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Piotr Wróblewski
Institute of Sociology
Silesia University, Katowice
E-mail: wroblewp@us.edu.pl

NATIONAL MINORITIES IN POLAND AND MECHANISM OF THEIR ETHNO-NATIONAL REVIVAL *

SUMMARY

The objective of this paper is to examine the processes of regeneration among national minorities inhabiting Poland. According to Anthony D. Smith the process of ethno-national revival occurs in three phases. First, there takes place the discovery of one's own ethno-history. In the next phase, ethno-national revival enters into the realm of politics and politicisation of culture. Finally, purification of the community leads to redefinition of citizenry and destruction of everything alien. It is the thesis of the paper that the revival of national minorities in Poland has been based mainly on certain symbols recognised as the group property. First of all, the renewal of ethnic nationalism focuses on certain locally distinguished places, generally acknowledged as sacred. Secondly, ethno-national revival of national minorities in Poland is strongly connected with the cult of heroes. Thirdly, the minority language is considered to be the highest value of the groups. According to the national minorities in Poland all these elements constitute the bases of national awareness. Furthermore, the ethno-national revival of these groups has been intensified by very particular interpretations of ethno-history. The history of the nation is considerably different from the way it is understood by people living in national states (Germany, Ukraine, Belarus). In this paper the author deals with the phenomena noticeable among Germans, Ukrainians and Belorussians living in Poland. These groups form majority conglomerates of non-Polish population of the Republic Poland. The author provides examples referring to these minorities and showing their practical solutions to identification dilemmas. This national regeneration of ethnies began in 1980 with the first revolution of "Solidarity". It reached its climax in 1989, when institutionalised social change took place, called "refolution" (Timothy Garton Ash). The basic symbolic system underlying the ethno-national revival of German, Ukrainian and Belorussian minorities is religion, since interpret of the history of the nation and the individual.

KEY WORDS: ethno-national revival, national minorities, religion, sacred places, cult of heroes, language, Poland

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: etnonacionalna obnova, nacionalne manjine, religija, sveta mjesta, kult heroja, jezik, Poljska

SŁOWA KLUCZE: odrodzenie etniczne, mniejszości narodowe, religia, miejsca święte, kult herosów, język, Polska

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Introduction

The objective of this paper is to examine processes of regeneration of national minorities inhabiting Poland. According to Anthony D. Smith the process of ethno-national revival occurs in three phases (Smith, 1995: 65-71). First, there takes place of the discovery of one's own ethno-history. The next phase of the ethno-national revival enters the realm of politics and consists in politicisation of culture. Finally, purification of the community leads to redefinition of citizenry and removal of everything alien.

The thesis of the paper is that the revival of national minorities in Poland has been based mainly on some symbols recognised as group property. First of all, the renewal of ethnic nationalism focuses around some locally distinguished places generally acknowledged as sacred. Secondly, ethno-national revival of national minorities in Poland is strongly connected with the cult of heroes. Thirdly, the minority language is considered to be the highest value of the groups. According to national minorities in Poland all these elements constitute the basis of national awareness. Furthermore, the vernacular mobilisation of these groups has been intensified by very particular interpretations of their ethno-history. The history of the nation is considerably different from the way it is understood by people living in national states (Germany, Ukraine, Belarus).

In this paper I will deal with phenomena noticeable among minorities living in Poland. These groups form majority conglomerates of non-Polish population in the Republic Poland (see Appendix no. 1 and 2). I shall provide examples referring to these minorities to show some practical solutions to the identification dilemmas.

To recapitulate, I should like to repeat the main thesis of my paper, which is as follows: the ethno-national revival of national minorities in Poland focuses around values related to sacred places, the cult of heroes and the language of the group. This national regeneration of ethnies began in 1980 with the first revolution of "Solidarity", and it reached its climax in 1989, when there took place an institutionalised social change called "refolution" (Timothy Garton Ash).

Sacred places

The national regeneration of Germans becomes objectivised in two types of sacred space: a sanctuary and a place of martyrdom (see Eliade, 1993: 66). For

Germans of primary significance in their interpretation of the history of their group are the place of relegation of the sacred at St. Ann Mountain in Opole district and the place of martyrdom in Łambinowice, in the same region.

The sanctuary at St. Ann Mountain was build at the end of the 15th century. At the beginning of the 17th century the church came into possession of a figure of its patroness, which was considered as miraculous (see Hanich, 1987). This place became the destination of many pilgrimages of the native population. The major ethnic festival of the German minority is organised also at St. Ann Mountain, every year since 1991.

