

REVIEWS

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Laurențiu Rădvan, *At Europe's Borders: Medieval Towns in the Romanian Principalities*, trans. Valentin Cîrdei, Leiden and Boston, 2010, Brill, 617 pp., bibliog., indexes, ills, maps, appendices, series: East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450, 7

The author in the very title of his work makes two important assertions. First, he identifies Europe with Latin culture and thus favours an analysis according to the centre–periphery model. Secondly, by applying one common term ‘Romanian’ to refer to the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia – let us put aside the anachronistic though admittedly stylistically justified use of this adjective – he implies the existence of significant similarities between those countries as early as the Middle Ages. Both propositions are amply confirmed in the book and form the main axis of the disquisition. The author is convincing when he situates the town network he describes in the circle of western civilisation and at the same time points to its peripheral character. He paints a picture of expansion which in large measure is common to both Wallachian and Moldavian towns.

The book is divided into three parts. The first provides comparative material, showing the realities of the neighbouring countries: Poland, Hungary and the area south of the Danube. The author is obviously well versed in basic literature accessible in congress languages, which undoubtedly broadened his analysis. This, however, was not enough for a new reliable synthesis of the issues under discussion. The many mistakes in this part adversely affect the work as a whole. The author would have done much better, had he dispensed with these chapters and used the acquired knowledge in the research and presentation of his main subject. And this main subject is dealt with in the other two parts, concerning Wallachia and Moldavia respectively. Both have the same arrangement and the same titles of individual chapters and sections: 1. ‘Urbanization’ (background, the emergence of towns, terminology, main residences of the prince, the târgs); 2. ‘Institutional, social, ethnic and economic structures’ (administration, law, and relations with the ruler, the town domain, social and ethnic structures, economy); 3. ‘Case studies’ (description of 16 Wallachian and 30 Moldavian towns). While the first of the above sections deserves a separate presentation, describing as it does the context in which the town network took shape, the sense of treating the remaining issues separately for each of the countries is doubtful, and the

result is repetitiveness. The author often highlights the parallel course of processes taking place in the two principalities and, much more rarely, differences between them. Meanwhile these differences would have been brought in a sharper focus, had they been discussed for both countries together. Also, it does not seem to serve any meaningful purpose to conclude each part with descriptions of individual centres. As the sources are scarce, the bulk of the lecture is an analysis of the history of each town in turn, and the results is again unnecessary repetitiveness. On the other hand, the presentation of cities in this form can encourage the interest of the general public and help the foreign reader to better understand the specific features of the local town network. The author deserves a commendation for the appendices with a list of rulers until ca. 1550 (p. XV) and a short glossary (p. 557), and above all for illustrations and maps. Apart from the image of the seal of the city of Baia (also shown on the cover) there are three maps and six city plans. As to the maps, it is certainly a pity that they fail to show the lie of the land – in the case of these countries and this particular subject it would have been useful to know the system of mountain ranges and chains. A particularly serious mistake as regards the whole of the cartographic material is not to give the scale, particularly for city plans.

The same subject has obviously been taken up repeatedly in historiography. However, for a variety of reasons (including scarcity of sources, political and ideological conditions) it was virtually impossible to put in some order even the most basic issues, such as the role of German colonisation or the significance of *locatio civitatis*. Laurențiu Rădvan has made just that. He has demonstrated that in the process of urbanisation of both principalities the basic role was played by western models. Towns were established first of all by the rulers, with an important participation of foreign population invited as part of the colonisation campaign. Constitutive elements of any town were its privileges and relative, usually very limited, autonomy. The author emphasises specific features of the region: it was not only the two principalities, but also their individual parts that developed at varying rates and under the influence of different factors. The common element, which made them differ from neighbouring Hungary and Poland, was considerable retardation of the urbanisation process, which began over a hundred years later than in those countries. The author's conclusions are by no means new, but he is the first researcher to substantiate them in such a complex way. His argument is balanced, precise and convincing, and the grasp of the tools of the trade truly impressive. The author is knowledgeable of various written sources, has a full grasp of terminology, toponomastics and iconography, and he documents the latest archaeological finds, all of which serves a convincing, coherent argumentation. On the other hand, he is not an expert in applying comparative analysis, which would come in useful in researching these problems.

Laurențiu Rădvan took the scene of European historiography by storm. The young Romanian historian (b. 1975) published his first contributions in 1998 and ten years later became member of the International Commission for the History of Towns. The modern, well documented synthesis of Wallachian and Moldavian towns in the Middle Ages, in spite of its shortcomings, confirms his high position.

trans. Bogna Piotrowska

Marek Słoń

Martin Nodl, *Dekret kutnohorský* [Decree of Kutná Hora], Praha, 2010, Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny, 451 pp., bibliog., index, ills

Within the history of Prague University King Wenceslas IV's Decree of Kutná Hora of 18 January 1409 was to play a decisive role. There had existed from the 1360s four nations within the Prague University: Bohemian, Bavarian, Saxon and Polish, which played an important role in the corporation's structure. From 1372 the nation system functioned at the two Prague universities: at the three-faculty university comprising faculties of the arts, medicine and theology and modelled on the university in Paris as well as the law university organised on the basis of the Bologna model. Various disputes erupted amongst the nations at the three-faculty university in the 1380s and 1390s but it was possible for them to agree on a compromise (*concordia nacionum*), which ensured stability for the corporation. As a result of various circumstances, Wenceslas IV, ignoring the traditions and statutes of the university, bestowed through the Decree of Kutná Hora three votes upon the Bohemian nation in all matters concerning the corporation, something that violated the hitherto organisation of the university. The royal decision resulted in conflict leading to the departure of around 500–800 students, bachelors and masters of the three nations (Saxon, Bavarian and Polish) chiefly to Leipzig, where they organised a new university as well as to a lesser degree to the already existing universities of Central Europe. The circumstances surrounding the issuing of the Decree of Kutná Hora, its content and consequences have been the subject of long-standing debates within Czech and German historiography from the beginning of the nineteenth century, ones to a significant degree grounded within a nationalistic and ideological frame. It is therefore with a sense of recognition that one should view the extensive work by Martin Nodl devoted to the history of Prague University (the three-faculty) at the end of the fourteenth century and the first decade of the fifteenth and to the Decree of Kutná Hora; a work that attempts to comprehensively illustrate this exceptionally important period in the history of Prague University and to resolve the historiographic dispute on the matter.

