

IV. ETHNIC PROBLEMS IN ETHNOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH

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ETHNIC STUDIES IN POLISH ETHNOLOGY. THEIR CONDITIONS, CONTEXTS AND TRENDS

Until recently ethnic studies have been most popular among historians and sociologists. The former group concentrated primarily on the stages of nation formation process, on the reconstruction of interethnic relations, on migrations and displacement, which resulted in altering ethnic and political borders, as well as on the history of national minorities and their role in historical processes. Sociologists, in turn, focused on theoretical questions related to the status of ethnic units under research and the nature of their transformations. They also paid close attention to the contemporary ethnic situation, devoting much consideration to the problems of ethnic identity, prejudices, stereotypes and conflicts, and also, to the process of integration and assimilation. Seen in this context, the achievements of ethnology in theoretical discussion and in the analysis of specific situations and circumstances seem to be relatively modest. Fortunately, however, the significance of ethnic studies in ethnology has been steadily growing for the last few years.

Ethnic studies in the interwar period

The beginnings of ethnic studies within the framework of ethnology go back to the interwar period. Revived Poland proved to be a country inhabited by many national and ethnic minorities — particularly along the Western and Eastern borders — which constituted nearly one third of Poland's population.

Ethnologists could not ignore this fact, although one must admit that only to a limited extent did they participate in studies of an applied nature, which were more willingly undertaken by sociologists. On the other hand, it might be worth noting that the descriptions of individual ethnic groups in the borderland had been one of the most popular subjects since the 19th century. This tendency persisted after the year 1918¹.

¹ A. Posern-Zieliński, *Kształtowanie się polskiej etnografii jako samodzielnej dyscypliny naukowej (do 1939 r.)* [The Formation of Polish ethnography as an independent scholarly discipline: until 1939], in: *Historia etnografii polskiej* [History of Polish ethnography], ed. M. Terlecka, Wrocław 1973, p. 90; L. Degh, *The Study of Ethnicity in Modern European Ethnology*, in: *Folklore, Nationalism and Politics*, Columbus, Ohio 1978, p. 34.

Research conducted at that time followed two basic trends². The first, which was distinctly traditional, concentrated on the ethnographic description of individual ethnic groups and on the cultural study of regions where people of non-Polish origin lived. This particular area of interest included attempts at determining ethnic boundaries based on the range of ethnographic artefacts as well as investigation into the ethnogenesis of Poles and neighbouring Slavic nations. K. Moszyński, A. Fischer and, partly, K. Dobrowolski³ were among the scholars who carried out research within this traditional framework. They tended to equate specific ethnic units with configurations, patterns and the ranges of cultural elements established during research to which they ascribed the value of “objective” scientific truths. Thus, the school was characterized not only by a static and descriptive approach, but also by an “etic – oriented”, pseudo-objectivized and acontextual attitude toward the regional, ethnic and national units being researched.

The other tendency, favoured mainly by J. S. Bystron and J. Obrębski⁴, sought to establish grounds for its own ethnic studies, severing links with many “traditional” approaches. The most important of their innovations were the following: first, the recognition that such studies should aim at finding the core elements of group consciousness which have determine feelings of separateness and ethnic identity, define the limits of strangeness and strengthen community; second, that these inquiries should also take into account interethnic relations (such as conflicts, antagonisms, stereotypes and mutual dependencies) because they are the only source of information about the complex system of con-

² W. Olszewski writes more on this issue: *Etnologiczno-antropologiczne podejście do problematyki etnicznej w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym* [Ethnological and anthropological approach to ethnic problems in the interwar period], in: *Etnologia polska między ludoznawstwem a antropologią* [Polish ethnology between ethnography and anthropology], ed. Posern-Zieliński, Poznań 1995, p. 153-160.

³ A. Fischer, *Recherches ethnographiques en Pologne*, in: *Domum Natalicum J. Schrijnen*, Chartres 1929, pp. 838-845; A. Fischer, *Etnografia słowiańska* [Slavic ethnography], fasc. 1-3, Lwów-Warszawa 1932-1934; A. Fischer, *Rusini: Zarys etnografii Rusi* [Ruthenians. An outline of ethnography of Ruthenia], Lwów 1929; J. Falkowski, *Północno-wschodnie pogranicze Huculszczyzny* [The North-Eastern frontier of Hutzul region], Lwów 1938; J. Falkowski, *Zachodnie pogranicze Huculszczyzny...* [The Western frontier of the Hutzul region...], Lwów 1937. For more on this issue see: Z. Sokolewicz, *Miejsce etnografii polskiej w nauce obcej (do 1939 r.)* [The position of Polish ethnography in foreign research till 1939], in: *Historia etnografii polskiej...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-189.

⁴ J. S. Bystron, *Megalomania narodowa. Źródła – teorie – skutki* [National megalomania. Sources, theories, effects], Warszawa 1924; J. S. Bystron, *Ugrupowania etniczne ludu polskiego* [Ethnic groups of Polish people], Kraków 1925; J. Obrębski, *Problem grup etnicznych w etnologii i jego socjologiczne ujęcie* [The problem of ethnic groups in ethnology and its sociological interpretation], “Przegląd Socjologiczny” vol. 4, 1936, pp. 177-195; J. Obrębski, *Dzisiejsi ludzie Polesia* [Polesie region inhabitants of today], “Przegląd Socjologiczny” vol. 3-4, 1936, pp. 414-446; J. Obrębski, *Problem etniczny Polesia* [Ethnic problem of Polesie region], “Sprawy Narodowościowe” vol. 10, 1936, No 1-2.

nections which are grounded in history and decisively influence the current course of events.