The place of martyrdom is another type of sacred space of the German minority. The members of the group believe that such a space is in Łambinowice, where one of the labour camps for the German population was situated. To this camp the civil population of Upper Silesia was sent in 1945-46. Hunger, diseases and tortures caused the death of many.

At the site of the camp, the local inhabitants have always lit candles on All Saints Day (Urbanek, 1994: 6). Germans launched an initiative to build a monument in commemoration of the victims of Łambinowice labour camp. This idea was generally accepted, also by Polish authorities. However the inscription which was to be put on the monument provoked sharp controversies. Finally, the monument in the form of a cross was unveiled in 1995. The two meter high stone obelisk bears the following inscription in two languages: "To Germans and Poles, victims of Lamsdorf camp in 1945-46".

The arguments between Poles and the representatives of the German minority usually ceased with a compromise on the symbolical character of the sacred places (the sanctuary and the place of martyrdom).

After 1989 there developed more tense relations between Poles and Ukrainians, especially in Przemyśl area, since the forms of monuments and inscriptions at the sites of martyrdom, commemorating soldiers of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, were not accepted by local authorities and the Polish population (see Wilczak, 1994: 3). In Przemyśl province there are still seven such monuments, not approved to be set-up. In Hruszowice a monument resembling a triumphal arch with a trident was built. The inscription engraved on it reads: "To the UIA heroes - fighters for the independent Ukraine". However, the authorities gave their agreement to a monument in Jaworzno (20 kilometres east of Katowice), unveiled in the place of the Central Labour Camp

for Ukrainians, where Orthodox and Uniate priests as well as people accused of supporting the Ukrainian Insurgent Army were imprisoned in 1947-49.

The place that provoked the most acrimonious argument between Poles and Ukrainians was the St. Theresa Church of the Carmelite monks in Przemyśl. By the order of the Pope it was to come into possession of the Byzantine-Ukrainian church. However, this decision was contested by the Polish community and the friars, who occupied the place for over two months. Eventually, the Pope allotted to the new Bishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Church a new place of worship, where during his visit in June 1991 he met the Ukrainian congregation. The St. Teresa Church affair reappeared on the front pages of national news papers again in 1996, when in the course of the restoration works the dome of the Eastern denomination church was destroyed in spite of serious objections of the Ukrainians. In their opinion the dome constituted a symbolic element of the presence of the Ukrainian religion and culture in the townscape.

The most important sacred places of Belorussians in Poland are Orthodox monasteries in Grabarka (near the town Drohiczyn) and in Supraśl (near the town Biała Podlaska). Grabarka Orthodox Church is situated on a hill covered with votive crosses brought there by worshippers making pilgrimage to the place - the greatest pilgrimage site of the Orthodox church in Poland.

The Church of the Annunciation in Supraśl was founded by Greek monks from Mount Athos (Cieślak, 1996: 10). For centuries it functioned as a monastery, first Orthodox, then Uniate, and then again Orthodox. In the years preceding World War II it became the property of the Catholic monks of the Salesian order and finally by the decision of the Ministers' Council in 1964 it was taken over by the Orthodox church monks, despite pretensions on the part of the Roman-Catholics to the right of use of the buildings. It must be, however, noted that the disputes over sacred places of the area are accompanied by nationalistic discords, aggravating the conflictive situation.

Unlike in Upper Silesia, the national conflicts in the east of Poland overlap with religious disputes complicated by their history. For example, in Przemyśl the Polish Catholics of Latin rite and the Ukrainians who belong to the Ukrainian Catholic Church, a denomination which also acknowledges the Bishop of Rome as their spiritual superior, have got involved in a conflict. In Supraśl, supporters of the Orthodox church of the Belorussian national identity constitute the other side in the conflict with the Polish Catholics.

Cult of heroes

The second of the analysed elements of the national revival is the cult of heroes. However, it does not concern merely persons related to the sacred, that is, those who were beatified or canonised by the Church.

The most important heroic figure for the Germans is Joseph von Eichendorff (see Kurcz, 1995: 193). This romantic poet was born in Upper Silesia, near Racibórz, in 1788. The respect for the writer and for his literary output which shows his Silesian roots, was common among the Germans living in this area before 1945. His place of birth has become the target of national pilgrimages for Germans.

But not only Joseph von Eichendorff is viewed as a national icon. The soldiers who died for their country fighting in the German army during the First and Second World War are also perceived in that way. Their symbolic monuments began to be erected in Upper Silesia after 1989. New monuments were built and the old ones, demolished after the World War II, were reconstructed. Homage to the fallen soldiers and the national interpretation of their death constitute a characteristic trait of Germans living in Poland.

