffs was incomparably stricter and more precise in 1915–18, compared to 1939–44. The poverty that the capital city was thrown beginning with 1915 was completely unprecedented, and never reappeared afterwards. Hunger, diseases, and joblessness were more evenly distributed during the Great War, while the situation of the Jews,

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<sup>5</sup> Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> For instance, Christian Westerhoff, *Zwangsarbeit im Ersten Weltkrieg. Deutsche Arbeitskräftepolitik im besetzten Polen und Litauen 1914–1918* (Paderborn, 2012).

though worse in most cases than that of their Catholic neighbours, did not radically diverge from the average.

An intelligent book, *A Minor Apocalypse...* is emphatic towards its characters – ordinary residents of Warsaw. Its author sought to reach a reality that is concealed behind newspaper reports and official statistics, and he does it with remarkable intuition. Errors – apart from spelling errors, rather numerous in this publication – are rather scarce and do not affect its appraisal. Probably the only misbegotten interpretation is the short passage mentioning “dozens of Turkish bakeries and sweetshops” which allegedly had to be closed down in Warsaw after the entry of Turkey into the war (p. 207): in this case, the historian author has been misled. The release in *Kurjer Warszawski*, taken at face value, was yet-another anti-Semitic satire targeted at ‘Dardanelle sweetshops’ whose main ‘basin’ was Chmielna Street in Warsaw<sup>7</sup>. It is otherwise worthy of note that even a mistake of this sort confirms a sad illustration of Polish-Jewish relations within Warsaw as depicted by Blobaum.

trans. *Tristan Korecki*

*Maciej Górny*

Pavel Kolář, *Der Poststalinismus. Ideologie und Utopie einer Epoche*, Böhlau Verlag, Köln, Weimar, and Wien, 2016, 370 pp.

The field of today’s academic debate on the former communism in the Soviet Union and in East Central Europe is marked out by the dispute between the traditional totalitarian paradigm and the ‘revisionist’ current (also referred to as ‘anti-totalitarianism’) that developed since the 1970s.<sup>1</sup> While the traditional paradigm keeps up its strong position in the former Eastern Bloc countries (save for Germany), in the aftermath of the moralistic critique of the 1980s regime, ‘revisionists’ have taken the upper hand. Seemingly, the common area within this otherwise differentiated research current is the querying of a binary State–society model, with violence of the totalitarian regime, devouring the society/nation (as an autonomous entity), at the centre. Set against this model were approaches inspired by social, economic, or cultural

<sup>7</sup> ‘Turcy w Warszawie’, *Kurjer Warszawski* of 2 Nov. 1914, morning edition, p. 4.

<sup>1</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, ‘Revisionism in Soviet history’, *History and Theory*, xlvii, 4 (2007), 77–91; Alexander Etkind, *Warped Mourning: Stories of the Undead in the Land of the Unburied* (Palo Alto, 2013), 29–31; Aleksandr Beljaev, ‘Vzgljad antropologa na knigu Alekseja Jurčaka’, in Aleksej Jurčak, *Éto bylo navsegda poka ne končilos’: poslednee sovetskoe pokolenie* (Moskva, 2016), 11–14; Thomas Lindenberger, ‘Sozializm na co dzień: dyktatura i społeczeństwo w NRD i w PRL’, in Sandrine Kott, Marcin Kula and Thomas Lindenberger (eds.), *Sojalizm w życiu powszednim: dyktatura a społeczeństwo w NRD i PRL* (Warszawa, 2006), 7–8.

(anthropological) history, which focus their attention on 'regular people', their subjectivity preserved in the face of totalitarian pressure, ways of shaping the identity, everyday life practices, and so on. The recent book on post-Stalinism by Pavel Kolář, until recently professor of comparative and transnational history at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, harks back for this particular line of research.

The choice of the subject of research is polemical, since Kolář's focus is on areas tending to be neglected or 'deformed' in the totalitarian paradigm. Among the former is the post-Stalinist period, which in light of totalitarianism is described, in negative terms, as 'lack' (of communist faith) and the process of de-ideologisation. Among the latter, the author points to "communism reduced to a history of power, policies of the communist-party leadership teams and party-member intellectuals serving it"; also, distorted incentives of the communists whose involvement in the Stalinist period was explained in terms of ideological fanaticism and, in the later period, conformism and cynical calculation. "In both cases", Kolář argues, "they were shown as objects unworthy of historical research. Therefore, the mentalities of ordinary communists, their plans for life and 'reasons for obedience' ... have tended to be neglected. Hence, we do not know what the communists, other than members of Political Bureaus, actually thought about communism, history, society, and the Party itself. We know almost nothing about how their imagination evolved, which ultimately ensured internal legitimacy for the ruling party" (p. 17). This critique forms the basis for a project which has at its centre post-Stalinism as a 'transition time', with its own peculiar essence, between Stalinism and 'late socialism' (1956–69/71) – the other focus being rank-and-file communists, described in the book as 'the many – *die Vielen* (thus echoing the phrase 'ordinary people'. Kolář shows how, in confrontation with the party discourse, they shaped their identity focused around the communist historiography. These issues are mutually complementary, since it is the search for new identity and the re-formulation of a utopia, after the truth about Stalinism was revealed, that the peculiar momentousness of post-Stalinism, as a separate epoch in the communist history, was meant to basically consist in.