Bystron's and Obrębski's ethnohistorical and ethnosociological achievements, which are so frequently cited today, show how ethnic matters can and should be analyzed via ethnological methods⁵. Their treatment of the sensitive ethnic problem was radically different from the traditional description of the borderland culture. They substituted etic-oriented interpretation for an emic-centered approach, and thus appealed to subjective elements of people's consciousness. They also tried to grasp the contextuality and dynamics of ethnic changes. Unfortunately, the war disrupted their successful and thought-provoking (even for contemporary analysis) research. After the war political and ideological circumstances prevented the spread of these valuable ideas.

Ethnic studies in the years 1945-1968

After World War II Polish ethnology, soon renamed ethnography, had to adjust to a completely new geopolitical and ideological system. In these altered circumstances ethnic studies, which were initiated by the innovative ideas of pre-war ethnologists and sociologists (F. Znaniecki, L. Wasilewski, J. Chałasiński)⁶, had to be abandoned.

Polish territory was arbitrarily moved to the West. A large migration followed, and within the new boundaries of the State a very homogeneous national community was formed, isolated from its eastern diaspora and western emigrant circles. National minorities — once numerous — were affected by the atrocities of the war (the Holocaust of Jews and Gypsies), and by the changes in state boundaries and subsequent massive displacement in forms of repatriation, reemigration and ruthless expulsion of people from their homes (operation "W" aimed at the forced resettlement of Ukrainians and Lemkos from Bieszczady region; Germans expelled from the western and northern territories annexed to Poland). The minorities were not only marginalized in number and civil rights but also territorially dispersed. A new ethnic situation was created, which should have been monitored and analyzed at that time.

⁵ A. Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa, *Wkład Józefa Obrębskiego w badania procesów etnicznych* [Józef Obrębski's contribution to the study of ethnic processes], "Etnografia Polska" vol. 23, fasc. 2, pp. 71-81.

⁶ J. Chałasiński, *Antagonizm polsko-niemiecki w osadzie fabrycznej "Kopalnia" na Górnym Śląsku. Studium socjologiczne* [Polish-German antagonism in a company town "Mine" in Upper Silesia. Sociological study], Warszawa 1935; L. Wasilewski, *Sprawy narodowościowe w teorii i życiu* [National affairs in theory and in reality], Warszawa 1929; F. Znaniecki, *Studia nad antagonizmem do obcych* [Studies of antagonism towards aliens], "Przegląd Socjologiczny" vol. 1, 1931.

However, the Stalinist regime, which supported the creation of fictitious images of a society centered around the communistic party and fighting against the political and class enemy, was not interested in exposing these processes, since the results obtained would have contradicted the official explanation of changes. Thus, the problem of minorities was practically removed from the list of issues discussed by journalists, writers and scholars. The Party's guiding principles, self-censorship and strict censor's instructions efficiently prevented anyone from entering the forbidden – and thus ideologically dangerous – field of study.

At the same time there were considerable changes within the Polish social sciences, which the authorities tried to make uniform and force into one orthodox Marxist paradigm. Sociology – a pioneer in the field of ethnic research – was dissolved on the grounds of its immanent “bourgeois” character, while ethnology was given a new task: recording Polish folk culture, which was gradually disappearing. The pre-war Eastern “borderland” issue had to be abandoned, since the area was then under Soviet jurisdiction, even ethnohistorical studies dealing with that region were prohibited because censors were trying to erase the former cultural and political shape of the second Polish Republic from the memory of the average citizen. Therefore scholars confronted many obstacles when they try to continue their work based on archival, pre-war data. Until the end of the 1950s it was also beyond the reach of ethnographers to investigate current migrations, to study the clashing of different cultural and ethnic entities and to analyze the process of their gradual integration.

After the fall of Stalinism in the beginning of the 1960s the political situation in the country and within the social sciences and humanities changed considerably and it was then possible for scholars, including ethnographers, to end the isolation and to a certain, however limited, extent control and influence the range of problems under investigation.

New socio-political circumstances resulted in innovative research programs, which could be called “ethnic”. They were conducted within the framework of three, quite separate trends. The first examined the changes and cultural integration in the Western Territories (previously called The Recovered Territories); the second concentrated on national minorities in the Polish People's Republic; the third analyzed ethnic situations and processes outside Poland and Europe. Owing to the politically sensitive nature of this research, it had to be carried out in such a way as to avoid issues which were still controversial or banned by the censors. The most significant of these were the studies devoted to the process of integration in the communities of the Western Territories. They were conducted in collaboration with sociologists, who regained their position and had more adequate means of analyzing the process of changes than ethnographers. No wonder, then, that works written at that

time by ethnographers reflect considerable influence of the sociological approach. Research on "integration and adaptation" was fully developed in the 1960s specially in Poznań, guided by J. Burszta⁷ and supported by ethnographic teams from Koszalin, Olsztyn and Wrocław. Although officially those studies were not of ethnic character, they contained many interpretations and facts which add to our knowledge of the subject. They include numerous remarks on the consequences of cultural clash, the effects of migration, the adaptation of newcomers from the East to the ethnogeographic environment, on creating new local and regional communities based on different cultural groups, and also on the process of settlement and adaptation of the Poles who came back to Poland from the Balkans and Western Europe after the war.

Central and regional authorities of that time supported the studies, but insisted that the reconstructed image of the new society in the Western Territories should remain consistent with the official political interpretation. Monographs and reports were supposed to create a positive image of communities living in harmony in western parts of Poland, well adapted to their "recovered" homeland and well integrated into the life of the region as well as into the main stream of the "socialist" society. It would be unjust, however, to say that this was the only result of studies carried out at that time. They did reveal many real dramatic processes and conflicts, but such phenomena were disregarded and belittled because the positive integrational view of the situation was deemed more important.

