

## REVIEWS

Acta Poloniae Historica  
126, 2022  
PL ISSN 0001-6829

Błażej Brzostek, *Wstecz. Historia Warszawy do początku* [Backwards. History of Warsaw until Its Beginning], Warszawa, 2001, Muzeum Warszawy, 814 pp., 51 ills, index

### Backwards, yet *en passant*

Błażej Brzostek's book *Backwards. History of Warsaw until Its Beginning* is a monograph of the city's history. It contains 56 texts, each provided with a title and a year, sorted in a reversed chronology, each of them at least several pages long. The texts were grouped in eight periods of political history of Warsaw, also in reversed chronology (2021–1990 'Post and Trans', 1989–1945 'Polish People's Republic', 1945–1939 'The War', 1939–1915 'The Capital City', 1915–1831 'The Partition', 1831–1795 'After a Loss', 1795–1525 'The Crown', 1525–? 'Masovia'). Each of these chapters, some of them comprehensive, has an additional introduction. The book begins with a short, 2021 'Introduction', and concludes with a longer text, 'About the Sources and Bibliography', in which the author discusses his various sources – both cited, and not cited (the book does not contain a bibliography in a traditional sense, only footnotes and an index which, sadly, does not feature the last names indicated in footnotes).

The year 2022 marks the twentieth anniversary of a Coldplay's music video for the ballad *The Scientists* (dir. Jamie Thraves). It wasn't the first music video to use a reverse chronology, or a reverse movement altogether – Wikipedia mentions Danny Wilson's 1989 production, *The Second Summer of Love*. In the mid-1990s Julien Temple's plotless, filmed in reverse order, music video for a new-age band Enigma's single *Return to Innocence* also became immensely popular. I focus here on the Coldplay's song not only because it tells a story of a car accident, as the singer is singing the song forwards, while the entire world (including him) moves backwards. It is also intriguing because of its title and text – evoking a known figure of a scientist as someone who forgets about the world, his feelings and relationships with loved ones, because he is consumed by his research and must look forwards ("questions of science, science and progress"). The logic of scientific method and progress ("I was just guessing at numbers and figures/Pulling the puzzles apart") does not necessarily apply to interpersonal relationships. The reminder of this banal

truth is accompanied by a clip that makes the experience of a singer more credible, but at the same time rejects the possibility of return to the idyllic past.

Naturally, the attempts to combine reverse chronology with reverse movement are only marginally possible in literature, as they become rather a matter of experimentation and/or literary play (for example, the poetic genre of *versus cancrini*). However, it would be almost impossible, especially in the long run, to employ this device in prose. If it is not an encrypted message, or does not concern short texts, it must respect the logic of syntax and resort to reversing the cause and effect. We could consider Martin Amis's 1991 novel *Time's Arrow*. Its narrator experiences protagonist's life as a kind of a movie, played from the end to the beginning, in a way external to the narrator, but at the same time somehow connected to him (as a form of his consciousness, or a guardian angel?). The narrative is consistently driven forwards, as it reveals the absurdities of everyday life and reinvents the outlook on processuality. Therefore, the story becomes one about evil as good (and vice versa), which is already foreshadowed by novel's subtitle: *or The Nature of the Offence*. Usually, the reverse chronology in a narrative is linked with the sin and the loss of innocence. Moreover, it could be also said that it does not invalidate the processes that govern the world, but emphasises them on the basis of an anti-structure, one that only strengthens the structure.

Such effects are usually caused by the reverse chronology in tales. What then could be the use of reverse chronology in books devoted to the history of a city? Is it to expose the guilt and the presumption of primordial innocence? In the case of a specific place, a house, a plot of land, a street, or a district, there may even be an exercise of imagination (methodological, stylistic, historiosophical?) to reconfigure them like in Amis's *Arrow of Time*. A study is an investigation, it can be carried out by examining the clues of the recent past, which are usually easier to reconstruct based on material evidence and the accessibility of source – so why could it not be presented in a similar way? This gimmick could naturally be used only in a single, selected phenomenon. The scope should not be very large. An attempt to deploy the device on a city-scale would probably result in a dreamlike essay. Setting up even a straightforward narrative (one which does not concern itself with excessive reflection) into the second law of thermodynamics, in the reverse, should, at least in theory, moralise the meaning of the whole.