The 'post-Stalinist transformation' is investigated in this book based on the East Central Europe's 'Northern Triangle' countries – i.e. Czechoslovakia, East Germany (GDR), and Poland. With the assumption that "a post-Stalinist consensus was taking shape in the local space, thus enabling continued existence of the communist authorities", the author seeks to shed light on the mutual influences between the party's centre and the peripheries. To this end, analysed are the party's central-level decisions, speeches by leadership members, 'authoritative' articles published by the 'theoretical organs' and the central press, party-related central historiography, as well as party training materials. As far as possible, Kolář juxtaposes these sources against their local-level reception. The material for such confrontation includes minutes of the

meetings of party assemblies, at various levels: East Germany's SED – District of Halle; Province (voivodeship-level) Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party [PZPR], Katowice; Czechoslovakia's KPČ's of the County of Liberec, Land of Ústí, and of the land and city of Ostrava. In Kolář's opinion, "it is the meeting minutes that provide a source that gives the floor to those who would otherwise have not left any written message whatsoever". This, to his mind, enables one to scrutinise the 'ideological everydayness', thus viewing "how the official language was understood and used; how the ideology's *langue du bois* was 'carnavalised', in the Baxtinian sense, by ordinary members of the party who turned the hierarchy upside down and profaned the ideological sanctities ('sacraments') through referring them to the 'impure' everydayness and carnality" (p. 20). Whereas this particular source base has enabled the author to meet his research purpose, it can be regretted that he has made no use of certain printed documents such as minutes of the meetings of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the PZPR, or documents of PZPR's central authorities dating to 1956. The latter contain, *inter alia*, an extensive record of the dramatic discussion of the central-level party activists after Khrushchev's 'secret speech' was revealed; or, shorthand notes of these activists' discussion with Khrushchev himself, which took place in Warsaw, in May 1956, during which the Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union showed his striking openness.<sup>2</sup>

The book's five chapters "investigate the semantic field of the ideological discourse", and how the discourse was perceived by 'the many'.

Chapter 1 ('Nach Stalins Tod: die Revolution der Tatsachen') discusses how 'Stalin's double death' impacted the communist understanding of history. It differed from the party-oriented 'sacred history' in that respect was reinstated for evidenced facts and the diverse past returned – a past that in the Stalinist image of history was degraded to the role of 'foreword of the brilliant future' (and, reduced to 'the progressive traditions'). Kolář refers to this transition as 'Khrushchev's historical turn' and shows what kind of a 'muddle' the decomposition of the previous image of history aroused in the party ranks. Party-member historians, those 'archive rats' scorned by Stalin, were tempted by this situation to de-ideologise their discipline, in parallel with institutionalising the party's memory that would form the basis for a new image of the party's history. Attempts at founding the propaganda on the scientifically established truth gave birth to contradicting tendencies whose collisions have been identified by the author (such as the forms of control over local memory, necessary to render the new, party master narrative coherent

<sup>2</sup> Antoni Dudek, Aleksander Kochański and Krzysztof Persak (eds.), *Centrum władzy: protokoły posiedzeń kierownictwa PZPR: wybór z lat 1949–1970* (Warszawa, 2000); Marek Jabłonowski et al. (eds.), *Dokumenty centralnych władz Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej: marzec-listopad 1956* (Warszawa, 2009).

[pp. 58–60]). Altogether, however, Kolář makes the point that party-oriented historiography (particularly in post-war communist Poland) got close to the ideal of facts-based history that used a de-ideologised vocabulary. It is worth to mention, at this point, the problems piled up for party-member historians by the archival policy of the USSR, an important operator of archival sources regarding the history of the workers' movement.<sup>3</sup> In his discussion of the central notions and rules of the post-Stalinist historical discourse, Kolář points to a 'heteroglossia of meanings' and Sisyphian attempts to render them homogenous (contrasted with indifferent attitude among ordinary members of the party). Attempts at making workers interested in the communist ideology through the histories of their plants or establishments also basically failed: instead of revolutionary combat, their focus was on technological progress, based on the models (prevalent particularly in the ČSSR) taken from the American and West German 'enterprise history'.

The second chapter ('Die Partei macht Geschichte') presents a self-portrait of the party as a renewed central character of the grand communist narrative. With its 'leading role', the party replaced, in its function, the 'infallible leader'. Kolář sketches the national and local contexts of fighting the 'cult of personality', demonstrating that, contrary to Khrushchev's input plans, but in line with the Marxist assumptions, this exercise was not limited to Stalin himself but embraced the squaring of accounts with abuses (and personal wrongs) at every level of the party life. In the author's view, the parties all the same managed to rebuild confidence and their position as the avant-gardes of the workers' movement. Still, the 'personality cult' remained as a historical burden that restricted the party's ability to act. Using a theological metaphor again, Kolář argues that the post-Stalinist party ceased, in its own awareness, to be a 'god', and turned into a demiurge instead: an imperfect builder who, correcting his own errors, reinstated orderliness amidst the Stalinist chaos, according to the perfect (Leninist) idea. And, the party in its 'demiurgic' shape was a much smoother version of the party. The disputes about 'class struggle' and 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' (in the doctrine considered the most complete form of democracy) that followed the 1956 events are perceived by Kolář as accepting the revolutionary violence to a lesser degree. While these notions were continuously defended as elements of the reigning ideology, with the decline of the epoch, even the change in the relations of production and transition to socialism started being figured out as a peaceful modernisation.