Despite quite intensified research penetration of the Western Territories, many essential ethnic problems were ignored and remained "unnoticed" because the climate of the "Gomółka period" was not favourable for such inquiries. The role of the German element in shaping the culture of the area annexed by Poland was completely ignored and so was the bicultural specificity of the native inhabitants, who were "officially" treated as the heirs of the ancient Polish tradition but — "unofficially" — as the foreign, semi-German element in the country. Also, no one analyzed the consequences — in both culture and consciousness — of treating the native people as "not quite" Polish, unworthy of trust, who finally were pushed aside as "second class" citizens. Conflicts among ethnic groups, which slowed down the process of integration, were studied only in a sketchy way, while research on the Ukrainian and Lemko peoples not only in the Western Territories, but also in

⁷ See: *Stare i nowe w kulturze wsi koszalińskiej* [Old and new elements in the rural culture of Koszalin region], ed. J. Burszta, Poznań 1964; J. Burszta, *Zagadnienie integracji kulturowej wsi na ziemiach zachodnich* [A question of cultural integration in villages of the Western Territories], "Roczniki Socjologii Wsi" vol. 10, 1966, pp. 179-188; M. Frankowska, *Etnografia polska po II wojnie światowej (1945-1970)* [Polish Ethnography after World War II: 1945-1970], in: *Historia etnografii polskiej...*, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

their native eastern borderland area, was avoided altogether. All these issues were politically dangerous, so it was not advisable to analyze them.

In the 1960s, however, initial studies of minority and ethnoregional groups in Poland were undertaken. Thus, scholars focused on Gypsies (Roma), Byelorussians of Podlasie region, Lemkos of the eastern Carpathian Mountains, Kashubs, Slovincs, Barmians of the Poznań area, Masurians, Warmians and Mountaineers of the Tatra Highlands. It would be difficult, though, to find serious work written in the 1960s or 1970s which was devoted to German, Ukrainian or Jewish minority groups⁸.

In most cases studies dealing with the problem of minorities were organized in consistency with the "ethnographic" tendency, which means that the description of specific "sections" of folk culture was treated as more important than the discussion of identity, of ethnopolitical and ethnohistorical conditioning, of interethnic contexts, or of the analysis of the aspirations of the the aforementioned communities willing to have more freedom of own cultural expression. This tendency was partly due to the atmosphere of political distrust toward any sign of social independence, including regional movements of Kashubs or Mountaineers, for instance. On the other hand, one can speak of traditional approaches in scholarly work, too tightly bound to the methods and schemes already in use. Fortunately, new approaches developed, which aimed at the analysis of national and ethnic consciousness in regional groups and treated stereotypes as a source of valuable data for the reconstruction of interethnic relations.

The ethnic issue was also visible in the studies of extra-European cultures. This scholarly interest covered such problems as the shaping of ethnic consciousness, the role of tradition in national consolidation (e.g. Z. Jasiewicz's research on the Uzbeks and W. Dynowski's team working on Mongolian society), the relationship between religion and ethnic identity (ethnohistorical studies of American Indians conducted by Mirosława and Aleksander Posern-Zieliński) and, finally, studies devoted to the acculturation process (carried out by M. Frankowska, K. Małkowska and G. Kloska)⁹.

⁸ See: M. Niewiadomska, *Bibliografia etnografii polskiej za lata 1961-1969* [Bibliography of Polish ethnography: 1961-1969], part 2, Wrocław 1983.

⁹ See: T. Kulesza-Zakrzewska, *Bibliografia etnograficznych prac magisterskich, doktorskich i habilitacyjnych na uniwersytetach polskich w latach 1945-1975* [A Bibliography of M.A., Ph.D. and habilitation theses at the Polish universities in the years 1945-1975], Warszawa—Łódź 1979; M. Frankowska, *Etnografia powszechna i jej miejsce w nauce polskiej po II wojnie światowej* [Ethnography of extra-European countries and its position in Polish social science after World War II], "Lud" vol. 53, 1969, pp. 103-136; M. Frankowska, *Etnografia polska po II wojnie światowej* [Polish ethnography after World War II], in: *Historia etnografii polskiej...*, op. cit., pp. 258-268.

Ethnic studies in the 1970s and 1980s

In the 1970s, when “real socialism” was liberalized and new, more open contacts with Western countries were established, positive changes became apparent in the social sciences, including ethnography. Intellectual isolation was broken and more scholars participated in international research mainly in collaboration with other “socialist” countries. Research expeditions to other continents were organized; scholars were granted scholarships and could attend conferences abroad; also, to a greater extent foreign Western anthropological publications were used in scholarly work. At the same time significant reevaluation was taking place within ethnography itself, based mainly on the conspicuous withdrawal from issues concerning traditional folk culture and focusing instead on the problem of contemporary transformations. It was because of this change that ethnographers started to concentrate on ethnic research which coincides with the growing tendency to study ethnic questions not only in the Soviet Union, but also in the West.

One of the characteristic features of this new tendency was a gradual loss of interest in the problem of the Western Territories. The official interpretation of this phenomenon adduced the political thesis of the completed process of the integration of the “Recovered Territories” with the mother country. At the same time, however, emigration of autochthonous population to the Federal Republic of Germany was taking place on an unprecedented scale in that area. The emigration was based on a Polish-German agreement and on German legislation which favoured these emigrational tendencies. It is also true that the decision to leave the Western Territories was attractive economically and many of the native inhabitants of the area were “encouraged” by local authorities to leave their homeland. It was a complex political, economic, ethnic and psychological situation which forced many Silesians, Masurians and Warmians out of their native land. Owing to the sensitive nature of this process it was impossible for scholars to analyze its course and its social and cultural consequences, including the changes in the identity of native inhabitants. To a certain extent these circumstances account for the fact that it is difficult to find any information on German minorities in publications written during the period of the Polish People’s Republic. Thus, this minority group emerged out of statistical non-existence in the 1990s and very soon, being properly organized, assumed a significant position in the region and country social and political life.