The work comprises five basic chapters besides the preface, introduction and conclusion. In the concise preface (pp. 5–8) the author points to the reasons for undertaking an examination of the Decree of Kutná Hora, first and foremost to the new findings on the *concordia nacionum* and the dispute over the allocation of places in *Collegium Caroli* for the years 1384–90. These enable a fresh examination of the existing *modus vivendi* amongst the university nations in Prague at the end of the fourteenth century and beginning of the fifteenth century. For Nodl the most important aims of the work are the detailed coverage of the two great disputes within Prague University (between the realists and the nominalists, and between the Bohemian nation and the remaining three nations), and a new look at the significance of national consciousness in the world of medieval intellectuals (p. 7).

In the introduction entitled: ‘Národ a ideologie’ [Nation and ideology] (pp. 9–31) the author undertakes a review of the positions held within Czech and German historiographies with regard to the Decree of Kutná Hora and the debates at Prague University, beginning with the works of Jan Theobald Held and František Palacký, through those of Václav V. Tomek, Joseph A. Helfert, Konstantin von Höfler, Friedrich Matthaesius, Václav Novotný, František M. Bartoš right up to the research of contemporary historians with František Šmahel, Jiří Kejš and Vilém Harold at the fore. This is a most excellent study not only of the history of research into the Decree and the great historiographic Czech-German dispute on the problem, but also of the ideological and national determinants for the views of particular historians. There is, however, an absence here of views beyond those of Czech and German researchers. One may conjecture on the varied reception of the findings and interpretations of Czech and German historiography.

In the chapter entitled “‘Smíření národů” v osemdesátých letech 14. Století’ [‘The compromise of the nations’ in the 1380s] (pp. 33–103) Nodl analyses the reasons, course and consequences of the dispute between the Bohemian nation and the remaining ones as to the appointment of places in *Collegium Caroli* for the years 1384–5 with its finale in 1390 as well as the connected dispute with the Prague archbishop John of Jenštejn as to his authority in relation to the University. As a result of the decisive stance and actions of the rector, Conrad of Soltau, and of the Saxon, Bavarian and Polish nations at the Holy See it was possible to defend the hitherto autonomy of the university from the designs of the archbishop of Prague, who aimed at extending his authority over the corporation as its chancellor. While on the question of the allocation of places in *Collegium Caroli* a compromise was reached; for the Bohemian nation obtained the right to five prebends (*collegiaturae*), while the remaining nations to six, with the outstanding twelfth prebend to be assigned in rotation to masters from each of the nations. The meticulous research into the sources induced the author to state that there was no national motive behind the dispute but that it had an internal

university character and that its escalation was fuelled by the ambitions of John of Jenštejn, who decisively started to favour the Bohemian nation to the detriment of the remaining nations and did so in an unprecedented way, unlawfully wanting to seat within *Collegium Caroli* exclusively Czech masters. Besides, Nodl has admitted that such a policy resulted in the departure to other Central European universities of certain eminent masters including Henry Totting of Oyta and Conrad of Soltau. The author also connects the departure of scholars from Prague at the end of the fourteenth century with the process of creating new university centres in this part of Europe: in Vienna, Heidelberg, Cologne, Erfurt and Cracow, which resulted in the regionalisation of universities. However, these new universities were to open up possibilities for a certain group of Prague masters from amongst the Bavarian, Saxon and Polish nations. He has also noted that ethnicity played a significant role within the framework of the Bohemian nation (*veri Bohemi*), as is borne out by the assignment of seats held by that nation in *Collegium Caroli* post-1385 and the dispute on the election to the collegiate master in 1390 of Conrad of Benešov (German: Beneschau, near Opava). For as he was not Czech, opposition came from the Czech masters. Nodl correctly emphasises that within the Bohemian nation at this time there had not yet been formed a fraction of Prague or Bohemian Germans demanding their rights in confrontation with Czech masters.

Much attention is devoted by the author to a presentation of the agreement concluded between the four nations and referred to in the sources as *concordia nacionum*. The agreement document itself has not survived but numerous sources attest to it including the university and rectorial oaths pre-1409. Given the discrepancies in hitherto literature on the subject with regard to the dating of the mentioned act, Nodl convincingly demonstrates that *concordia nacionum* was adopted during the first months of 1385 and undoubtedly resulted in an amicable solution to the dispute over places in *Collegium Caroli*. In his opinion it constituted a fundamental element of the organisation of Prague University, for it appealed for peace and concord amongst the nations. Probably in 1385, the main principle of *concordia nacionum* was added to the rectorial oath as well as that of the university which was taken by every student, bachelor and master, thereby becoming a rule which stabilised the corporation and resulted in a mellowing and suppression of the internal corporation disputes.

The next chapter ('Před bouří: zlatá devadesátá léta 14. století' [Before the storm: the golden years of the 1390s], pp. 107–44) depicts the process of the strengthening of university autonomy in the last decade of the fourteenth century through the regulating and broadening of the rector's jurisdictional rights as well as of the corporation's freedoms thanks to the privileges obtained from King Wenceslas IV and Pope Boniface IX. In addition Boniface IX confirmed in 1397 the hitherto conservators of university rights

and privileges: the provost of Mainz, the dean of Wrocław (Breslau) and the dean of the All Saints' Chapter at Prague Castle (Nodl mistakenly states that all the conservators were provosts, p. 118) for a further 25 years. Then a dispute arose for the Saxon nation protested to the rector, demanding a conservator from their territory. The author presents the course of the dispute, and its conciliatory settlement, according to which six sub-conservators from the Saxon nation were to be appointed by the university and to be assigned by twos to each conservator so that the *concordia nacionum* was not infringed. However, the Holy See was finally not to accept such a solution and in 1400 the Prague archdeacon was nominated a new conservator, while the sub-conservator was the dean of the All Saints' Chapter.

Next the author discusses the growth in the significance of the Bohemian nation at the end of the fourteenth century and beginning of the fifteenth. This was through the increase in the number of promoted bachelors and masters at the faculty of Arts as well as of regent masters who constituted at the time 26–29 per cent of the entire group of professors in the faculty. Besides, the Bohemian nation was significantly over-represented in the University colleges. Finally Nodl strongly underlines that the foundations for the university were directed in this period almost exclusively to students and masters from the Bohemian nation.