The representatives of the Ukrainian minority hold in high esteem poets who were born in the areas inhabited for centuries by Ukrainians and Poles, namely the western borderland of Eastern Galicia - the territory incorporated in 1772 into the Austria of the Hapsburgs. In the pantheon of national poets the Ukrainians regard Ivan Rusenko and Ivan Antonycz as national icons. These two figures are often a subject of quizzes organised during ethnic festivals. An important event of such festivals is the unveiling and consecration of a monument to a great compatriot, e.g. the monument to Antonycz unveiled during the "Watra" (Watch-fire) ethnic festival of Ukrainians held in Antonycz's home village Nowica in the Beskid Niski Mountains (West Carpathians). The ceremony was attended not only by the representatives of the minority, but also by hierarchs of the Ukrainian Catholic church and guests from the Ukraine.

It is worth noting that the ceremony of unveiling the monument to Joseph von Eichendorff, a national hero of Germans, was characterised with the same solemnity. During such ceremonies national ideas of a minority group mingle with the sacred.

At the ethnic festival of Ukrainians there arouse a conflict over commemoration of Nikifor Drowniak, a naive painter, regarded by the Ukrainian population as a national hero and by Poles as an outstanding representative of Polish folk culture.

The argument which developed in summer 1996, concerned the inscription on the commemorative plaque. Polish local authorities of Krynica, the birthplace of the painter, did not accept the inscription in the Ukrainian language. In consequence, the monument has not yet been unveiled. Like German minority in Poland, Ukrainians living in Poland have a great respect for soldiers who died "pro patria". They recollect their compatriots fighting against Poles in the Zaporogian Rifels (1919-20) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (1943-47). Almost all Polish Ukrainians consider these soldiers heroes, while for a vast majority of Poles the military operations of the separatists are criminal acts directed against the Polish nation (see Wilczak, 1994: 3).

The last minority group to be analysed here are the Belorussians. Among the representatives of this nation, occupying north-eastern Poland, the cult of national heroes is hardly noticeable. The cult has been replaced by an ethnic myth of profound significance for the Belorussian minority in Poland, for the survival of the whole nation. There is a conviction about the key role of the minority in the process of cultivation of national ideas dying out in their national state, the Belorussian Socialist Republic of Soviet Union, now the Republic of Belorussia. This was expressed by the leader of their patriotic elite, a citizen of Białystok, Sokrat Janowicz (see: "Belorussia and Poland: Marriage of Convenience" a 1987 speech /Janowicz, 1991/ and a 1996 text by the same author "Before Belorussia Becomes Belorussified" /Janowicz, 1996/).

Language

Another element around which the revival of national minorities in Poland focused is language. The paradox of the situation concerning the Germans lies in the fact that German language is recognised as one of the most important group values, while only a relatively small number of people within the community are able to make use of it (Jacher, 1993: 114). Those who have the best command of the language are the eldest representatives of the generation, who attended German schools before 1945.

In 1989, when German cultural societies started to get organised, a number of leaders had poor command of their mother tongue. They used Polish even during the election campaign. Thus, they differ in this respect from the leaders of the other ethnic minorities (Ukrainians, Belorussians) who speak their mother tongue fluently.

In such a situation learning German became a priority of the German cultural societies. To this purpose language courses for adults were organised. In spite of initial enthusiasm many supporters of this form of learning their mother tongue soon gave up. Their eagerness ceased when they realised the enormity of work that goes into learning and acquiring a good command of the language that was spoken by their ancestors.

In primary and secondary schools the process of teaching German as a mother tongue began since 1989. At the present time, many children and young people are being taught German.

Despite the incomplete practical knowledge of their mother tongue, the Germans regard the German language as the highest group value. Using Stanisław Ossowski's terminology, it can be said that it is becoming a Sunday value.

Any estimate of the linguistic competence of the representatives of Ukrainian and Belorussian minorities as well as the general use of their native languages, can be only very tentative. Undoubtedly, the number of schools where the native languages are used as the languages of instruction is not as great as in the areas inhabited by the German minority. There is a considerable discord between the stress laid on Belorussian language teaching by representatives of the patriotic elite and on attitude of indifference by an overwhelming majority of people (see Tarnowska, 1992: 62). On the other hand, the Ukrainian minority, which comprises a population of several hundred thousand scattered over northern and western parts of Poland, teaches its language in three primary schools and in three boarding-schools for general education (Czech, 1991: 128).