In the 1970s and 1980s research on the culture of minorities continued and focused mainly on marginal and more “exotic” groups, such as Tartars, Gypsies, Lemkos, Greek immigrants and Russian Oldbelievers, while the most numerous minority groups living outside their own countries and republics (Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Lithuanians and Slovaks) were not in the center of scholars’ attention. This resulted from adjusting the practice of the social

sciences to the political situation of that time, which was unfavourable for research which could spoil “brotherly” relations among socialist countries. It was also for the same reason that the character of studies carried out at that time was very academic. The evaluation of the circumstances, real needs and aims of these groups, their interethnic relations and the State policy towards these minorities were among the topics cautiously avoided by many scholars, while the problem of ethnocultural character of minority communities and the role of diminishing ethnic traditions (including religion) in sustaining the sense of distinctiveness and ethnic history became the most dominant topics.

Some new ideas also emerged connected mostly with the “discovery” of J. Obrębski’s pre-war valuable works. They contained innovative thoughts which after years of oblivion began to be reintroduced into scholarly discussion. Two suggestions, based on the careful analysis of Obrębski’s studies, turned out to be particularly important. The first advised scholars to look at the question of belonging to a particular ethnic group in the light of research on the identity of its members, as they themselves define it; the second proposed to learn about ethnic reality via the analysis of interethnic contact (e.g. antagonisms, stereotypes, prejudice). These two suggestions formed the basis of a series of valuable theoretical and cognitive studies devoted to the opposing concepts of “familiarity” and “strangeness” as well as to feelings of ethnic separateness, cultural distance and ethnic stereotypes¹⁰.

Ethnic issues concerning extra-European countries were not very popular, with the exception of American studies, where such topics as: indigenism, nativism, Pan-Indianism, native policy, assimilation, acculturation, ethnic conflicts and the relationship between religion and maintained identity were discussed and analysed.

Not only ethnographers focused on ethnic issues in those years. Historians, who studied the processes of nation-forming¹¹ also contributed to progress in this field. Sociologists were very active as well. They exerted considerable influence on theoretical discussion of the concept of the nation, of national consciousness, assimilation, and the definition and typology of minorities¹².

¹⁰ J. Burszta, B. Kopczyńska-Jaworska, *Polish Ethnography after World War II*, “Ethnos” vol. 47, 1982, No 1-2, pp. 50-63.

¹¹ J. Chlebowczyk’s works on Central-Eastern Europe played a significant role in this field, see: J. Chlebowczyk, *Procesy narodotwórcze we wschodniej Europie Środkowej w dobie kapitalizmu (od schyłku XVIII do początku XX w.)* [Nation-forming process in eastern Central Europe in the capitalistic period: end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th Century], Warszawa – Kraków 1975, and T. Łepkowski’s works concerned with the processes of forming a nation in Latin America and in the territory of Poland.

¹² *Założenia teorii asymilacji* [Principles of the theory of assimilation], ed. H. Kubiak and A. Paluch, Wrocław 1980; K. Kwaśniewski, *Mniejszości narodowe a świadomość narodowa* [National minorities and national consciousness], “Studia Socjologiczne” 1976, No 2; J. J. Wiatr, *Naród i państwo. Socjologiczne problemy kwestii narodowej* [The Nation and the State. Sociological approach to the national question], Warszawa 1969.

A specific field of empirical investigation, however, was a study of Polish emigrant communities which in reality formed a Polish version of ethnic research. At the time when E. Gierek was the leader of the State and communist party, these studies were supported by authorities, because they constituted an important factor in official propaganda and politics. It was vital for the Polish government to break its isolation and establish new and more friendly contacts with emigrant circles. Although historians and sociologists excelled in these studies, ethnologists made their contribution as well.

The topic of emigrant communities was already occasionally discussed in some of the professional ethnographic journals in the 1960s, but a major reevaluation took place in the following decade, when the atmosphere became more favourable for such research. At that time many studies of ethnohistorical and ethnographic character were published, concentrating on the Polish emigrants in Western Europe, Canada, the United States and South America. Most of them focused on emigrant communities in cities and industrial centers, which was a kind of novelty in ethnological experience previously rooted in studies of traditional culture of villagers and small town inhabitants.

Only a few scholars working on Polish emigrant culture did research on emigrants and their descendents living in rural areas¹³. The list of subjects that needed investigation was much longer, however. There were issues, for instance, connected with Polish communities which in the new geopolitical structure had to remain outside the Polish eastern border, i.e., in the Soviet Union. The political system of that time provided no room for that kind of research (though there were few exceptions), because it would have broken the conspiracy of silence about the fate of Poles in the East.

There were two fundamentally different tendencies in the interpretation of research on Polish emigrant communities: the first — traditional and ethnographic — preferred a descriptive approach and used patterns of discourse derived from the inquiries of researchers concentrating on folk culture; the second — anthropological — focused on the analysis of ethnic processes and

¹³ E. Pietraszak, *Polonezkoy — polska społeczność wiejska w Turcji* [Polonezkoy — Polish rural community in Turkey], "Etnografia Polska" vol. 18, 1974, fasc. 1; J. S. Łątka, *Polska wieś nad Bosforem* [Polish village on the Bosphorus], Kraków 1981; R. Kantor, E. Krasieńska, *Potomkowie osadników z Polski we wsiach Derenk i Istvanmajor na Węgrzech. Monografia etnograficzna* [Descendants of Polish settlers in two Hungarian villages: Derenk and Istvanmajor. An ethnographic monography], part 1-2, "Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Etnograficzne" fasc. 15, 1981; fasc. 17, 1981. For a more detailed discussion of scholarly achievements in this field see: R. Kantor, *Etnograficzne badania polonijne. Rzeczywistość i propozycje* [Ethnographic studies of Polish communities abroad. Reality and proposals], "Lud" vol. 68, 1984, and also an article by R. Kantor in this volume: *The Achievement of Polish Ethnology in the Study of Polish Communities Abroad*, pp. 265-276.

cultural changes, and was inspired by ethnosociology as well as new trends in the anthropology of ethnicity¹⁴.