The author has devoted a lot of attention to the Church reform movement in the milieu of the Prague masters. Its most important representatives in the 1380s and 1390s were Conrad of Soltau, Matthew of Cracow, Johannes Marienwerder, Henry of Bitterfeld, Nicholas Magni of Jawor, Matthew of Liegnitz, John Isner and Stephen of Kolín. However, Archbishop John of Jenštejn's disputes with Wenceslas IV meant that the majority of them left Prague. Their place was filled by young Czech masters with Stephen Pálež and Stanislas of Znaim at the head. The author has equally traced the process of the reception of the works and philosophical and theological views of John Wycliffe, which began in Prague at the beginning of the 1380s due to the Dominican Nicholas Biceps, though later it was chiefly pro-reformist Czech masters who were connected with this current. Heated within the Prague milieu were the doctrinal disputes between the nominalists chiefly derived from the Saxon, Polish and Bavarian nations and the Czech realists on the subject of the universals and Wycliffe's views, of which a part were deemed heretical.

In the next chapter 'Disciplinace universitánů a vyhrocení sporů' [The disciplining of University members and the bringing of lawsuits] (pp. 145–80) Nodl examines the attempt to drive Wycleffism out of Prague University in the first decade of the fifteenth century. The impulses to combat Wycleffism came from the university in Heidelberg, considered at the time as a bastion of orthodoxy as well as from the circle of those Prague scholars of the Saxon, Polish and Bavarian nations who opposed the dissemination of Wycliffe's

heretical theses. At the stormy gathering of Prague University masters of 28 May 1403 a ban on any spreading whatsoever of Wycliffe's 45 heretically considered articles was passed. A large role in the return of orthodoxy to the university was played, in the author's opinion, by the new Prague archbishop Zbyněk Zajíc of Hasenburg, who *ex officio* was responsible for matters of the purity of Christian belief. His activities resulted in the public denouncement of heretical beliefs adopted from Wycliffe, particularly in relation to the Eucharist and remanence, by the masters of the Bohemian nation Stephen Pálež, Stanislas of Znaim and Matthew of Knín. Martin Nodl has analysed in detail all the circumstances connected with this, emphasising that the philosophical-theological arguments over Wycliffe had an increasing visible national subtext.

The Decree of Kutná Hora is the subject of the last extensive chapter (pp. 181–323). The author comprehensively researches the direct causes of the issuing of this act. He discusses the content of the royal decree and the university's reaction, the polemics and conflict of a deep national colouring between the Bohemian nation and the other nations, defined already as a single German nation, the legal validity of the monarch's decision, and in the end its tragic consequences for the university. Nodl, after František Šmahel, has adopted the estimate that as a result of the secession around 500–800 students, bachelors and masters of the Saxon, Bavarian and Polish nations left Prague after 9 May 1409. This was an extremely serious loss for Prague University for, at the time, there studied in the most numerous faculty around ten to twelve hundred people. The largest group of around 200 students, bachelors and masters made for Leipzig, where as early as 1409 a university was founded based on the Prague model with four nations: Meissen, Saxon, Bavarian and Polish. The author discusses in detail the participation of the secessionists in the organisation of Leipzig University as well as the subsequent fate of Prague University, whose international position had been broken. Here he emphasises that the processes of changes initiated by the Decree of Kutná Hora resulted in the losing by the Prague centre of its university freedoms. It is regrettable that the author did not include the edition of the Decree of Kutná Hora, something which would have made the reading of this chapter, and the entire book, easier.

In the 'Conclusion' (pp. 325–34) Nodl shows that the path to the Decree of Kutná Hora did not lead through conflicts amongst the university nations, for these were being effectively and flexibly resolved in the spirit of *concorda nacionum*. The reasons for the fundamental breakdown of the hitherto system had its roots in the philosophical and theological debate over Wycliffe, in which there are clearly visible nationalist tones. The irresponsible policy of Wenceslas IV towards the University caused a dispute in which a new *concordia nacionum* was, according to the author, already impossible.

To sum up, the monograph in question is an notable academic achievement and one which well fits into the current of modern research into European universities. To Martin Nodl's great credit is the revision of the hitherto position of Czech and German historiography that had emphasised the nationalist grounding of the disputes amongst the university nations in Prague up to the beginning of the fifteenth century.

trans. Guy Torr

Krzysztof Ożóg

Marcin Soboń, *Polacy wobec Żydów w Galicji doby autonomicznej w latach 1868–1914* [Poles Facing Jews in the Galicia of the Autonomy Period, 1868–1914], Kraków, 2011, Wydawnictwo Verso, 328 pp., bibliog., ill., tables

The book in question is the first attempt by any scholar in the field to provide a complete description of attitudes of Poles toward Jews in Galicia (the Austrian partition area) between the 1860s, the time of reforms, and the outbreak of World War I. The book was written based upon a doctoral thesis, but is no debut for its author who had previously had a few articles of material importance published to his credit, his participation in international research projects on Galicia being worth of noting too.

There are five chapters, each formed of subchapters – all arranged in a chronological/thematic way, the fashion in which the material is presented somehow forcing a reappearance of the same threads, at times causing a prolixity of the discourse, to an extent. The 'Introduction' offers an extensive discussion on the book's topic and the present state of research, along with a meticulous breakdown of the reference sources, encountered methodological problems, and assumed research methods.

Chapter One reminds the reader of the social/legal situation of the Jewry and the Poles in Galicia; to a far lesser extent, of other ethnic groups too. Chapters Two and Three present the economic background and political conditions for the Polish-Jewish relations. The author attaches special attention to a reconstruction of the prevalent political attitudes of the time and place. Chapter Four discusses the notions of assimilation, acculturation and conversion – the three dominant strategies with respect to the Jewish question. The extensive Chapter Five deals with anti-Semitic attitudes as such (e.g. the pogrom wave of summer 1898). Each chapter is concluded with a résumé, running a few pages each. The book's closing part comprises diagrams and tables, much helpful to the reader. Annex no. 3 contains, however rather casually selected, documents. No subject or personal-names index in place is quite a hindrance to the reading. Otherwise, the book displays a well-thought-over structure and an extensive and versatile collection of new facts.