Chapter 3 ('Die Nation: mit oder gegen die Partei?') discusses the problem of nation as the most competitive historical entity, viewed against the party. Using the examples of the post-Stalinist concept of the history of the Communist Party of Poland [KPP], the approach to the national question in the

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<sup>3</sup> Jan Szumski, *Polityka a historia: ZSRR wobec nauki historycznej w Polsce w latach 1945–1964* (Warszawa, 2016), 289–97.

GDR, the history of the relations between the Polish and Czechoslovak communists, and the attempts to integrate in the history of the KPCĚ the experiences of its German members, Kolář traces the relations between the class and national discourse. These analyses are doubly polemical. In Kolář's opinion, the post-Stalinist historical narrative, as it stood, confirms the proposition of Gita Deneckere and Thomas Welskopp, according to which nation dominates over class in European historiography, but opposes their statement that after 1956 the notion of class could have been skipped from the communist representations of the past: even in Poland, where the "nationalist narrative increasingly shaped the party-oriented discourse, which was continually determined, primarily, through the central Marxist notions" (pp. 163, 177). Second, Kolář's interpretation of the function of nationalism in the party discourse is different than that proposed by Marcin Zaremba. To his mind, it was not an exclusively instrumental function but partly an identity-related one – namely, an attempt at constructing a new national identity. From the standpoint of communist parties, this particular function had a counterproductive role. Following Katherine Verdery, Kolář demonstrates how the attempts at instrumentalising the nation, however transitorily efficient, gave rise to the disputes around national identity, which ultimately led to emancipation of the national discourse, disablement of Marxism, and delegitimation of the party's power.

The fourth chapter ('Die Feinde der Partei') describes the post-Stalinist story of the enemy. Using a scale of animosity stretching from a demonised (and, dehumanised) enemy to political competitor, Kolář shows how the post-Stalinist narrative shifts towards more lenient registers.<sup>4</sup> The diabolical 'public enemy' from the Stalinist age was replaced by 'antagonists', 'competitors' and 'political opponents', much less saturated with hostility and no more subject to 'liquidation' but, potentially, to be persuaded. Neglecting the resumptive of a Stalinist language, caused by the conflicts (of June 1956 in Poznań, the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the Prague Spring, 1968), plus a few exceptional incidents (the way Khrushchev spoke of Beria; West Germany until the 1960 in the East German's discourse), the change concerned internal enemies (revisionism being the major one) as well as external ones (imperialism, West Germany, the United States). Another indication of the change affecting the 'enemy's image is, potentially, the fading out of certain enemy-related categories: such, seemingly, was the case with peasants in communist Poland, promoted, from 'kulaks', to 'working peasantry' – a socialism-building force in the countryside.<sup>5</sup> Kolář's approach to 'Zionism' is non-standard: he namely

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<sup>4</sup> Thus confirming the findings of Krystyna W. Trembicka, in her *Wrogowie w myśli politycznej Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej* (Lublin, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> For example, Władysław Gomułka, 'Przemówienie na VIII Plenum KC PZPR (19–21 X 1956)', *Nowe Drogi*, 10 (1956), 36.

argues that in spite of the anti-Semitic incentives among the propagandists and prevalent sentiments among the recipients, the image of 'Zionist' enemy was in itself dominated by an 'anti-imperialist' narrative; the incoherence of the image attested to problems with construction of a party-based identity.

Chapter five ('Die Sehnsucht nach dem Goldener Zeitalter') shows the curiosities of the post-Stalinist concept of time, which was prevalently formed by the criticism of the 'personality cult': owing to Khrushchev's 'secret speech', this criticism marked in the history of communism a caesura which weakened the linear idea of revolutionary time. The future appeared thenceforth as a 'return' or 'rebirth' of the Leninist principles. However, Kolář makes a reservation that it was not a consistently cyclical concept of time, whilst linearity was not entirely denied; hence, post-Stalinism offers a 'pluralism of temporal orders'. Doubts increasing around 'socialist revolution' came as the sign of a decline: the author discusses this aspect using the example of party jubilees and the Polish debate on backwardness. As far as rehabilitation of the victims of Stalinism, recollections of party veterans and the history of industry, Kolář sketches the image of the past harmony and pre-Stalinist party as an object of 'utopian yearning' which, as opposed to nostalgia, was to be future-oriented and materialised through political action (the concept of utopia will be resumed below). Post-Stalinism finally appears as longing for a 'golden age': "the past played a double part [in it]: as a trauma and as a dream. The trauma resulted from Stalinist crimes. At the same time, there was a dream, a hankering for a better world, which was best and easiest actuated through idealising one's own past. ... Elegiac, beautifying images of the past were not meant to arouse the wish to, merely, return but to delight, opening people's years to happiness, harmony, and perfectness. ... Post-Stalinism drew its political mobilisation potential exactly from the state of mind in between a 'never more' and a 'not yet'" (pp. 313–14).

