

RECENZJE

► Andrzej Chodubski (rec.), **Helena Głogowska**, *Stosunki polsko-białoruskie w XX wieku. Od imperium rosyjskiego do Unii Europejskiej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, Białystok 2012, ss. 677.

In recognition of international relations of the 20th century, business, relationships, conditions, impact, influences and Polish–Belarusian relations compose a special type of reality. It results from the geography and changes the borders between these two countries, their political status in changing international realities; legends, myths and stereotypes. This state of affairs is aptly summarized in the essay of Alesio Czobot, Belarusian writer, who wrote: “And when the scribes come down, it will increase the dust, that you can hang an ax in it! The first one has learned about “Western Russia”, the second about the Republic of Poland, the third – the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the fourth one – “that here will be Poland, because that is how it was before the war.” The fifth one mourns that the revolution of 1917 was a mistake, the sixth sheds tears that “such a country should shatter”, and all this together in Minsk is called the Republic of Belarus, in Warsaw – Borderlands (Kresy)”. A notable expert in Belarusian issues, Helena Głogowska tries

to explain this complexity. She is the authoress of more than 150 studies and papers published in various scientific publications and about 400 popular science publications. She is the authoress of such books: *Belarus 1914–1929. Culture under the pressure of politics* (1996), *Belarusians on the Coast of Gdańsk*.

As a political scientist, who attaches great importance to take care of methodological aspects, she aims to prove the thesis, that the development of Polish–Belarusian relations after 1989 depends to a large extent on the legacy of relations between Poland and Belarus, including numerous stereotypes, and a subordinate role of Belarus and Belarusians in international relations before July 27th, 1990, when the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic adopted a law on sovereignty. After World War I, Belarusians as a nation, mainly ethnic rather than political, were not able to maintain a sovereign state, which contributed to their marginalization in international relations. In comparison with Poles, the inferior position of the country resulted from the lower national consciousness, a very small number of intellectual and political elites, as well as weak economic potential (p. 14–15).

It is noted in the presentation of the problem that the modern understanding of the formation of the Polish–Bela-

rusian relations his requires insight into the heritage of their creating from the perspective of the dissolution of empires after World War I and their evolution, associated with the creation of a national policy model of the impossibility of creating uniform government units. Because of the constituent entity in the creation of modern states, which turned out to be a nation, a sense of belonging to the nation (national consciousness) and its ability to collective political thinking in terms of statehood have become important criteria. It is recalled that after World War II in European international space, divided into spheres of influence between the Soviet Union and the satellite states, Poland, along with Belarus were apparently in the same group, but they differed greatly in the case of the state status.

Poland as the People's Republic of Poland within the new political borders was in the group of socialist countries, which was named as the people's democracies. In the sphere of internal system, this model corresponded to the state, which used the Constitution of the USSR from 1936, "with the leading role of the Communist Party" as a basic assumption of the political system, listed in the Polish Constitution of 1952. The Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, as well as the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was a federal republic, with borders covering much of the pre-war Polish state (the so-called Eastern Borderlands). Status of the Union Republic of Belarus limited it's international sub-

jectivity in comparison to PRL. It reduced it mainly to the absence of foreign policy, led by the Soviet Union on behalf of the whole federal state.

Furthermore, it is indicated that the recognition of contemporary Polish-Belarusian relations requires taking into account the following perspectives: 1. the relationship to the state as an institution of social and political life of the nation, 2. the relationship to the nation as a constitutive category in the country-forming process, 3. In relation to national minorities.

The aim of this paper is to present the process of formation of the contemporary Polish-Belarusian relationship in the perspective of the twentieth century heritage of Polish-Belarusian relations, existing on different levels, indicating their origin, geopolitical, economic, ethnic, national, cultural and awareness conditions. The historical approach to the formation and development of Polish-Belarusian relations reveals their different intensity and the diversity of its participants. Taking into account the problem of justifying the turning point it indicates that they are embedded in the critical events that are important for both countries. The twentieth century was a time of development of national movements and the formation of new states in the dissolution of the empire in Europe, including in the area of Central and Eastern Europe. Formation of new countries in this geographical space has become a new challenge for them, especially in the systems of relationship.