Thus, there was a basic difference between the two main approaches in studies of emigrant communities which reflected a marked contradiction between traditional ethnographic tendency and modern anthropological studies. The former was directed at the reconstruction of statically treated cultural heritage and centered on maintained relics of national (folk) culture as well as on Polish contributions to the civilization in the country of residence, while the latter was trying to observe the dynamics of emigrant community transformations and interpret them in view of new emerged forms of ethnic identity (ethnicity) and of ethnic culture. Scholars working within the first framework stressed the concept of "home culture" of emigrants, studied the ways they maintained it in the new environment and interpreted their contribution to foreign culture with great reverence for native elements. Thus, they treated Polish emigrants' communities as integral components of a national diaspora¹⁵. The other approach concentrated on the process of absorption of emigrants into the receiving society, on developing new syncretic cultural patterns, on the role of ethnic symbols in shaping new forms of ethnicity, and on the processes of creating new ethnic tradition. In short, this approach aimed at observing the dynamics of the integration process in new social conditions in the context of the most significant phenomena accompanying it, i.e., ethnicity maintenance and deethnicization, ethnic coexistence and conflict, isolation and contact with the country of origin, intragroup changes and the influence of the ethnically foreign environment¹⁶.

¹⁴ Some foreign works had an immense influence on the formation of this tendency specially: *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, ed. F. Barth, Oslo-London 1969; H. Gans, *Symbolic Ethnicity. The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America*, "Ethnic and Racial Studies" vol. 2, 1979, No 1; *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, ed. N. Glazer and D. Moynihan, Cambridge, Mass. 1975; M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life. The Role of Race, Religion and National Origin*, New York 1964; M. Nowak, *Problemy etnicznej Ameryki* (Polish transl. of *The Rice of the Unmeltable Ethnics*), Warszawa 1985; P. van den Berghe, *The Ethnic Phenomenon*, New York-Oxford 1981; R. J. Vecoli, *Ethnicity. A Neglected Dimension of American History*, in: *The State of American History*, ed. H. J. Bass, Chicago 1970.

¹⁵ W. Sobisiak, *W sprawie badań nad kulturą rodzimą emigrantów* [Some remarks concerning studies of native culture of emigrants], "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" vol. 18, 1974, No 1; W. Sobisiak, *Emigracja jako przedmiot badań etnograficznych* [Emigration as a subject of ethnographical studies] "Przegląd Polonijny" vol. 1, 1975, fasc. 1; W. Sobisiak, *Kultura rodzima Polonii zachodnioeuropejskiej* [Native culture of Polish communities in Western Europe], Poznań 1983; M. Paradowska, *Polacy w Ameryce Południowej* [Poles in South America], Wrocław 1977; M. Paradowska, *Podróżnicy i emigranci. Szkice z dziejów wychodźstwa polskiego w Ameryce Południowej* [Travellers and emigrants. Sketches on the history of Polish emigration to South America], Warszawa 1984; M. Paradowska, *Wkład Polaków w rozwój cywilizacyjno-kulturowy Ameryki Łacińskiej* [The Contribution of Poles to the development of culture and civilization of Latin America], Warszawa 1992.

¹⁶ See: A. Posern-Zieliński, *Tradycja a etniczność. Przemiany kultury Polonii amerykańskiej* [Tradition and ethnicity. Cultural Changes of American Polonia], Wrocław 1983; A. Posern-Zieliński, *Koncepcje etniczności w amerykańskich studiach etnicznych* [Concepts of ethnicity in

Ethnic studies without censorship

The fall of communism in Poland at the end of the 1980s freed the social sciences from ideological constrictions, so that for the first time in the history of post-war Poland some issues could be discussed without restraints, in accordance with social demands and the interests of specialists as long as the costs of research did not exceed the modest financial means allocated to research teams and centers. New circumstances turned out to be favourable for a genuine explosion of ethnic studies. This phenomenon was partly connected with the growing worldwide interest in nationality and ethnicity issues, but it also resulted from democratic transformations in Poland, which triggered increased socio-political and cultural activity among minority groups. There was also a third significant factor, propitious for this kind of research: the need to eliminate blank spots, especially concerning studies on Poles who live in the territory of the former Soviet Union. It was necessary to assess the condition and demands of these communities, isolated from their home country for decades, and work out schemes for social and government assistance for them. Sociologists – in particular those applying the anthropological approach (Warsaw, Cracow) – take the lead in this field. A new periodical, “Sprawy Narodowościowe” [“Nationality Affairs”] has been published, continuing the tradition of the inter-war journal with the same title. It has become an interdisciplinary forum for the interchange of information and scholarly experience in the field of ethnic studies carried out within theoretical and empirical, Polish, European and worldwide frameworks. Many other specialist journals (e.g. “Przegląd Wschodni” [“Eastern Review”] and “Przegląd Polonijny” [“Polonia Review”]) deal quite extensively with ethnic problems. Numerous surveys conducted by public opinion research centers, monitor social awareness regarding the power of stereotype, prejudice and of ethnic sympathy. The number of M.A., Ph.D., and habilitation theses devoted to these important topics has also increased recently.