In the Epilogue, Kolář poses the question, "what can the communists' path from a fanatic belief, through a shocking disappointment, up to the search for a new beginning, tell us, in general terms, about modern ideologies and power systems"? (p. 318) The reply he proposes makes up an interesting concept of an ideology that may prove useful also in other research contexts. Using the suggestion of 'ideological everydayness' where the centre of gravity shifts from concepts elaborated by intellectuals to the grassroots perception of these concepts, Kolář inclines to identify ideology with the Baxtinian 'authoritative word' – a language that is neither commented upon nor challenged but merely reproduced in order to ritually confirm the traditional order. The author refers in this respect to a 'performative function of ideology', which overrules the question of faith in the communist ideology: the point is, then, about the ritual of sustaining the community. Baxtin set such a language against an 'internally convincing speech' (*vnutrenne ubeditel'noe slovo*): dialogical, dynamic, and creative, capable of potentially undermining the official discourse. In

Kolář's understanding, this role is taken by utterances of rank-and-file party members which profaned ideological sanctities, thus subjecting the 'authoritative language' to a peculiar 'carnivalisation'. According to Kolář, such duality of language plays an important role in the creation and sustenance of power relationships; it explains why "people under communist dictatorships, including members of the party, were not bothered about the fact that they defended ideological phrases in public and repeated the 'authoritarian discourse' of a 'developed socialism', in which they doubted in private" (p. 324). By way of such 'grumbling' the ideological consensus was getting reinforced rather than undermined (p. 325).

While, in Kolář's approach, ideology is not a unilateral message targeted at masses, utopia is not a static vision of the ideal state, established from higher-up; rather than that, it is an 'experienced' or 'affecting', 'grassroots-level', 'processual' utopia. Also in this respect, references to the Baxtinian carnival as a, kind of, 'applied utopia', whose reflexes Kolář seems to identify in the images, extracted from workers' recollections, of friendly community "forming the reference framework for a Golden Age to be potentially retrieved" (pp. 283–4). Referring to Ernst Bloch, in turn, but neglecting the metaphysical core of his conception, Kolář refers to utopia as presaging something that 'is not there yet' as an innate human proneness to something better, expressible in a "sceptical attitude toward what exists, which bears the imprint of hope in a continuous transformation without a determinable purpose" (p. 15). In this sense, utopia does not have to be a sketch of the future; given this perspective, the decline of the Stalinist utopia inevitably loses in meaning. This is, perhaps, why Kolář avoids to discuss Leszek Kołakowski's *The Death of Gods* and other like texts, which are otherwise a blatant testimony of the irrevocable destruction of the communist utopia (in some of the 'many', at least).<sup>6</sup> Instead, he persuades that after 1956 the 'utopian energy' drifted away from a 'programmatic utopia' (*programmatische Utopie*) toward a 'processual utopia' (*prozessuale Utopie*), which shifted the total purpose to the background, endeavouring to attain it through incessant work for the party, revived by a hope for the better tomorrow. It is the 'processual utopia' that Kolář perceives as a source of real motives for the communists' party-centred involvement (pp. 329–30).

It is not completely clear whether ideology and utopia have, in the concept proposed by Kolář, a function analogous to Karl Mannheim's classical differentiation whereby the 'ideological orientation' is meant to "actualise, or incessantly reproduce, the existing order of life", whereas the 'utopian orientation', "when it comes to acting, will partly or entirely split up the

<sup>6</sup> Leszek Kołakowski, 'Śmierć bogów', in *idem, Pochwała niekonsekwencji: pisma rozproszone z lat 1955–1968*, 2, ed. and preface by Zbigniew Mentzel (Warszawa, 1989).

order of being that exists at the given time".<sup>7</sup> The point is not about a direct reference to Mannheim (whose name is not even mentioned in the book) but about the tradition of examining the mutual relation between the two phenomena, as initiated by this German sociologists. Assuming this perspective, the understanding of ideology as an 'authoritarian language,' as proposed by Kolář, can be seen as echoing the orientation describable as 'reproduction of the existing order'. The problem of utopia is more complex, though: it is not clear whether Kolář identifies utopia with 'internally convincing speech' or whether the 'speech' is capable of 'splitting up the order of being'; it can call the order of discourse into question but, functioning as 'grumbling', it has a stabilising effect. As for 'processual utopia', it anticipates social change (however receded into undefined future) whilst also operating as an incentive for involvement for sustaining the legacy order. It is thus plausible that, contrary to the Mannheimian tradition, ideology and utopia in Kolář are mutually complementary in their function of ritual reproduction of order.

Now, in the light of these assumptions and analyses, what is the portrayal of post-Stalinism as a separate period in the history of communism? The descriptions of post-Stalinist discourse (on history, class, nation, enemy, and so forth) seem to be the mostly, though not entirely, convincing. The category of '(the) many', understated, as it is, in sociological terms, leaves one unsatisfied. Most frequently, synonymous to '(the) many' are quantifiers such as 'communists', 'post-Stalinists', 'party members', 'party historiography', etc., though the author specifies, at times, that the concerned ones are party-member historians whose background was the new party-affiliated intelligentsia educated after 1945 and thus remote from the thought horizon of the working class (pp. 62–3); otherwise, the point is a discourse targeted at party members from a region with a strong social-democratic tradition (p. 234). The social, regional, generational, or political contexts are rarely proposed, though; the discourse is usually set in a national context. In comparative studies, resorting to such general research categories is probably inevitable. As a result, however, paradoxical about this book – whose declared purpose is to investigate the identity of '(the) many' – is that it presents the 'top-down party discourse' in the most explicit manner. We can cognise the final 'product' of the discourse (namely, utterances of First Secretaries and high-level party functionaries) rather than its 'production'. In this latter respect, the author confines himself to stating that after the death of Stalin-the-'master editor', the task of creating the official discourse was taken over by central-level party instances (pp. 21, 68–9, 113). Let us moreover note that shortage of a social context leads at times to explaining the development of the discourse with use of its internal logic (for instance, the decomposition of the 'authoritarian

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<sup>7</sup> Karl Mannheim, *Ideologia i utopia*, trans. Jan Miziński (Warszawa, 1992), 159.

discourse; p. 328), from which the author distances himself in the introductory section (p. 21).