The author has declared in the introductory section that several aspects and determinants of the Jewish-Polish relations would fall within the scope of his interest. The range of problems outlined in this section, spanning sociology, historical anthropology, and cultural studies, has not been exhausted, thus possibly leaving the reader not entirely satisfied. In spite of the ambitious announcement, not all of the problems touched upon have been subject to penetrating analysis or offered a novel, original explanation or clarification.

Still, justice ought to be done to the author: Chapters One and Two offer an exhaustive and reliable summary of the established knowledge, supplemented with the author's own findings and a survey of the key issues. Demographic analysis is what Soboń is at home with: it is worth emphasising as historians generally tend to shun a research of this sort, or quite frequently perform it in an arbitrary manner. The image of economic relations and of the position of the Galician Jewry is similarly clear, not triggering much doubt. Hubert Blalock's incessantly attractive concept of middleman minorities, present in the literature since the 1960s, has been made a skilful use of.

The author has quite accurately shown a panorama of the Galician anti-Semitism, aptly emphasising and convincingly analysing the differences between Western and Eastern Galicia. His observations and conclusions are well argued for and embedded in considerable erudition. He precisely documents the persistent vitality of anti-Jewish constructions and their getting modernised in the political culture of Galicia of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Christian anti-Judaism played a key part in this respect across the period researched, offering a simplified explanation of the political upheavals and social changes taking place at the time. Yet, the author records a series of other threads that are gaining in importance in the period in question as well. Those ideas were strongly manifesting themselves, in the first place, at the meeting point of political Catholicism and the varieties of nationalism, with the trend's most glaring manifestation in the social movement led by the Catholic priest Stanisław Stojałowski, later on followed up and processed by the National Democracy.

The understanding of anti-Semitism as displayed in the book narrows the notion down to merely a racially-motivated hostility toward Jews and people of Jewish origin. Albeit legitimate, this assumption is strongly controversial, given today's state of the literature. The author is not entirely consistent in this declaration, though, as elsewhere he appears ready to verify his assumptions (cf. subchapter on 'a-Semitism' as the Galician variety of anti-Semitism; pp. 96–101). A focus on conflicts, including violence, as an important aspect of the Polish-Jewish relations may also be deemed legitimate. It has to be noted, however, that the author has not found an appropriate interpretative key to events of this sort. Although his reconstruction of the Galician anti-Semitic microcosm appears convincing (Chapter Five – 'Anti-Semitism in Galicia: the Scale and Nature of the Phenomenon'; pp. 221–87), the

proposed analysis of its constituent elements proves at times inconclusive. One example is the relatively modest results of detailed historical analysis applied to the voluminous documentation of fears of a peasant community, which appeared in the course of pogrom waves of the years 1897–8. This analysis lacks a more penetrating insight into the community's inner world, with use of anthropological analysis methods. The author, it could be said, has missed an exemplary anthropological situation he faced. This scarcity of anthropological sensitivity is a major shortcoming of his study.

Analytical deficiencies also cause that some parts of this book lack a clear argumentation. On the other hand, this author states that the Polish-Jewish relations were, putting it euphemistically, far from peaceful over the entire period under discussion. Contrary to many Polish elaborations, he offers a reliable evidence of the scale and reach of anti-Semitic violence, particularly in the late 1890s. Thus, Soboń is audacious enough to call a spade a spade. On the other hand, however, he tries to prove that anti-Semitic agitation was of a low, perhaps null, significance at all in the province. Is this span any explainable? It would imply a regard upon anti-Jewish attitudes in terms of a certain cultural continuity, broken up with cyclical acts of violence. Going beyond the area under investigation would also be necessary, in order to carry out comparative studies (particularly with regard to other countries in the Habsburg empire); these do not appear in the book, in spite of being heralded in the 'Introduction'. Done in this way, extension of the proposed analysis would alter the interpretative perspective, enabling the author to formulate his own conclusions in responses to the problems or issues he sets forth while refraining to offer his own interpretation of them.

Marcin Soboń's book primarily sets in order the present-day state of knowledge, furnishing the reader with a survey of problems vividly disputed today. It provides an enormous documentation found and collected by the author, pieces of which have not by far been subject to research (e.g. those from the Central State Historical Archives in Lviv). The author's ambition was to offer a comprehensive, versatile, interdisciplinary and synthetic depiction of an issue of importance not only on the grounds of historical studies. The effort had proved partly successful, owing to a limited catalogue of questions, as clearly seen in certain parts of this book – thus leading to a too-narrowly-scoped analysis, as coupled with too-far-fetched interpretative cautiousness (if not minimalism, at some points).

The pessimistic, if not at times dreary, truth about the Polish-Jewish relations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century has not as yet made its way to social awareness, handbooks or lectures on history of the period. It should be hoped that the monograph by Marcin Soboń will contribute to a change in this respect.

Andrzej Wierzbicki, *Spory o polską duszę. Z zagadnień charakterologii narodowej w historiografii polskiej XIX i XX w.* [Dispute over the Polish Soul: Questions of National Character in Polish Historiography of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries], Warszawa, 2010, Muzeum Historii Polski, Collegium Civitas, 324 pp., index

'National characterology' is, to put it briefly, a collection of statements which define inborn or acquired characteristics of a nation. Such studies had been carried out as early as antiquity. Later this kind of consideration proved extremely resilient to scientific revolutions and paradigm changes. In spite of numerous attempts at giving national characterology strict methodological frameworks (they reached their most developed – also institutionally – form in what is known as nineteenth-century German *Völkerpsychologie*¹), its dominant feature is still a vague nature of formulas used, eclecticism of methodology, sometimes intellectual nonchalance which manifests itself in rash generalisations. Antonina Kłoskowska describes the main category of national characterology, and also the idea of national identity, as hypostasis.² Andrzej Wierzbicki makes no attempt at rationalising this field. On the contrary, in the final part of his book he states that – so far – 'no procedure for recognising national character, as applied by historians, has been proved to work' (p. 307). While he sees the futility of this category, the author at the same time perceives its role in interpretations of Polish history in the past over two hundred years. Therefore his book is a specific synthesis of the history of Polish historiography, seen through the prism of deliberations on the national character of Poles and those nations which had the strongest influence on the Polish past.

The book is an updated and considerably enlarged version of Wierzbicki's treatise from 1993. In between the author has published a number of works on the history of Polish historiography, notably regarding the Romantic epoch.³ The major part of what has been added to the new edition relates to 'national characterology' in the second half of the twentieth century. The book is composed of an introduction, six chronologically arranged chapters and a conclusion. It also includes an index of names.