Therefore, perhaps the most surprising fact about Błażej Brzostek's book, and the backwards movement as the most expressive feature of the composition, emphasised in the title, is that it manages to avoid the moralising component. It is not accompanied by any strongly articulated thesis or a consistent reflection on the course of matters and their character, although of course it is peppered with remarks on remembering the past, its nature (i.e. that it does not exist) and other topics, leaving the assembly of an interpretation

to the reader. But we don't actually have to do that. The author himself states at the beginning of the book that he does not seek "any meaning in the history of the city, no 'guiding line', assuming that we are experiencing with an incomprehensible collection of experiences (a thousand of 'Warsaws'), which have existed" (p. 17), and concludes with repeating the words about "the space of experience and memory" (p. 756). It is a very loose formula, after all, not imposing diagnoses and strong opinions on the reader. Yet, the very assumption that there is no such guiding idea or meaning is also a profession of faith and a form of interpretation. Are the transmitted memory and experience only principles that govern this work? It seems to me that there is a topic, or perhaps a thread, which seems to stand out in the book's maze of social, political, economic, and even everyday life issues. It is the city inhabitants' confrontation with the European civilisation, here understood as a certain model according to which the city should function. Moreover, it is supported by the gaze of strangers, whose ways of looking become a very important manner of perceiving the city. Consequently, Brzostek cites a multitude of sources: the statements of visitors from foreign countries, especially from Western Europe (but also from Russia), who often pass through Warsaw, either travelling towards Europe or coming back from it. The connections to European cities network and the civilisational distance from the other centres do not reveal themselves. Rather, they are exposed, constructed by the author, who establishes the right issues and quotations.

*Backwards* shows why Warsaw looks the way it does, but does so as if in passing, as if it were not the most important thing here. The book is in essence a series of interesting sketches, accompanying a portrait of a city, which were arranged in a more or less reverse chronological order. 'More or less', because the dates are approximate, as the author sincerely warns the reader in the 'Introduction'. Indeed, the relationship between some chapters and their temporal scope are merely pretextual or even incidental, especially further into the book. In the nineteenth century the connections become so loose one could even wonder if it would be possible to abandon them altogether without detriment to the book as a whole. Usually, each of the individual texts – I don't know if I could call them 'chapters', it seems that the word 'sketch' in fact fits best here – seemingly has a single main topic but it is a misdirection in most cases. In a number of chapters, it would seem possible to identify two topics, more often a few, and from each topic you could still draw some digression. Occasionally, such a sketch makes an attempt to conceptualise the city as a whole (city understood as a spatial representation, and as a stratified community deployed in urban topography). Such a technique was used, for example, in a great sketch set in 1941 entitled *Three Warsaws*, about the occupied city. A metaphor of overlapping cities, with its large potential to juxtapose into other moments in history, is practically deployed only once, in the said chapter. We can

extrapolate these few different Warsaws from other sketches, and the author limits himself only to one final statement – ‘a thousand Warsaws’. Brzostek achieves mastery in rendering the diversity of the world – if the world is an ‘incomprehensible collection of experiences’, it is the category of *varietas* that allows to get out of the embarrassment of riches. The author returns to some topics, signals, and things (you could look at the index to learn how the author sees them, more or less) in subsequent texts, describing some of them a bit more broadly. Other topics, on the other hand, are not mentioned again. Therefore, the reader can wait in vain for a long time for a continuation of some threads, while some remain merely a heap of details, a string of observations on the margins. One example is the issue of colour and shades of Warsaw, another – the recreation of the old Polish traditions for the use in the modern world, and the inventing of traditions. In both cases, there would be enough material for a separate study. As there was no mention of the *pastelosis*<sup>1</sup> (in this case it should be marked at the very beginning in this compositional arrangement) we can surmise that colour will probably not emerge as a separate issue. However, for me the biggest disappointment was the animal world or rather lack thereof. The chapter entitled ‘A Dog from Nowy Świat (1856)’ seemed to herald a tale about the presence of dogs in the city... and there is not a lot about dogs there, as a matter of fact.