Doubts are raised by the image of post-Stalinism as an epoch when a 'processual utopia' and the longing for a 'Golden Age' (of Leninism) determined the communist identity anew. This picture emerges from the polemic against Andrzej Walicki's proposition that the change occurring after 1956 led to a deficiency of faith in the communist ideology, and thus to a loss of the communist identity, which was still masked by ritual obedience.<sup>8</sup> It is this particular ritualisation that Kolář identifies as a feature of ideology; shifting his attention from party-member intellectuals to 'the many', he asks about the reception of these issues. The renewed communist identity referred to by Kolář is, therefore, a real identity of members of the communist parties, which does not have to have much in common with the communist ideology. This is nothing surprising, given what we know about the ritual character of this ideology after 1956<sup>9</sup>; Kolář writes about it in a few places – for example, when mentioning examples of astonishing ignorance of delegates to party trainings which "revealed that party members had no idea about the Marxist-Leninist theory" (pp. 79–80, 86, 306). 'Processual utopia' is not quite convincing as a communist utopia (if this was to be a hope for a better tomorrow "which, however, was not to follow at once, and at any expense"; p. 329); it mostly looks like an idea shared by members of the communist party, and is described by Kolář as a "'bourgeois' clutter" („bürgerliches" *Gerümpel*; p. 290) that was sustained in the post-Stalinist circle of meanings. Given this context, Kolář's considerations on the mentality of regular party members seem to offer a perspective that complements, rather than replaces, Walicki's 'top-down' concept, embedded in the totalitarian paradigm.

There is one more point of view which deserves attention. In his discussion of the identity of communist party members, Kolář neglects those who were deemed revisionists. They only appear in this book as an object of 'authoritarian discourse'. To understand the post-Stalinist period, however, it would be important to present their own point of view, which contained, after all, a very significant utopian perspective.<sup>10</sup> Let us notice (following the author) that before revisionism became the enemy's label, it was an essential current of the criticism of Stalinism as a political system that violated the

<sup>8</sup> Andrzej Walicki, *Marksizm i skok do Królestwa Wolności: dzieje komunistycznej utopii* (Warszawa, 1996).

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Krzysztof Dąbek, *PZPR: retrospektywny portret własny*, Warszawa 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Magdalena Mikołajczyk, *Rewizjoniści: obecność w dyskursach okresu PRL* (Kraków, 2013); Leszek Kołakowski, *Główne nurty marksizmu: powstanie, rozwój, rozkład* (Londyn, 1988), 1153–67. (The latter book is not mentioned, or listed as a reference, in the book under review, which is an incomprehensible omission.)

principles of democracy, humanism, and rationalism, all initially associated with Leninism.<sup>11</sup> Since the beginning, the criticism became a medium for diverse alternative visions of 'free and creative' society, referring to these principles. Some of these visions were meant to be implemented by way of proletarian revolution (to recall Jacek Kuroń's and Karol Modzelewski's *Open Letter to the Party*<sup>12</sup>), primarily, however, through reforms of the communist system, aiming at democratising the political life, establishing freedom of the press, scientific and artistic creativity, freedom of conscience, rationalisation of the public and economic administration, and so on. Such postulates were (aptly) described by the party-bound 'authoritarian discourse' as 'bourgeois'; still, they were formulated by party members within the party-specific discourse. Particularly striking in these strivings was the response to the experience of Stalinist oppression and squaring the accounts with one's own Stalinist faith, which on the philosophical level was connected, *inter alia*, with the search for an 'inoculation' against the 'venom' of dogmatism; in reference to Leszek Kołakowski's paradigmatic text, the latter is describable as a quest for a 'codeless ethics'.<sup>13</sup> In other words, a glance on revisionism seems to suggest that the breakdown in the belief in the Stalinist utopia not necessarily led in the post-Stalinist epoch to a new communist utopia; rather than that, it would lead to a liberal utopia, expressed in the Marxist language.

trans. *Tristan Korecki*

*Marcin Wolniewicz*

Małgorzata Pakier and Joanna Wawrzyniak (eds.), *Memory and Change in Europe. Eastern Perspectives*, Berghahn, New York and Oxford, 2016, 373 pp., bibliog., index, ill

*Memory and Change in Europe* is the result of two meetings sponsored and organized by the European Network of Remembrance and Solidarity (ENRS) in Warsaw in 2011–12. According to its editors – Polish sociologists Małgorzata

<sup>11</sup> The discussion of the PZPR activists after the 20th Convention of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union proves that these threads in the criticism of Stalinism appeared in utterances of some irreprehensible orthodox persons (such as Józef Cyrankiewicz, Jerzy Putrament, and Roman Werfel); see *Dokumenty centralnych władz Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej*, 30, 72, 85–9.