This lecture reminds that due to the historical influences of western and eastern (Russian) Belarusian lands became the territory in which they collided, creating the specific ethno-cultural frontier “as a continuous area” or island nations of direct contact and/or ethnic groups, out of which a variety of border processes and their consequences arise, including psychological ones, being a subject of an interdisciplinary study.

It is noted further, that the diagnosis of contemporary Polish–Belarusian relations, apart from the historical perspective, assumes that Belarus had not been an independent state before, so it could not be analyzed as a subject of international relations, including neighbourhood relations.

The basic part of the book is divided into two parts, namely: I. Political heritage in the development of Polish–Belarusian relations in the twentieth century, II. The formation of Polish–Belarusian relations after 1989. In the first part there is a division into 5 chapters: 1. Two nations in one state. Poles and Belarusians in the Russian Empire (1900–1914), 2. In pursuit of their own nation-states. Attempts for agreements and autonomy in the years of World War I, 3. Belarus and Belarusians in the shadow of Polish–Soviet relations. The relationships between the state and minorities (1921–1939), 4. Nations without a state. The question of Poland and Belarus during World War II occupation (1939–1944), 5. Poland and Belarus, Poles and Belarusians in post-war real-

ity (1944–1989). The second part is divided into 5 chapters as well: 1. Contemporary cultural reception of Belarus in Poland, 2. Polish–Belarusian relations after 1989, 3. National minorities in the Polish–Belarusian relations, 4. Picture of Polish–Belarusian minority in the minorities press, 5. The presence of Belarusian culture in Poland after 1989. It is a logical arrangement of the presented issues, each chapter is a separate sequence, and at the same time is a constituent part of the characteristics of the development of Polish–Belarusian relations in the twentieth century.

The part concerning the development of Polish–Belarusian relations in the twentieth century was carefully prepared in terms of methodology. It clearly identifies the need for the fair-depth diagnosis of the complex cultural reality, with an international realm. The reference is made here to the cells constituting the main difficulty in explaining, referring to the theoretical approaches to explain international reality. This part highlights the new aspects of research that the authoress of the study undertook. The research questions combine intellectual perception of phenomena and processes with their disclosure in the practical cultural-civilizational life. It is worth mentioning to outline the state of research concerning the scientific recognition of this complex reality and its different explanations.

The lecture emphasized that the state of national consciousness was forming country-making trends that greatly

intensified with the outbreak of World War I. An important institution affecting the development of national consciousness was the Roman Catholic Church, expansion of the model and the Polish-Catholic and Borderland's gentry, most of which were in favor of the creation of the Polish state on the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Belarusian national movement was based mainly on the yeomanry and the Orthodox Roman Catholic officials and teachers (p. 29).

The lecture shows that Polish-Belarusian relations in the late nineteenth century, particularly highlighted by the development of political parties. The concept of self-development of the Belarusian movement associated with the idea of a political break with the tradition of Polish cultural paternalism in Belarus. Diversification of the Polish-Belarusian relations occurred after the release of the Tsarist ukase of tolerance, guaranteeing freedom in religious matters and the freedom to use the local language (1905). Belarusians were seen mostly as peasants, dependent on the landowners and incapable of independent national existence. It was then, when the press began to reveal the separateness of Poles and Belarusians (p. 42). In the presentation of the problem one is provided a rich exemplification process of awakening national consciousness and the revealing of the contradictory cultural phenomena and processes. Among other, it is pointed out the understanding of the work of Adam Mickiewicz,

whom the Belarusians called "fellow", who was born in White Russia and grew up in the "mother country Belarusian-Lithuanian", which he called "Lithuania" (p. 59).

With an extraordinary analytical diligence the authoress shows the issues of awareness, having been reflected in the writings and literature of those times.

