

## FOREWORD

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The 20th century in Europe was definitely crucial. The dynamics of the changes taking place in this period is beyond comparison to earlier epochs. The question of the revolution which transformed the social self-consciousness of the inhabitants of the Old Continent deserves particular attention. The 19th century was still in the era of local communities whose self-consciousness was constructed upon specific phenomena and responses to them in the human psyche.

Some such real phenomena were family ties, including the “awe”, or respect, towards one’s father and warm feelings towards one’s mother. Concrete phenomena should also include direct social interactions, neighbourly or economic (established via direct exchange in a more external environment than neighbours), as well as the relations of participation in specific activities (religious rituals, military service).

First and foremost, the inhabited and “domesticated” space was a real value. For this reason, fatherland was treated as a particular extension of home: a sphere of “familiarity”, inhabiting which defines us as the state of being “from here”. The sense of identity formed by the knowledge of the land, fields, meadows, woods, lakes and rivers, and all the nature filling the geographical space. Such a sense also stemmed from the awareness how much work, toil, and sweat it cost to build houses and towns, plough fields, clear fallow land, plant trees, dig wells... It was the awareness of the bond forged, generation after generation, through hard work and often armed struggle for the land and the right to live in it. In this concrete space people loved, bore children, started families, forged neighbourly ties, friendships and collaboration relationships, all kinds of relations between humans, which were known to be “ours” and “familiar”. Identity grew on the foundation of the memory of common past: the sense of togetherness was rooted in a specific point in time and space, in particular events and the memory of them.

The dynamic transformations of economy, politics, society and customs which began in the 19th century accumulated in the 20th: the age of revolutions, world wars, change of morals, and technological breakthrough transformed the

mechanism of social identification as well. Identity could no longer be built on the concrete foundation of being communally lodged in stable economic relationships, permanent conditions of existence, and relatively unchanging relation towards “authority”. The world born in the 20th century was much more dynamic and placed on both individuals and whole communities demands of a new kind: awareness of belonging to a wider community than the regional one and involvement in the issues of a nation, state, or society. In the last century, much more strongly than in the previous ones, communal identity began to be shaped based on symbolic categories: not material economic relations, relations of power, or social relations but rather socially produced knowledge: historical and civil education, national, social, and political ideologies, nationalist, communist, and fascist propaganda.

The memory of a local community, derived from participation in specific events placed at specific points in time and space, becomes just one of the components of social memory built upon supralocally constructed knowledge: school textbooks, literature, historical writign, and media communication.

Papers included in this volume present, exemplify, and illustrate the complex and diverse process of transforming the material basis of collective consciousness and social memory into a symbolic basis. The texts by Anna Bockova and Mária Tonkova, Miriam Viršinska, and Róbert Letz provide a clear exemplification of the aforementioned process regarding the formation of the modern national identity of Slovaks based on the historiographic, educational, and popular narration devoted to the personage of Andrej Hlinka. Next, the text by Denisa Labishova and Blažena Gracova is dedicated to the issue of the formation of the image of Czechoslovakia in the historical consciousness of neighbouring nations based on the discourses in textbooks of history. The article by Ligia Henczel-Wróblewska concerns the question of building a national identity by the Polish minority community in Piemont by preserving the memory of the graves of Polish soldiers. Whereas Andrzej Moniak’s article describes the disappearance of material traces of the Soviet past in Poland in the situation where there is no symbolic foundation which might sustain this material heritage. The text by Wiktor Werner analyses the phenomenon of social memory and historical

knowledge coming under the control of the mass culture discourse, particularly expansive at the turn of the 21st century.

The treatises mentioned above form a certain continuum combining political events (rise of Czechoslovakia – fall of the USSR), media events (school textbooks – products of mass culture), and social processes (emancipation of the Habsburg monarchy nations – mass economic migrations characteristic of the turn of the 21st century). It allows us to see in the specific historical phenomena, shown in individual studies, general processes, which had such a strong effect on the social and cultural nature of Europe.

TRANSLATION: Andrzej PIETKIEWICZ