<sup>12</sup> The related chapter of Karol Modzelewski's memories is entitled 'The rebellion and a utopia'; Modzelewski emphasises the revolting effect of his observation of the liberal democratic order prevalent in Italy, in the light of which communist ('People's') Poland appeared as a 'humiliation'; see Karol Modzelewski, *Zajeżdżymy kobyłę historii: wyznania poobijanego jeźdźca* (Warszawa, 2013), 90–125.

<sup>13</sup> Leszek Kołakowski, 'Etyka bez kodeksu', *Twórczość*, 7 (1962), 64–86.

Pakier and Joanna Wawrzyniak – the book's aim is to approach the transformations experienced by East European collective memory since the fall of the Berlin Wall, and at the same time reopen the debate about the existence (or not) of a distinctive East European identity. Joining these issues together naturally raises an inquiry about the predominance and suitability of West European memory patterns for the Eastern half of the continent.

One of the aspects that sets this volume apart is the fact that most of its contributions have been written by Eastern European scholars. This shared insider feature is the starting point for diverse multidisciplinary proposals of variable academic relevance, which provide the grounds for discussion from the Eastern European angle and the presentation of evidence that may not come up too often in international fora.

The volume opens with a 'Foreword' by Jeffrey K. Olick and an 'Introduction' from the editors. The sixteen essays that follow are grouped into four sections: 'Memory Dialogues and Monologues', 'Eastern Europe as a (Unique?) Memory Framework?', 'Eastern European Memories Facing Historical Change and Cultural Transformations', and 'Foci of Memories in Eastern Europe'.

The first and shortest section, consisting of Aleida Assmann's and Andrzej Nowak's contributions, sets the scene and offers confronted views with regards to European politics of memory. On one hand, Assmann highlights the need to move away from self-centered heroic national memories in order to build a transnational memory based on dialogue and focused on victims, aimed at moral and healing purposes. On the other hand, Nowak is critical with what he perceives as a (postcolonial?) West European attempt to introduce a public memory 'from above', founded on shame and political correctness that compels East Europeans to give up part of their national remembrance of their traumatic experiences, instead of recognizing and conciliating memory diversity.

In the second section, Maciej Górny and Kornelia Kończal delve into the reasons for the feeble application, up until very recently, in Eastern Europe of Pierre Nora's popular *lieux de mémoire*, as well as the evolution and adaptation of the notion to this regional context. The authors argue that academic interest in collective memory in East European countries is nothing new, but has followed conceptual and methodological traditions of their own, mostly devoted to national myths and stereotypes, before being displaced by Western epistemological categories. On the other hand, the association of collective memory to violent dictatorial pasts and the ongoing heated debates about its politicization in the public sphere have left little space for the incorporation of a term that had been coined with the French case in mind in the first place. Nevertheless, Górny and Kończal finish by pointing out that Central and East European research on conflicted memories could in fact contribute to pushing considerations on Nora's concept beyond national boundaries. The author of the next essay, Sławomir Kaprański, challenges the idea that East European memory processes are singular and unique, and suggests

that such belief stems from and is partly responsible for the 'othering' of Eastern Europe. Through his analysis of the commemorations of the Jewish Holocaust and the extermination of the Roma people, Kapralski aims to prove that actually Eastern and Western Europe have undergone similar remembrance-oblivion fluctuations, only 'desynchronized'. Kaja Kaźmierska's work proposing a dynamic mutual influence of individual and collective memories through a case study of Polish narratives about the *Kresy* (former Polish Eastern Borderlands occupied by the Soviet Union after the Second World War) rounds off this part of the book.

The third section of *Memory and Change in Europe* groups together a series of essays dedicated to memory processes in different East European countries during the most recent decades. To start with, Joanna Beata Michlic addresses the controversial issue of East Europeans' (non-)remembrance of their countries' involvement in the Holocaust since 1989. Michlic distinguishes between two stages in memory restoration: an (ethno)nationalistic stage, based fundamentally on denial and rejection with a view toward reinforcing the nationals' victimhood, hence more of a 'forgetting' policy than a proper remembrance (or as she puts it "remembering to forget"); and a pluralistic or civic stage, during which the reinterpretation and commemoration of the country's darkest pasts is promoted ("remembering to remember"). The author warns about the disturbing prevalence and even alarming boost of the former strategy (the years that have gone by since the ENRS gatherings solidly confirm this trend), but also notes latent pragmatic reasons to adopt the latter approach, namely economic interests and prestige due to East European integration in the EU in 2004 ("remembering to benefit"). Both stages are illustrated through the enumeration (albeit not a thorough study) of many examples. However, it is a pity that Michlic, instead of concentrating on the Polish Jedwabne case in order to bolster her previously stated conclusions, does not offer in the last part of her essay a deeper analysis of such an appealing issue as the relationship between EU enlargement, memory policies, and commercial profits. In the next work, Lidia Zessin-Jurek explores the transformation of Gulag memories precisely because of the EU extension to the east. According to the author, the experience of the Soviet concentration camps has been shaped by European institutions into an identity sign for Eastern Europe and a positive transnational link based on a shared trauma, hence generating regional solidarity between victims. However, this process is still being developed primarily in Brussels' lobbies and is hardly perceived at all in the often-conflicting East European national discourses. The next contribution, written by Stanisław Tyszka, compares the opposing politics of memory adopted by Poland and the Czech Republic in the case of compensation for violations of property rights during previous regimes, i.e. legal continuity *versus* restitution laws. Beyond official transitional justice, and/or its lack in certain areas, Tyszka offers the opinion that the memory