Considering all these aspects, as well as modest resources and limited number of researches, the situation and achievements of ethnology are quite remarkable. Ethnological departments at universities run series of courses devoted solely to ethnic topics; more and more M.A. theses concentrate on this problem; specialist conferences are organized; ethnologists prepare expertises and reports for institutions dealing with the practical aspects of

American ethnic studies] “Lud” vol. 63, 1979; R. Kantor, *Między Zaborowem a Chicago. Kulturowe konsekwencje istnienia zbiorowości imigrantów z parafii zaborowskiej w Chicago i jej kontaktów z rodzinnymi wsiami* [Between Zaborów and Chicago. Cultural consequences of the presence of the Zaborów parish in Chicago and its contacts with home villages], Wrocław 1990; J. Rokicki, *Więź społeczna a zmiany kultury. Studium dynamiki polskiej zbiorowości etnicznej w USA* [Social bonds and cultural change. The study of dynamics of Polish ethnic community in the U.S.A.], Wrocław 1992.

emigrant or minority problems¹⁷; periodicals write about ethnic studies more often and publish essays on ethnocultural characteristics of minority groups and on the cultural specificity of borderland area (journal "Polska Sztuka Ludowa. Konteksty" ["Polish Folk Art. Contexts"] takes the lead here). Finally — and most importantly — the number of people engaging such studies has grown considerably. They are working in all centers of ethnological research, but ethnic topics are mostly taken up in Warsaw and Poznań.

Having presented a general view of ethnic studies in contemporary times, one should briefly, and thus not sufficiently, review the main fields of interest. There are now three main trends: investigation into minority groups living in Poland, study of Polish emigrant communities abroad, and of research on ethnic problems carried out in other areas, mainly in non-European countries.

Research on minorities is continuation of studies undertaken earlier, but at least two new elements have emerged. Firstly, groups which had been "neglected" arouse more interest now; secondly, the approach of researchers has changed. The purely "ethnographic" approach (systematic description of minority culture) yielded to "ethnic" interpretation, which focuses on identity problems and on the contexts of interethnic relations.

Studies of "exotic" groups — i.e. of Gypsies, Karaites, Armenians, Tartars and other Muslims living in Poland¹⁸ — have continued. It has also become possible to expand studies of borderland minorities, i.e. Lithuanians, Lemkos, Byelorussians and those groups which instead of ethnic affiliation prefer to identify themselves as "Orthodox"¹⁹. In respect of these facts, interest in the Ukrainian minority seems very limited. After years of neglect the German

¹⁷ One should mention here M. Gawęcki's report prepared for "Wspólnota Polska" — an organization dealing with Polish communities abroad — *Polacy w Kazachstanie. Kultura i świadomość etniczna* [Poles in Kazakhstan. Culture and ethnic consciousness], Poznań 1993 (mimeo), and M. Kairski's report on the situation of the forest Indians in Ecuador, prepared for CEDIME — Ecuadorian center of social studies, *Situación de la cultura Waorani que estan fuera de la influencia del ILV y las indicaciones para la actuacion en el futuro*, CEDIME, Quito 1992 (co-author: I. Stoińska).

¹⁸ L. Mróz, *Geneza Cyganów i ich kultury* [The ethnogenesis of Gypsies and their culture], Warszawa 1994; A. Mirga, L. Mróz, *Cyganie. Odmienność i tolerancja* [Gypsies. Dissimilarity and Tolerance], Warszawa 1994; A. Bartosz, *Nie bój się Cygana* [Do not be afraid of a Gypsy], Sejny 1994; G. Pełczyński, *Karaimi polscy* [Polish Karaites], "Sprawy Narodowościowe — Seria Nowa" vol. 2, 1993, fasc. 1/2; id., *Ormianie polscy w wieku XX. Problem odrębności etnicznej* [Polish Armenians in the 20th century. A Problem of ethnic distinctiveness], (Ph.D. thesis, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań 1994).

¹⁹ *Kultura muzyczna mniejszości narodowych w Polsce* [Music culture of national minorities in Poland], ed. S. Żerańska-Kominek, Warszawa 1990; K. Pudło, *Lemkowie. Proces wrastania w środowisko Dolnego Śląska 1947-1985* [Lemkos. Process of their integration with Lower Silesia society, 1947-1985], Wrocław 1987; and a very good supplement to this work by A. Kwilecki, *Lemkowie — zagadnienia migracji i asymilacji* [Lemkos — their migration and assimilation], Warszawa 1974.

minority has been “discovered”, mainly in the Lower Silesia (Opole region)²⁰. Also, scholars have begun to investigate problems of the Jewish communities (now almost extinct in Poland), their regional history and contribution to Polish culture, and have been trying to reconstruct their image among Poles²¹. Studies of comparative character, ethnic distance and the influence of opinions and stereotypes on the relationship between any minority group and the Polish majority are the main field of interest for the Warsaw team of anthropologists, guided by E. Nowicka²². The above mentioned topics, as well as those which have escaped my notice, make a substantial contribution of ethnologists to the study of Polish minorities. It is a group of sociologists and historians, however, that still takes the lead in this field. These three disciplines (including ethnology) approach the subject of their research in similar ways, but in ethnological writings ethnohistorical interpretations intervene most successfully with the examination of current processes and phenomena.

A considerable number of ethnologists are engaged in research on Poles living abroad, where interesting changes can be observed. The most clear manifestation of these transformations is the pioneering fieldwork carried out in Polish communities living in the former Soviet Union, which before the fall of the totalitarian system were out of researchers' reach. This type of research concentrated mainly on rural areas, which are easier to penetrate, while big cities (Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Kiev, Lvov and others) were (temporarily?) left aside. Another valuable characteristic of this research is its potential feasibility (in the social and political sense), since anthropological reports provide useful evaluation which makes it easier for state authorities, the Church and charity organisations to prepare adequate help schemes for Poles in the East.