¹ Georg Eckardt (ed.), *Völkerpsychologie: Versuch einer Neuentdeckung* (Weinheim, 1997).

² Antonina Kłoskowska, *Kultury narodowe u korzeni* (Warsaw, 2005), 102.

³ Andrzej Wierzbicki, *Groźni i wielcy. Polska myśl historyczna XIX i XX wieku wobec rosyjskiej despotii* (Warsaw, 2001); *idem*, *Historiografia polska doby romantyzmu* (Wrocław, 1999); *idem*, *Europa w polskiej myśli historycznej i politycznej XIX i XX wieku* (Warsaw, 2009).

Chapter One is an analysis of statements dating from the Enlightenment period, which concentrate on the threat, and later the reality, of the downfall of the Polish state. Even in that early period national characterology engaged the interest of the most outstanding Polish intellectuals, including Stanisław Staszic, Adam Naruszewicz, Jędrzej Śniadecki and Wawrzyniec Surowiecki. It was also in that period that the basic views in this field took shape. On the one hand, there was a thesis about the immutability of the national character, and on the other about its evolution under the influence of geographical, climatic, historic and cultural factors. The ideology of progress proclaimed steps towards perfecting the characteristics of the community as a whole. Meanwhile the Cassandra-like tone of the critics of noble democracy and its deformation was in consonance with the thesis of the degeneration of the Commonwealth and the necessity for a return to the allegedly ideal original form. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw the appearance of the basic questions about Poland's cultural – either Western or Eastern – affiliation. These were related to the rise of interest in Slavdom as presented by Herder, who was often imitated and just as frequently criticised.

In Chapter Two Wierzbicki writes about the Polish search for a specific central national idea. His view is that Romantic deliberations were largely metaphysical in character, especially in comparison with the Enlightenment ideas. In the discourse in question an important role was ascribed to Russia, which often appeared as 'the other' in Polish identity projects. Next to the West (which was also criticised, though at the same time Poles identified with it), Russia became the main point of reference not only for Adam Mickiewicz, Joachim Lelewel and Bronisław Trentowski, but also for the extravagant ethnological theories of Franciszek Duchійński, who detected Asian racial and intellectual features in the Russians. All of this provided a background for apologies of the Polish national character, frequent in the nineteenth century and often combined with the cult of idealised Slavdom. Wierzbicki emphasises the fact that reflection on national character was not the exclusive domain of only Polish authors and that in historiography it generally performed the role of a universal factor useful in logically justifying any phenomenon.

Chapter Three describes critical response to the apologetic inclinations of Romantic authors. Wierzbicki discards the view that critics of Romanticism in historiography allegedly shunned speculation on inherent or acquired national characteristics. The author is mainly interested in the Cracow historical school, but he also mentions many other intellectual circles and individual authors, who may have differed in some individual aspects of their criticism, but all subscribed to the view that 'Western characteristics were too sparse in us' (p. 139). It is worth mentioning that the views of Cracow conservatives were not intrinsically linked with ideological Occidentalism. Wierzbicki quotes here Edward Bogusławski who harnessed the negative

evaluation of Slavic characteristics to his theory of the historic need for the unification of Slavdom under the Russian sceptre.

In Chapter Four the author discusses a continuation, rather than turnabout, in Romantic reflection, parallel with the work of the Cracow conservatives. The next generation of apologists of the Polish national character, successors of Romanticism, can be divided into at least three groups. The epigones of Romanticism, for example Stefan Buszczyński, 'the indefatigable glorifier of Polish goodness, nobleness and tolerance' (p. 197), were mentally still in the period before the collapse of the January uprising (1863–4) and responded indignantly to any criticism of 'national faults'. The second group were Warsaw positivists, who opposed the Cracow conservatives with sober argumentation which Wierzbicki analyses taking as an example Władysław Smoleński. These pointed to manifestations of national rebirth on the eve of the downfall of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In his criticism of the Cracow historians Smoleński invoked the category of society and refused to regard as morally base a nation of which only part of the political elite could be described as degenerate. The third group of the 'apologists' of the Polish national character, the neo-Romanticists, made themselves known towards the end of the nineteenth century and were noticeable in Polish intellectual life during World War I and the first foundation years of the new state. In the work of their mainstream representatives, for example Jan Karol Kochanowski and Antoni Chołoniewski, 'national characterology' was elevated to the position of a key issue that served to explain the general sense of history. They also underlined the scholarly status of such deliberations. Kochanowski, author of rather vague reflections on Polish social psychology and at the same time one of the most prominent among the Warsaw historians, expressed this conviction in his programme lecture at the inauguration of the academic year 1919/20 at Warsaw University:

This has the charm and mystery of a power that links individuals into a nation but this is also an obligation, coming from an inner imperative, so that learning – the sphere of collective efforts of thought – affords not only *cosmopolitan objectivity*, which is a natural expression of man's membership of humanity, but that it also affords *national subjectivity*, an equally inherent expression of a particular feeling for phenomena, given to mankind and closest to it.⁴

Chapter Five is about national character in Polish historiography in the period between the two world wars. In relating theoretical discussions on methods of establishing psychological characteristics of society Wierzbicki focuses on the question whether this is the sum total of individual characters or perhaps a separate ontological entity. This period saw some attempts at describing

⁴ Jan Karol Kochanowski, 'Zadania historiografii polskiej', *Przegląd Historyczny*, series 2, ii (1919–20), 203–22, here 212.

the ‘anthropological’ type of a Pole. Again historic aspects prevailed over other arguments, e.g. those reverting to the idea of psychological races. The eighteenth-century dispute between the ‘optimistic’ and the ‘pessimistic’ approach continued also in the interwar period, with the ‘optimistic’ approach prevailing immediately after 1918, and a more ‘pessimistic’ approach taking the upper hand after Józef Piłsudski’s takeover in 1926, when the need for strong, authoritarian government was sometimes justified by the weakness of the Polish national character.