of past property injustices will remain a sore spot for yet a very long time in both nations. In the next chapter, Tetjana Žurženko compares the post-Soviet memories of the Second World War (or 'Great Patriotic War') in two border towns: Xarkiv, in Ukraine, and Belgorod, in Russia. Žurženko points out that in both cities memory cultures have been formed at multiple interconnected levels by international, national, regional, and local actors. Such interaction has produced different results. In the Russian case, the Soviet discourse – though now under the influence of Russian nationalism and the Orthodox Church – remains in place and presents a greater unity; while in the Ukrainian case there is room for more pluralism and a variety of interpretations, which causes the emergence of competing collective memories, political disputes, and ideological instrumentalization. The next two essays, written by Heorhij Kasjanov and Judy Brown, also deal with memory politics in the same area. Kasjanov studies the development of new identities and the political usage of memories in Ukraine during the 1990s and 2000s. The author analyses the changing and troublesome measures adopted in recent decades by Kyiv to help shed light on the conflict between the Ukrainian and Russian populations and governments. On the other hand, Brown resorts to local professional tour guides and a "walking memory methodology" to explore traditional historical narratives embodied in the urban landscape of Sevastopol, which prior to its annexation by Russia in 2014 had turned into a figurative battlefield for Soviet and post-Soviet memory projects.

The fourth section of the volume begins with Piotr Kwiatkowski's work presenting the results of the sociological research project 'Second World War in the Memory of Present-Day Polish society', carried out in 2009 for the Polish Museum of the Second World War. Next, Jacek Chrobaczyński and Piotr Trojański address, from a historical perspective, the political manipulation during communist times of two of the most powerful Polish memory sites of the Second World War: Auschwitz and Katyń. The authors point out that until 1989 Auschwitz's and Katyń's public relevance was clearly unequal, as communist governments put the focus on Nazi atrocities and fuelled Polish fears against Germany, while denying and muffling anything that could damage the Soviet Union's image and interests. According to the authors, the memories of the crimes committed by both totalitarianisms withstood the distortion and silencing by the regime of the Polish People's Republic thanks to Jewish Holocaust survivors, the Catholic Church, democratic opposition groups, and individuals who rejected communist historical narratives. In the following contribution, Matthias Weber reflects on the interesting possibility of developing a fertile, dialogical Polish-German *lieu de mémoire* at the grassroots level, taking the memories of the presence of the German population in Eastern Europe and the repression they experienced as a starting point. The penultimate chapter of *Memory and Change in Europe* consists of Jana Jančeva's ethnological research about local and family memories of socialist collectivization

in Bulgaria. Based on personal biographical interviews and a comparative analysis of two different villages and regions, Jančeva's findings highlight the existence of conflicting interpretations of what was from the beginning a controversial process, in that collectivization is basically understood as either a form of destruction, or a form of development. Lastly, the book closes with a comparative essay by Claudia-Florentina Dobre on the political uses of memories of the Bulgarian and Romanian communist pasts. Similarly to other contributions in this volume, in Dobre's work different versions and outcomes of the same memory struggle can be found in the public sphere, mostly depending on the political ideology and the political situation of the Romanian and Bulgarian post-communist governments.

In the Introduction to *Memory and Change in Europe* its editors suggest the existence of idiosyncratic East European memory frameworks as a result of the common recent past in the region. This thesis could have been backed much more solidly by, in the first place, including research about more countries and areas; and in the second place by offering more transnational papers rather than single cases and comparisons between just two countries, i.e. disregarding multinational research possibilities (for example Kaźmierska's contribution about memories of the *Kresy* omits the Ukrainian, Belarusian, Lithuanian or Jewish points of view). The amount of works dedicated partly or exclusively to Poland also risks overshadowing the other contexts, which are tackled more superficially or even not at all, like for instance with respect to Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, a strikingly near-absent Russia, the Baltic republics, and former Yugoslavia. Some of the essays also too briefly address a few intriguing issues that would merit further elaboration and which could, hopefully, become the basis for yet another round of meetings and a second volume in due course. Nonetheless, the book reviewed contains a number of promising and far-reaching proposals and is a significant contribution in the English-speaking scholarly world to the research into East European memory cultures.

*proofreading James Hartzell*

*Cristina Álvarez González*

Paweł Machcewicz, *Muzeum, Znak Horyzont*, Kraków, 2017, 304 pp.