One of the main achievements was no doubt the initiation of studies on Poles in Kazakhstan (the teams of M. Gawęcki and S. Szykiewicz). They dealt with ethnodemographic, ethnohistorical and ethnosociological issues and enabled scholars to assess the state of language maintenance, tradition and religion preserved in Polish communities. They also examined their economic and professional status, analyzed interethnic relations and provided information on the ethnic consciousness of people who, until then, had been almost

²⁰ M. G. Gerlach, *Współczesne podziały górnośląskiej zbiorowości regionalnej jako problem etnograficzny* [Contemporary pluralism of the Upper Silesia regional community as an ethnographic problem] “Etnografia Polska” 1992, No 1; *Swoi i obcy na Górnym Śląsku* [Familiars and strangers in Upper Silesia], ed. K. Wódz, Katowice 1993.

²¹ A. Cała, *Wizerunek Żyda w polskiej kulturze ludowej* [The image of a Jew in Polish folk culture], Warszawa 1987.

²² *Swoi i obcy* [Familiars and strangers], ed. E. Nowicka, Warszawa 1990.

completely isolated from their ideological homeland²³. These studies became particularly important because of the national discussion over possible repatriation of Poles from Kazakhstan and because of the first decisions made with respect to that goal. They are of a very delicate nature as future events and decisions could be influenced by them. Therefore, despite the fact that the first stage of the few-years' study has been closed, there is still a need to observe the changes taking place in the consciousness of those people and in their lives, and also to analyze the difficulties people coming to Poland from the Kazakhstan steppes have in adjusting to new circumstances.

Studies of Polish communities are conducted not only in remote Kazakhstan, but also across Poland's eastern border, mainly in Lithuania and Byelorussia (L. Mróz and I. Kabzińska). They concentrate on Polish inhabitants of villages in that area and on local interethnic relations. Research on Poles in Siberia (A. Kuczyński, W. Bielecki) as well as in the Caucasus (A. Woźniak) should also be mentioned here. It seems strange, however, that Poles living in the Ukraine have not attracted much attention.

Studies of Polish communities in North America have been continued, but they have lost their former significance. To a limited extent ethnologists supplement research conducted by sociologists and historians as they more and more willingly take interest in recent waves of emigrants and in current transformations within Polish communities²⁴.

Oddly enough, scholars do not seem very interested in those members of society who left Poland in order to migrate to Germany (i.e. Poles, Polish Germans, Silesians, Warmians, Kashubs). Although this might be a very difficult kind of research to carry out, it is, however, very important for cognitive reasons. It also has a significant practical value because of quite frequent contacts between Poles and Germans (personal and business visits).

²³ M. Gawęcki, *Charakter zmian zbiorowości polskiej w strukturze etnicznej Kazachstanu* [The character of changes of a Polish collectivity in the ethnic structure of Kazakhstan], "Przegląd Wschodni" vol. 3, 1994, fasc. 2 (10); Z. Jasiewicz, *Polacy z Ukrainy w Kazachstanie. Etniczność a historia* [Poles from the Ukraine in Kazakhstan. Ethnicity and history], "Lud" vol. 75, 1992; A. Posern-Zieliński, "Czerwony Październik" na stepie. Polska społeczność wiejska w południowym Kazachstanie ["Red October" in the steppes. A Polish rural community in Southern Kazakhstan], in: *Polacy w Kazachstanie* [Poles in Kazakhstan], ed. A. Kuczyński, Wrocław (in press).

²⁴ A. Posern-Zieliński, *Adaptacja na odległość: polscy emigranci w USA wobec zmian w kraju* [Adaptation at the distance: Polish emigrants to the USA and their attitude to transformations in the home country], in: *Etnologia a współczesne transformacje społeczno-kulturowe* [Ethnology and current social and cultural transformations], ed. M. Buchowski, Poznań (in press); J. Kucharska, *Poszukiwanie tożsamości kulturowej ludności kaszubskiej w Polsce i Kanadzie* [Searching for the cultural identity of the Kashubs in Poland and Canada], Łódź 1993; J. Rokicki, *Msza w rytmie polki. Etniczne elementy ludowe w liturgii kościelnej w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki* [Polka Mass. Ethnic folk elements in Church liturgy in the USA], in: *Kultura skupisk polonijnych* [Culture of Polish communities abroad], Warszawa 1994.

Unfortunately, studies of Polish emigrant communities in Germany are not particularly favoured by ethnologists and other social scientists.

Investigations into national problems of other countries form the third branch of contemporary ethnic studies, the most distinct being research on the ethnic situation in both Americas, which generates interest among many scholars and covers a wide spectrum of topics. It results from a strong tradition of American studies in Poland, from good conditions for international collaboration and from interdisciplinary co-operation among the research centers in Poland. The significance of this last factor has been intensified by the preparations for the "500th anniversary of the encounter of two worlds" and also by forming a team for conducting research on the cultures of South America²⁵ at the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań.

Studies of North American cultural pluralism and its role in shaping the character of the American nation are carried out within this framework. Scholars are also investigating the relationship between ethnicity and religion with regard to multicultural society (A. Posern-Zieliński and others). Due to an agreement with research centers in Venezuela and Ecuador, scholars from Poland have been also able to conduct studies of the isolated groups of forest Indians in the Amazon Basin. One of their goals is to work out adequate programs of protection and support for these minorities (M. Kairski and his team).

The year 1994 marks the beginning of team work on the formation of new identity among the Indian inhabitants of Ecuador. This process results from their economic and social advancement, and their organizational activity on the regional and national levels. It enables the native people of the country to take an active role in the modern society (A. Posern-Zieliński and his team). The pioneering ethnocartographic studies, which are well advanced now, formed the basis for an atlas of South American native inhabitants and for the analysis of their advancement in acculturation process. The atlas shows the territory presently occupied by individual native tribes and their current demographic situation²⁶. One should also mention here the project aimed at elaboration of a dictionary of peoples, nations, minorities and ethnoregional groups of both Americas (A. Posern-Zieliński, R. Tomicki and the team).