Chapter Six, completely new, concentrates on ‘characterology’ in the period when, at least in theory, it should have been completely superfluous. As Wierzbicki explains, in spite of the Marxists’ fundamental dislike of psychological approach, it was doing quite well in communist Poland and in some periods was popular in particular among authors close to the communist authority. Contributions by such authors as Colonel Zbigniew Załuski or Aleksander Bocheński met with considerable interest among historians who experimented with psycho-history and history of mentality, and who studied national auto- and hetero-stereotypes. A symptomatic manifestation of this interest was the congress of Polish historians in Poznań in 1985, dedicated to myths and stereotypes in Polish history.⁵ Considerable part of this chapter has been devoted to Tadeusz Łepkowski’s views of the Poles’ national characteristics, as well as Edmund Lewandowski’s by then slightly obsolete theoretical ideas.

In the ‘Conclusion’ Andrzej Wierzbicki once again considers cognitive usefulness of the historiographic current, which has been one of the major ideas in the Polish humanities of the past two hundred years, but has failed to produce any coherent methodology, nor has it arrived at any definite conclusions. The rational element of the idea of national psychology, could, according to the author, be found in the creative function of auto-stereotype. The oft-repeated conviction that Poles represent certain characteristics could, by force of suggestion, become a psychological reality and shape the patterns of collective behaviour. However the problem is that the historians, whose work is analysed in the book, have never produced a coherent personality model of the Pole. Instead, they have provided descriptions that are mutually contradictory, a result of not only differing views of individual thinkers, but also logical shallowness and incoherence within any one theory. Considering all of this, the author comes to the conclusion that national character is merely a fundamental myth rooted in history.

Andrzej Wierzbicki’s book provides a coherent and convincing analysis of the discourse on national character in Poland, although the author is by no means a proponent of this category. Among its merits is the fact that the

⁵ Texts based on congress papers are to be found in Janusz Tazbir (ed.), *Mity i stereotypy w dziejach Polski* (Warsaw, 1991).

author presents the views of Polish historians against a broader background of West European and Russian ideas. Thus disputes among Polish historians are not shown as a closed sequence of interpretations battling with each other, but as a reflection of broader ideological tendencies in Europe. A minor shortcoming is that the author neglects to relate Polish theories to those in the neighbouring countries, above all those nations which were successors of the former Commonwealth: the Ukrainians, the Lithuanians and the Belarusians. And this is an interesting problem in that in each of those cases Poland constituted an important point of reference – usually critical. It is also a pity that there is no mention of the work of the supporters of ‘Slavic reciprocity’, known to Polish nineteenth-century authors – of Ján Kollár, Jozef Šafarik or Jernej Kopitar, for example. However, it must be admitted that within Poland – the author’s main point of interest – the influence of authors from the neighbouring countries was of minor significance, compared to that of representatives of West European and Russian intellectual currents.

The changes that the author introduced in the second edition are considerable, but, understandably, of only supplementary nature. The basic theses, the structure of the exposition and methodological approach have remained unchanged. If today’s reader is left with a certain unsatisfied feeling, this is precisely in this respect. Wierzbicki quotes an enormous number of sources, which he analyses scrupulously and eruditely. He does not miss references – recurring in statements by Polish students of national character – to the category of symbolic masculinity and femininity of whole nations and societies. On the other hand, however, we find no reference to research on the history of women and the gender discourse, which have been dynamically developing in the past decades. Sometimes the reader is left with the feeling that the gender category, in the case of some Polish historians, could prove a useful instrument in helping throw a new light on the subject. Similarly, while the author notices both the use of the category of race in Polish ‘characterology’ and criticism of the anthropological current, he does not give enough consideration to the question of biologisation of imaginings about a national community and to the reception of social Darwinism in Poland (Darwin’s name is not mentioned even once). Meanwhile adopting such perspective would help put in sharper relief the links between late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century discourse on national character on the one hand, and the spreading anti-Semitism of that period on the other. Nevertheless both shortcomings should be rendered relative, at least because in Polish historiography they still form a new field of research, if not for other reasons.

Wierzbicki, however, steers clear of another, much more serious danger. The mass of original, often extravagant theories on national character could have easily inclined the author to ironic comments and evaluations – quite understandable admittedly, but drawing us away from the understanding of mechanisms of the whole problem. In his book this danger has been avoided.

The author repeatedly emphasises that some of the most outstanding Polish intellectuals have been equal partners in this discourse, and frequently quotes from the work of the most prominent Polish methodologists of history, e.g. from Marceli Handelsman's *Historyka*:

Community shapes, in respect of psychology, those who are its constituent parts and it leaves its mark on them. Composed of various individuals, often representing quite different characteristics, it creates its type, its average expression, its cross-section of community, whose features appear in most varied forms in the psychology of individuals who form it. ... In historic reality both elements – the individual and the collective – are most closely combined in each person and cannot be separated from each other.⁶

trans. Bogna Piotrowska

Maciej Górny

Agnieszka Nowakowska and Zofia Wóycicka, *Etniczna polityka komunistów. Dwa casusy* [The Communist Regime's Ethnical Politics: Two Cases in Point], with a foreword by Włodzimierz Borodziej and Marcin Kula, Warszawa 2010, Wydawnictwo TRIO, 244 pp., bibliog., series: W Krainie PRL

The book by Agnieszka Nowakowska and Zofia Wóycicka comprises two studies by the young authors that deal with memory (particularly, sociology of collective memory) and historical awareness, situating their research activity at the intersection of sociology, political science, and history. The first study, by Zofia Wóycicka, is titled 'Od Weepers do Wieprza. Dzieje pewnej wioski w Olsztyńskiem w latach 1945–1956' [From Weepers to Wieprz. The history of a certain village in Olsztyn area, 1945–1956]. Agnieszka Nowakowska is the author of the other study, 'Między polskością a sowieckością. Szkoły polskie w Wilnie w latach siedemdziesiątych XX wieku' [Between Polishness and Sovietness. Polish schools in Vilnius in the 1970s]. The proposed combination of the two, apparently clearly differing as to subject-matter, should be deemed justified. In fact, both texts deal with a similar set of issues: the daily life on the ethnic borderland under the conditions of a totalitarian regime. It is a story of neighbourhood, identity problems, attitude toward 'the aliens' and 'the others', and, relations with the lowest-tier authorities. The characters are specific individuals, and the history is shown in a worm's-eye view – a local and personal perspective; hence, the differing interpretations of events.

⁶ Marceli Handelsman, *Historyka*, ed. Piotr Węcowski (Warsaw, 2010), 4.