Few museums can claim that the domestic and international media followed their creation as closely as that of the Gdańsk Museum of the Second World War.<sup>1</sup> Yet the reasons for this interest were not always positive: rather it

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<sup>1</sup> For more, see Daniel Logemann, 'On "Polish History": Disputes over the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk', in *Cultures of History Forum* (21.03.2017), DOI: 10.25626/0061, as well as the newspaper articles in the notes.

was a product of the international astonishment at a minister of culture in a democratic state trying to halt an extremely expensive museum project when it was almost complete. It is therefore hardly surprising that a book on the museum and the debate surrounding it has been published in the same year the museum opened, or that a translation came out only a few months later.<sup>2</sup>

What kind of book is it? Paweł Machcewicz's *Muzeum* is an account, from the perspective of the Gdańsk Museum's founder, of the creation of the museum from its inception to its hard-fought inauguration. It is a very subjective document in the ongoing debate around the museum, which at the same time is a discussion of the Polish view of the Second World War: a tirade in which Machcewicz defends himself against the countless attacks and accusations levelled against him, his colleagues and the Gdańsk Museum over the years. However it is also the self-portrait of a historian preoccupied with writing books who became a museum director captivated by his exhibits. It is a work, therefore, that cannot easily be categorised.

The book's relevance proceeds from that fact that the debate around the museum raised several burning questions on the politics of memory and society: What role should history play in Polish society? Should it serve the construction of the nation and mobilise against attacks from outside? Or should it render Poland's historical experiences and sensitivities comprehensible to others, thereby embedding them in Europe's memory? From what perspective should society view the Second World War? How much influence should politics have on the depiction and interpretation of history? And, equally, what does patriotism mean in a modern society?

The work is organised chronologically into three parts: 'Początki' [Beginnings], 'Jak powstaje muzeum' [How a Museum Comes into Being] and 'Wojna' [War]. A brief introduction entitled 'Paweł jest trupem' [Paweł is a Corpse] takes the reader back to the 'war', described in the third part, between the ministry of culture and the museum's directors shortly after the Law and Justice party (PiS) came to power. A short chapter with the title 'Niezamknięta historia' [Unfinished History] closes the volume.

In the first part, Machcewicz describes putting forward in 2007 the idea of erecting in Poland a Museum of the Second World War as an answer to the German project of creating a 'visible sign against expulsion and displacement'. He relates how these plans for a narrative historical museum acquired concrete form through the support of Donald Tusk's government: the museum was intended to emphasise the particularities of the Polish experience of the war, i.e. the particular harshness of the German occupation, on the one hand, and the Soviet Union's role as aggressor in 1939 and new occupier after the defeat of the Germans, on the other. In addition the museum aspired to depict the

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<sup>2</sup> Paweł Machcewicz, *Der umkämpfte Krieg. Das Museum des Zweiten Weltkriegs in Danzig. Entstehung und Streit* (Wiesbaden, 2018).

war from the perspective of the civilian population. Here Machcewicz also describes the first political debates triggered by the museum project. The political right grouped around PiS saw the project as an encroachment on their natural political territory – historical politics and patriotism. They attacked the museum as an unpatriotic and cosmopolitan undertaking that served the interests more of Berlin and Brussels than of Poland. At the end of the first section, Machcewicz places his project in the context of the international museums of the Second World War that have appeared since the 1990s and have also been often highly politicised.

The second part deals with the implementation of the project, which Machcewicz initially undertook as a prime-ministerial plenipotentiary. This political office allowed him to continue developing the concept for the museum while the protracted organisational and administrative procedures for founding the museum were being completed, which only happened at the end of 2008. Machcewicz relates the initial need to overcome political resistance in Gdańsk and the considerations behind the choice of the academic advisory board and museum staff. He describes the construction of the museum and the difficulties involved, the research trips to other museums, the development of the collection and the problems faced by academic historians who, accustomed to writing books, now had to fit their knowledge onto the very limited space of an interpretation panel.

The third and longest part deals with the attacks on the museum after PiS's victory in 2015 and the efforts of Machcewicz and his colleagues to resist these and open the museum. He recounts in detail how the minister of culture, Piotr Gliński, and his deputy, Jarosław Sellin, sought to gain control over the museum by cutting its budget, making public accusations and using political and administrative manoeuvres to remove Machcewicz before the museum opened. However he also describes the support the museum received from Polish and international historians, veterans of the Polish Home Army and their families, the donors of the exhibits and normal citizens. One is left with no doubt that he views the opening of the museum against all the odds as a great victory, even if he did have to give up his post shortly afterward. In the final chapter, Machcewicz portrays the debate over the museum as the current phase of the debate on Polish history, tradition and patriotism, a discussion that has lasted for generations in Poland.

Machcewicz relates all of this in an exciting and often entertaining manner with well-chosen anecdotes and quips: for example, when he describes how a colleague originally from Germany fiercely defended the 'Polish view' against their German counterparts or how the museum acquired spectacular exhibits through clever exchanges. On the other hand, he also relates the often touching family histories behind the exhibits donated to the museum by private individuals. One must praise the fact that Machcewicz maintains his professionalism despite his visible frustration at the mistreatment dealt

out to him and the museum. He devotes a relatively large amount of space to the arguments of his opponents before responding to them in detail. He also respectfully acknowledges that Andrzej Nowak, a conservative historian from Cracow, defended the museum during the PiS-led campaign, even though it went against Nowak's view of Polish history in many areas. With its numerous references to contributions to the controversy from both sides, the book is an excellent starting point for all those who want to study the ongoing debate over the museum more deeply. *Muzeum*, however, is also worth reading by anyone interested in historical debates and the depiction of contemporary history in museums.

*trans. Christopher Gilley*

*Stephan Stach*