²⁵ See: "Etnografia Polska" vol. 36, 1992, fasc. 2; *Ameryka Indiańska. Spotkanie dwóch światów* [Native America. The encounter of two worlds], Poznań 1992; A. Posern-Zieliński, *Etnologiczne studia latynoamerykanistyczne* [Ethnological Latin American studies], in: *Kierunki badań nad problemami kultury Ameryki Łacińskiej* [Research tendencies in studies of Latin American culture], Warszawa 1989.

²⁶ M. Kairski, *Situación actual etno-cultural de los grupos etnolingüísticos nativos del América del Sur*, (vol. 2 Atlas), Abya Yala, Quito, Ecuador (in print).

As far as other territories are concerned, the interest they evoke only occasionally results in ethnic research. The multicultural territory of Russia attracts some attention (S. Szyrkiewicz's comparative study, E. Nowicka's research on the identity of the Buryats) as well as some other regions of Asia (e.g. L. Dzięgiel's studies of Kurds) and Africa²⁷. The lack of interest in European studies is, however, very distressing. Apart from research projects I am aware of which focus on Muslim emigrants from North Africa living now in France (R. Vorbrich) and on the identity of Alsatians (A. Chwieduk), there are not many more that could be mentioned here. This fact is at variance with the growing significance of ethnic issues on our continent; it is unfortunate that interest in this field has thus far been limited, however, it is a clear manifestation of the weaknesses of Polish studies on the ethnology of Europe.

Final remarks

There is no doubt that ethnic studies can develop in a satisfactory way only on the following conditions: a) they must be undertaken by well organized and competent teams; b) there must be a friendly atmosphere and social demand which encourages this type of research and c) they must receive adequate financial support.

Ethnic studies have always been entangled in the "micro" (i.e. state) and "macro" (i.e. international) politics and therefore have been subject to many pressures and limitations. With respect to Polish ethnological work this influence is more clearly manifested in the topics which have been omitted and disregarded, rather than in the way publications have been written, or the facts interpreted. The end of censorship made ethnic studies free of direct official interference and stimulated their further, unrestricted development. Achievements from the past, however, prove that despite many limitations it was possible to contribute to this field of study, which means we are not starting from scratch.

Although the spectrum of topics examined in the past was wide, there was always some dominant feature of studies in every period. Between the wars, for instance, scholars concentrated on "borderland" ethnic groups; after World War II and in the 1960s issues connected with the Western Territories were most significant; in the 1970s and 1980s the focus of study was shifted to the culture and life of Poles living abroad, mainly in the West; contemporary times, in turn, witness the development of research on minority groups and on Poles

²⁷ S. Szyrkiewicz, *Struktura etniczna i tendencje jej przemian u schyłku ZSRR* [Ethnic structure and its transformation tendencies on the decline of the USSR], "Sprawy Narodowościowe – Seria Nowa" vol. 2, 1993, fasc. 2; L. Dzięgiel, *Węzeł kurdyjski: kultura, dzieje, walka o przetrwanie* [The Kurdish knot: culture, history and struggle for survival], Kraków 1992; Z. Komorowski, *Kultury Czarnej Afryki* [Cultures of Black Africa], Wrocław 1995.

living across the eastern border. If we compare ethnic studies in Poland with the same type of research in other countries, we conclude that focusing on the problems of reemigration, on Poles living abroad and on Polish diaspora is and has been a typically Polish feature. In the countries of Western Europe scholars have been mainly interested in minorities and immigrants; in North America they have focused on the emergence of multicultural society; in the former Soviet Union, on the processes of integration and interethnic relations.

This "national" character of Polish ethnic studies (slightly mitigated by research related to minorities and ethnic situations in other continents) accounts for the fact that some fields of interest are not adequately developed, considering their significance and social demand. Undoubtedly, investigation into problems of minorities is not yet fully satisfactory. There is a lack of work on immigrant groups in Poland, on the growing number of "gastarbeiter" ("guest-workers") and on the ethnic problems of contemporary Europe (Central-Eastern in particular). This is a very live issue and it demands a good knowledge of the regional specificity of this part of Europe. I think Polish specialists would certainly be successful in this branch of study.

The majority of ethnic studies can be placed within the framework of present-day ethnology, although they also make use of the ethnohistorical approach, which enables scholars to evaluate current phenomena in the proper perspective, to understand the nature of ethnic stereotypes, the mechanisms behind the creation of the image of an "alien", relations of ethnicity with culture and religion, or varying relations between minority and majority groups. Another sign of positive change is the fact that more and more often researchers not only conduct studies, but also prepare expertises and reports, which, in turn, form the basis of reports used in establishing ethnic policy (research on Poles in the Kazakhstan and the United States, on Gypsies, or the native people of Ecuador). The applied character of ethnic studies produces new demands and offers challenges; but what is most important, it should make scholars aware of their tremendous responsibility, since there is no doubt that everything they say or write can influence the ethnic situation they interpret and vice versa.

There is not much co-operation within contemporary ethnic studies, despite their interdisciplinary character. This is also true of ethnology, because its representatives often conduct parallel but independent research. It should be observed, however, that the ethnological (anthropological) approach is not clearly visible in this type of study since it is limited either by traditional ethnographic description or by excessive use of sociological interpretation. I think this results from insufficient theoretical discussion on research methods and the interpretation of ethnic phenomena, which are still dominated by the descriptive tendency and analysis of particular situations, groups and processes. This tendency could be counterbalanced by focusing on studies more

related to real problems considered within skillfully conceptualised and comparative framework.

Tools of interpretation, which are suitable for the current situation, as well as original approaches and experiences deriving from previous research thus far will enable us to tackle the tasks in the coming century and to embark on ethnic studies in the new Europe, which is opening its frontiers. Thus, ethnic studies will contribute to the formation of a world where people protect their own identity, but at the same time remain tolerant and ready to coexist with “aliens”.

Translated by Urszula Zielińska