Włodzimierz Borodziej and Marcin Kula, authors of the 'Foreword', emphasise that the individuals described in both studies remained in their respective 'small homelands' once the war was over – albeit they have lost their 'great' homelands. The characters, natives of Masuria area and Polish dwellers of Vilnius alike, 'moved' their countries of settlement while making no physical move. The Vilnius region was deserted by the Polish intelligentsia who left almost in their entirety and were replaced by the newcomer Russians or Lithuanians. In turn, most of the Masurian Germans fled in 1945, in fear of the Red Army nearing – to be replaced by new settlers, mostly Polish, subsequently joined by some Ukrainians in 1947. The new conditions superimposed on everyone the need to assume and accept the completely new rules of life.

This is not where the similarities end, though. The authors have used a similar methodology, with a remarkable role of oral history analysis to it, dealing with the history that has been personally experienced and subjectively preserved in human memory. The message has been excavated through accounts and their analysis. The source base for both studies is archival documents and period press texts; it is the accounts however that have enabled a more critical view of the image emerging from 'traditional' sources. Confrontation and supplementation of various communications has eventually formed up an almost three-dimensional image of the history, one that takes account of the feelings of individuals and social groups.

The essay by Zofia Wóycicka describes the relations in a Masurian-Polish-Ukrainian community of the small village of Wieprz (German: Weepers), located ca. 30 km off Iława (German: Deutsch Eylau). Today, its dwellers are mostly Ukrainians who were resettled in 1947 by the Polish communist authorities as part of Operation Vistula (*akcja 'Wisła'*); the remainder are families of former Polish settlers (having arrived there mainly from the central Poland as well as from *Kresy* – the pre-war eastern borderland area), plus Masurian indigenes who are scarce in number. Wieprz is now a typical post-state-farm-environment settlement, gnawed by joblessness and plagued by alcoholism.

The story's starting point is the first months of 1945, the time the history of a German locality of Weepers ends and the one of Polish Wilczarki (then renamed to Wieprz) starts. Facing the Red Army troops closing in, the German authorities ordered that the East Prussia inhabitants be evacuated. Yet, almost all the Weepers locals remained where they were. They survived the front passing by, and the nightmare of the military marauders' licence. They were being through hunger, robberies, murders, rapes, and loots. It was only in May 1945 that the germs of Polish civil authorities appeared, overtly neglected all the same by the Soviet soldiers. The accounts referred to by Wóycicka perfectly render the ambience of those days. They show, for instance, how the locals successfully took advantage of the disputes

between the Soviet and the Polish authorities. The thing was that while Polish officials were intent on 'pushing away' the German population from Masuria, the Russians were interested in putting them to work. The locals would usually seek buttress from the Soviet commanders. A fact of import was that the Russians were seen as those who had won, and to whom one had better submitted in consequence of a war that was lost. The Poles, in turn, were perceived as threatening yet, in effect, contemptible looters and usurpers. The Soviet troops retreated from Masuria only in late 1945/early 1946. The autochthons were not quite well treated by the officials and by the settlers. The situation was improving gradually, owing to e.g. special directives received from Warsaw.

As time went on, there were more and more settlers coming and increasing numbers of former dwellers leaving – to head mostly for Germany, West or East. A new community took shape in Wieprz, composed of several groups knitting together very slowly and with difficulty. The core part of the study in question is about the relations between those people and the authorities; as a broader concept, it deals with the functioning of the Stalinist system on the village level.

Representatives of the authorities acted in a manner, so to say, typical to their time. Day-to-day administration was not their only focus: from the outset, they spared no efforts to implement solutions based upon the ideological assumptions. They did their best organising and inspecting into any manifestations of social life, going as far as interfering in personal relations. They would not hesitate to apply intimidation and repressive measures. The propaganda was omnipresent. The compulsory supplies of produce were enormously pestering. In parallel, as the author aptly remarks, the local relationships were remarkably significant to the authorities-society relations. The officials' attitude not infrequently resulted from a compromise between the official duties and common sense. For the communist-party/state authorities, it was reporting business that counted in the first place; hence, documents generated on a local level would often embellish the reality, reporting on successes achieved on yet another 'ideological front'. In the recollections of the locals, many a manifestation of those authorities' activity appear now to have been much less threatening than one might think it was, having read the official documents. Some of the initiatives, such as participation in propaganda events, shows made by a touring cinema-theatre, etc. are now recalled as downright attractions.

A sense of temporariness, and lack of rootedness among the settlers, was not favouring the building of social ties. Ethnic conflicts manifested themselves time and again. The Poles' attitude toward the Masurian natives as well as the Ukrainians tended to be reluctant. Nonetheless, these partitions were getting less and less acute with time. Cooperation, mixed marriages included, appeared in lieu of hostility. Of importance was the fact that there was no

church in the village – a venue around which ethnic/religious emotions could have concentrated, alongside a spiritual life. As testified by the documents and accounts collected, the authorities more or less successfully attempted to alleviate the tensions. Since the early 1950s, efforts were taken to more broadly attract autochthonic people and Ukrainians for collaboration. Still, on the grass-root level, the inhabitants proved they could display solidarity above ethnic divisions when e.g. resisting attempted collectivisation.

The year 1956 – the study's final caesura – no doubt marked a turning point for the country as a whole. The outcomes of this transition were reaching the locality of Wieprz at a very slow pace, though. The author found it hard to drill down her respondents' memory to get any reflection of those events. The daily life of out-of-the-way Masurian provinces did not quite change then. It is the Wieprz locals' belief, expressed regardless of their background, that a real milestone came only with the abolition of compulsory produce supplies during the 1970s (the 'Gierek decade').

The author carried out most of her underlying research in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The study's only major flaw is no use it apparently makes of the literature produced in the recent years, all the more so that certain nuances of the communist authorities' nationalistic policies have been rather thoroughly researched there. References made to, e.g., Eugeniusz Mironowicz's book *Polityka narodowościowa PRL* (2000) could have refined certain conclusions. In most cases, however, these more recent studies tend to confirm the detailed findings made by Zofia Wóycicka – this being undisputedly to her credit.