Similarly, with great care were presented agreements to reach state autonomy in World War I. Programs of political organizations are here presented, the position disclosed by the activists indicated, which was placed in a carefully assembled database source. This activity relates to the local and international reality. A disapproval from the Polish side of Belarusians is emphasized. It is still in the so-called taboo area (for example, p. 119). This reality took till the Versailles treaty. It is noted here, that Poland still saw this space as its province with the "Lithuanian" shade (p. 127); in the sphere of making those areas more Polish they used the Catholic Church (p. 142). For leading politicians reality that Poland had large areas inhabited by hostile people was not convincing (p. 149). The new life of the country functioning, including the Belarusians, began the revolution in May 1926. Their status was analytically presented in the lecture, emphasizing the fact that in 1938 the mass deportation of Poles in Belarus Soviet had began. Those who were Catholics or had Polish-sounding names were considered Poles (p. 235).

A unique part of the study is a presentation of the problem of relations between the two countries and their relationship to the occupants in the years 1939–1944. It is noted here that dependence of Polish–Belarusian relations from the reality of occupation was crucial. The experience and policy of totalitarian regimes, under the authority of which were Poles and Belarusians after the outbreak of World War II played a huge role in their relationship. These relationship took place in extreme conditions of the occupation (p. 237).

Similarly, with great care it is presented the Polish–Belarusian reality, which manifested itself in the years 1944–1989. Attention is drawn here on issues such as the changing of borders, repatriation of the population, the consequences of a political thaw after 1953, the strength and specificity of changes after 1980, Polish–Belarusian relations in exile (the convergence of the political fate of the Poles and Belarusians in exile, the environment of Paris “Culture” and its recognition of the concept of a post-war Polish border). Factual knowledge delivered here gives a synthetic view on the Polish–Russian relations. They appear as the reality of high complexity, rich in everyday practice and reception of intellectual property. This analysis is a unique achievement of cognitive matter, clearly enriching the knowledge of the Polish–Belarusian relations.

In the presentation of the relationship between the parties after 1989, the cells of continuation in the new political

reality, as well as great activity in generating new signs of life for local and international culture are indicated. It is noted that in the context of the development of new strategies and tactics, the collapse of the USSR was a surprise (p. 367). An important place in the analysis occupy myths and stereotypes, revealing the relationship between the parties. In the consciousness of Polish society, Vilnius and Grodno appear as mythologized Polish cities (p. 308). Very carefully structured knowledge is delivered here, especially showing diplomatic and national relations (Treaty on Good Neighbourhood and Friendly Cooperation of 23 June 1992), “political dialogue” from 1996–2004, the situation of national minorities in the relations between the two countries. There are very carefully gathered factual materials which are explained from the point of view of the research (in conjunction with the regularities of changes in the field of national minorities).

Enrichment of the knowledge of the Polish–Belarusian relations is presented on the basis of the minority press (“Niva”, “Czasopis”, “Głos znad Niemna”, „Magazyn Polski”). An important part of the knowledge is a challenge to present the presence of Belarusian culture in Poland after 1989. It is noted here, that this presence is not yet the subject of scientific research, especially from the point of view of international relations (p. 549).

The *appendix* contains lists of personal power institutions in Poland and Belarus, generating Polish–Belarusian rela-

tions. They take into account the term of the functions held by certain individuals. *Kronika stosunków polsko-białoruskich 1990–2005* is a valuable part.

The list of references is made carefully, reflecting the essence of the presented problems, including records, documents, and printed materials, diaries and memoirs, newspapers and periodicals, encyclopedias, guides, dictionaries, articles, studies, books and Internet sources. This is an important component of the study, it becomes a guide to recognize the Polish–Belarusian relations.

Pointing out the most important signs of grandeur research presented in this monograph, one must emphasize the following: 1. Holistic and yet a deeply analytical outline of the Polish–Belarusian relations in the twentieth century, 2. Clear identification of the specific national identity of Belarusians, 3. Critical and balanced at the same time deeply cognitive assessment of international relations that generate the Polish–Belarusian and Belarusian–Polish relations, 4. Providing a wealth of descriptive knowledge, reflecting the development of Polish–Belarusian relations, both the heritage of the past and the present. Many of the identified cell culture fact is introduced for the first time in a so-called scientific circuit, 5. Diligence methodology, the use of the latest interpretation, recognition system, binding political events of the past (in the long term) to the present, indicating the historical accuracy in the borderland.

It should be noted with conviction that the presented monograph deserves

a lot of attention. It is the most valuable study of contemporary Polish–Belarusian relations.

Andrzej Chodubski