Since 1989 through their cultural societies or by means of various petitions the representatives of minorities have demanded access to the media in order to broadcast in their national languages programmes on the hot issues of their in-groups. Initially their appeals were rejected by various institutions. The 1991 parliamentary election campaign led in the media offers a telling example of the unquestioned dominance of the Polish language. Before the election the representatives of "The Minority Electoral Block" uniting Polish Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Slovaks and Czechs, were instructed during a live programme not to use their native languages while addressing voters. Nonetheless, each representative present made the final announcement in his native languages.

At present, the Polish public television and radio do broadcast minority programmes. Warsaw TV, which produces programmes in Belorussian and Ukrainian, co-operates with minority societies: the Union of Ukrainians in Poland and the Belorussian Social and Cultural Association. In southern Poland local television presents a programme for the German minority, entitled "Oberschlesien Journal". Also, local radio stations countrywide broadcast for minorities.

Conclusions

The ethnic-national revival of minorities in Poland has been determined by the relations of the native people towards sacred places, the cult of heroes and languages. The objectivisation of national identity among the representatives of the Germans, Ukrainians and Belorussians was conducted in a similar way. For centuries, these groups have constituted the dominant elements of the ethnic mosaic of the Polish Republic. The ethnic activation of the Ukrainian and Belorussian communities, as well as of the German communities, began during the martial law in Poland and it reached its climax during the early years of the social transformation. Similarly, the process ended with the registering or re-establishing of the minority cultural societies.

National regeneration of Germans, Ukrainians and Belorussians in Poland assumed also the form of politicisation of culture. In the case of Germans and Ukrainians it was mainly the quest for defining, as an in-group, those ethnic groups whose folk culture did not fit well into the framework of a single national group. Ukrainians tried to propagate their ideas among Lemks - a group of Ruthenian highlanders in the Beskid Niski, while Germans attempted to awake the national consciousness of Silesians - the native inhabitants of Upper Silesia (see Łęcki et al., 1992: 160-163).

A means of this politicisation of culture were mainly festivals organised by the minorities. Great meetings of the German minority are held at St. Ann's Mountain. Ukrainians organised their Ukrainian Culture Festivals in Sopot and Przemyśl, where they met with an inhospitable reception on the part of Poles (see Wilczak, 1995). The traditional festivity of Ukrainian culture in the West Carpathians is generally known as "Łemkowska Watra" (Lemk-Shepards' Watch-fire) held in Zdynia since 1990. The Belorussian festival "Basawiszcz" brings together not only young representatives of the minority in Poland but also those who are not allowed to manifest their patriotic feelings in the Republic of Belorussia.

The last moment of the ethno-national revival described by Anthony D. Smith, purification of community, run parallel to cultural politicisation. The process consisted in expelling from the minority groups those members who were regarded as enemies of the national interests. Even a few group leaders could not avoid such labelling, having been found outside of the mainstream of the group politics. In each of the groups analysed here the conflicts can be associated with the most influential representatives of patriotic elite - former presidents of their respective minority associations (see Łęcki, Wódz and Wróblewski, 1995: 87-88). These victorious fractions repeatedly found an explanation in the alleged spying practices of the person expelled.

The basic symbolic system underlying the ethno-national revival of German, Ukrainian and Belorussian minorities is religion, since the experience of the sacred provided an adequate framework for the interpretation of the history of the nation and the individual.

APPENDIX

1) The central areas of national minorities

On the basis of current statistical data concerning national and ethnic associations in Poland, it may be assumed that there are about 400,000 people claiming to be of German origin. The main centre is in Upper Silesia (Opole and Katowice).

After the deportation of Ukrainians to the northern and western regions in 1947, the centres of the minority can be found in north-western Poland, i.e. Olsztyn and Elbląg districts, and also in the southern part of Słupsk and Koszalin districts. After 1956 many Ukrainians returned to their motherland, i.e. Krosno and Nowy Sącz districts. The traditional Ukrainian culture flourishes in such towns as Gdańsk, Wrocław and Przemyśl. At the present time, the minority consists of about 300,000 people.

Belorussians reside in Podlasie, in the eastern part of Białystok district. Their major centre is located in Białystok and in the area east of the town bounded by the border with Belorussia. In addition, there is also a predominantly Belorussian population around Bielsk Podlaski. The region has a Belorussian population of 250,000, which constitutes about 35% of the whole district population.