Agnieszka Nowakowska's study discussing the everyday reality of Polish-language schools in Vilnius in the 1970s proves no less fine and successful. This author has sought a reply to the question of what drivers and factors informed the functioning of these schools. The dependencies between ideological assumptions and the youth educational practice are her special focus. She deliberates on the position of ideology in the life of so-called man-in-the-street. The study is contributory – and it is the tiny fragments of life, like pieces of a jigsaw-puzzle, that make up the reality being described. Nowakowska's analysis of individual phenomena being deeply set in the local context tells us a lot about the essence of the communist system, its influence on individuals and communities. The underlying research sources are archival documents (mainly, official reports of authorities across the tiers), periodicals published at the time in what was the Lithuanian SSR (in Polish and Russian) and accounts forming the actual backbone of this study, which is true also for the other one. Lengthy treatises on the period/Soviet pedagogy are made use of as well. Quotations cited and references made excellently illustrate the tasks posed for the schools in the time under discussion. A list of reference literature complements the sections' content.

The Brezhnev years were a period when intensive measures were taken in the USSR to create a uniform 'Soviet nation'. In parallel, an internationalist

nature of the Soviet homeland was emphasised, with attempts being made at institutionalising any manifestations of national distinctness, thus enabling control over them. Russian was the lingua franca, and was clearly propagated at the expense and to the detriment of the other Republics' national languages. Russian people settling across the Union's Republics did not integrate into local societies, tending not to assimilate or identify themselves with their cultures.

The Poles dwelling in the Vilnius region (Polish: Wileńszczyzna) were put into a tough situation. The Lithuanian communists would usually assume a 'national' attitude. One aspect of this trend was endeavours made to keep a margin of freedom particularly for cultural and education activities while preventing over-Russification of the Republic. The central authorities in Moscow were aware of it, and therefore Polish-language schools had been allowed in the region in the Stalinist years already. The intent was to exert a pressure on the Lithuanians who were eager to have the region Lithuanised. Given the Kremlin's attitude, the republican authorities were forced to tolerate the state of affairs as it was. The Polish community of Vilnius were aware of the situation and sought support from Moscow in their attempted defence of their national identity. The Vilnius-region schools taught in Polish but in the Soviet spirit. These outlets delivered the programme of educating loyal citizens of the Soviet Union.

Nowakowska portrays the school's daily life: the lessons, roll-calls, 'in-honour-of' ceremonies, extracurricular classes, activities of *Oktyabryata* ('Little Octoberists' – a Soviet organisation for 7-9-year-olds) and pioneers (scouts), through to recyclables collection actions, compulsory labour to the benefit of kolkhozes, etc. There was nothing that could occur or take place independently of the all-pervading communist ideology. The people were elaborating various strategies to survive. A symbiosis, calling for a far or not-too-far-reaching compromise with the totalitarian regime, was a must. Given the specificities of the seventies' decade, even in a country like the USSR the ideology ceased to be intimidating and, even more so, did not trigger a revolutionary zeal any more: this statement by the author sounds convincing. The ideology 'was an integral part of daily reality, burdensome and boring at times while bringing quite an entertainment some other time' (p. 235). Hence, the school has turned into a kind of theatre where both the teachers and their students played their parts in the obligatory ritual, with greater or lesser conviction.

Along with the official current, inter-ethnic relations functioned in Vilnius too. There were still many superstitions shared by the Polish community, anti-Semitic phobias included. Contacts with Lithuanian people, who tended to be perceived in an adverse light, were limited. The Lithuanian language was learned rarely and without much will to do so. A command of Lithuanian was not indispensable for those living in the Soviet Lithuania. Relations with

local Russian people tended to be much better, as a rule. Russian was easier to learn, facilitating further education and opening a career path across the USSR. The Poles and the Russians were getting closer to one another owing to their similar social position which was definitely inferior in the Lithuanian SSR to that of the Lithuanian people. The Poles rather frequently tended to assume Soviet cultural patterns, the Russian language being part of these. The family home where the national tradition and customs were observed was in some cases the only remaining enclave of Polishness. Yet, the importance of traditional family ties was incessantly diminishing in a society that was subject to accelerated modernisation combined with ideological pressures.

The factors described by Nowakowska, to which remaining isolated from Poland should be added, enable us to understand why the national culture, and even the identity of the Vilnius-region Polish community, 'turned different' compared to the rest of the Polish society. Our understanding of the origins of this community's negative attitude toward the outbreak of Lithuanian nationalism in the early 1990s is now clearer too – with its resulting ambivalent attitude to the then-hot-issue of independence of the Lithuanian state. The essay in question is a rewarding sketch of a portrait of our compatriots from Lithuania who all too often tend to be seen merely through the prism of recollection literature or emotion-imbued political journalism.

It may only be regretted that no source or literature available in Lithuanian has been made use of. As the author rightly points out, the Poles of Vilnius did not function in a social and/or political vacuum. Then, the origins of the Lithuanian people's attitude, particularly toward Polish schools, would be worth learning about. It would be an interesting exercise to make these issues part of a broader context, regarding the position of Vilnius in the Lithuanian national movement; the myth of a lost capital town and its 'Polonised' inhabitants, built in the interwar years; the idea to regain and re-Lithuanise the 'East Lithuania' (as Lithuanians call the Vilnius region). The specificity of Polish-Lithuanian relations during WWII years is worth closer attention too. Lastly, the underlying drivers of the once-famous 1956 protest of Lithuanian intellectuals against Polish schools in Vilnius region would be worth reminding. An extensive literature, also available in Polish, deals with all these questions, after all.

The remarks on a weak national attachment or sentiment among Vilnius-region Poles would call for a deepened afterthought. The generations of grandfathers and fathers of the characters Nowakowska describes come to the fore here. This is a very interesting and complex problem, not to be described by a single sentence. Let us but remark that the issue of 'incomplete identity' or a dual Polish-Lithuanian character of the national awareness (as it is understood today) of those dwelling in the historically-Lithuanian lands was nothing out-of-the-ordinary. The emergence of national states in the interwar period marked the first point at which the locals were forced to stand

for either the Lithuanian or the Polish option. These problems have mostly been quite well described in the literature; taking these threads into account would have enriched the content of the study which is otherwise superb.

To sum up, with the Nowakowska and Wóycicka book, the reader is encountering a mature and very interesting elaboration of its subject-matters. The structure of both sections is carefully developed and well-thought-over, providing us with portraits of everyday reality under the communist rule. And, making us aware once again that the so-called ordinary realities of those uneasy times were in fact variegated.

trans. Tristan Korecki

Krzysztof Buchowski