2) Estimated number of national minorities in Poland (Piotr Wróblewski)

Nationality	Inhabitants	Members in Minority Associations	% of the Total Population
German	400,000	364,000	1.0
Ukrainian	300,000	10,100	0.7
Belorussian	250,000	4,200	0.6
Gypsy	20,000	-	0.0
Slovak	15,000	3,000	0.0
Lithuanian	10,000	3,000	0.0
Jewish	8,000	2,500	0.0
Czech	2,000	500	0.0

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NACIONALNE MANJINE U POLJSKOJ I MECHANIZMI NJIHOVE ETNONACIONALNE OBNOVE

SAŽETAK

Svrha je rada razmotriti procese obnove nacionalnih manjina koje žive u Poljskoj. Prema tezi koju je iznio Anthony D. Smith, etnonacionalna obnova prolazi kroz tri faze. Prvo, dolazi do otkrića vlastite etničke povijesti. Zatim, etnonacionalna obnova ulazi u područje politike i politizira kulturu. Napokon, "čišćenje" zajednice dovodi do ponovne definicije građanstva i uništavanja svega tuđega. Teza je ovoga rada da se obnova nacionalnih manjina u Poljskoj temeljila najviše na nekim simbolima, shvaćenima kao grupno vlasništvo. Ponajprije, obnova etničkog nacionalizma usredotočila se na neka lokalno prepoznatljiva mjesta, koja su bila shvaćena kao sakralna. Drugo, etnonacionalna obnova u Poljskoj je tijesno povezana s kultom narodnih junaka (heroja). Treće, manjinski jezik smatra se najvećom vrednotom skupine. Prema nacionalnim manjinama u Poljskoj svi ovi sadržaji predstavljaju temelje nacionalne svijesti. Nadalje, etnonacionalnu obnovu ovih skupina ojačala su osobita tumačenja etnopovijesti. Povijest nacije vidi se u drukčijem svjetlu od shvaćanja što ga imaju ljudi u nacionalnim državama (Njemačkoj, Ukrajini, Bjelorusiji). U radu se autor bavi pojavama među Nijemcima, Ukrajincima i Bjelorusima koji žive u Poljskoj. Ove skupine tvore najveće konglomerate ne-Poljaka u Republici Poljskoj. Autor nudi primjere kako ove manjine u praksi pokušavaju riješiti identifikacijske dvojbe. Nacionalna obnova etničkih manjina u Poljskoj počela je 1980, nakon prve revolucije "Solidarnosti", te dostigla vrhunac 1989, kad je nastupila društvena promjena zvana "refolucija" (Timothy Garton Ash). Religija je temeljni simbolički sustav u korijenu etnonacionalne obnove njemačke, ukrajinske i bjeloruske manjine, jer je svijest o sakralnome ponudila okvir za tumačenje povijesti nacije i pojedinca.

MNIEJSZOŚCI NARODOWE W POLSCE I MECHANIZM ICH ETNICZNEGO ODRODZENIA

STRESZCZENIE

Przedmiotem tego artykułu jest analiza procesów etnicznego odrodzenia mniejszości narodowych zamieszkujących Polskę. Problem ten jest rozpatrywany zgodnie z propozycją teoretyczną Anthony D. Smitha, zamieszczoną w jego pracy "National Identity". Teza artykułu głosi, że proces odrodzenia mniejszości narodowych w Polsce dokonuje się w oparciu o pewne symbole uznane przez te zbiorowości za własność grupową. Po pierwsze, ideologie narodowe mniejszości związane są z pewnymi przestrzennie wyróżnionymi obszarami uznawanymi za miejsca święte. Po drugie, z poczuciem odzyskanej świadomości narodowej związany jest kult herosów. Po trzecie, przedstawiciele mniejszości uznają język narodowy za najważniejszą wartość grupy. W potocznej świadomości członków tych zbiorowości, wszystkie te elementy tworzą podstawę świadomości narodowej. Odrodzenie etniczne mniejszości narodowych w Polsce dokonało się również w oparciu o specyficzne interpretacje historii etnicznej. Historia własnego narodu rozpatrywana jest odmiennie niż w państwach narodowych zamieszkiwanych przez Niemców, Białorusinów i Ukraińców. W artykule tym omawiane są zjawiska występujące w społeczności niemieckiej, ukraińskiej i białoruskiej w Polsce. Grupy te tworzą największe skupiska ludności o niepolskim pochodzeniu zamieszkujące obszar Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. Odrodzenie etniczne tych grup rozpoczęło się na początku lat osiemdziesiątych i osiągnęło swój punkt kulminacyjny w 1989 roku. Podstawowym systemem symbolicznym, który oddziałuje na proces uzyskiwania narodowej tożsamości tych zbiorowości jest religia.