There is something about this mode of writing I could call a *silva rerum* charm and style, a notion which I will try to clarify in a moment. Thanks to it there are no big problems with reading the whole book. The artificiality or non-obviousness of the reversed structure have been concealed and neutralised as much as it was possible (personally, I experienced the greatest doubts around the year 1939).

*En passant* (an expression borrowed from chess terminology where it denotes a capture of a piece that has passed over capturing piece; here: “by the way”, in passing) pertains to a certain principle of thinking and construction of individual sketches, and the book as a whole. Probably it can be explained in different ways, but above all it is justified because of the theme of the city, which demands skilful introduction of digressions, the ability to prioritise certain information, and to synchronise the panoramic view, medium plan, and detail. All of this is compounded by the problem of historical approach. Here I can also observe a peculiarity of the treatment of sources, their selection; avoidance, distrusts and even pickiness towards

---

<sup>1</sup> “Colourful zigzags, arcade game motifs, geometric figures, pseudo-frames of windows and even infantile drawings of flora and fauna – those are just some of the visible symptoms of the aesthetical and urbanistic chaotic condition also known as Polish *pastelozna*” – cited after Sara Nikolić, ‘*Pastelozna* – refurbishing of the PPR heritage’, *Urban Development Issues*, 63 (2019), 51–64.

classical literature, but also towards some personal documents, often found in Varsavianist scholars' libraries; the preference for press sources, a limited selection of iconographic and visual sources (the book is rather lacking in images, more often the author simply describes a picture rather than reproduces it in the book). Altogether you could say that the author gives the impression of not being heavily attached to any particular type of source (apart from the aforementioned accounts of foreigners). Thanks to such decisions a rather non-obvious entirety emerges (and the author himself feels obliged to some extent to explain his selection of some sources and omission of others). It seems to me that the *en passant* mode is the strongest aspect of Błażej Brzostek's book, as it determines its originality and is rewarding for readers. That does not mean, however, that I read all sections and cases with equal diligence and pleasure. Human memory also works in *en passant* mode. By the way, for the transference of memories and experiences, a reversed chronology is not enough; it is however a paradoxical, anti-structural nod to the tradition of linearity. Perhaps, randomness, 'a game of hopscotch', scattering of these sketches could have been a gesture that would underscore the sentiment that "the past does not exist" (p. 15) even more. The fact that I am writing about this anti-structural linearity is not a criticism of *History of Warsaw until its Beginning*, but rather a form of its praise. Brzostek stimulated my imagination and encouraged me to reflect. Perhaps this book could give rise to a certain, invigorating research ferment, but more importantly, to the way such research is presented. That for me, a humanist, a Varsavianist scholar, researcher of the city's history, is the greatest asset of the book. At the same time it is (perhaps, above all else) a book for everyone, a book which popularises the history of the city (even if read anew and in a more modern manner), which quite well fills a certain knowledge gap, especially in reference to the history of the old city; additionally, it is quite an easy read. It becomes something of a guide for the intermediates. This is connected with my main doubt. One cannot deny that the image of Warsaw in the twentieth century, especially after the Second World War, provided by Brzostek, is balanced, panoramic, and all-encompassing at the same time. The cracks begin to appear more or less at the beginning of the sections devoted to the nineteenth century (that is, its end), which acts as a kind of cushion before the narrative accelerates into the earlier centuries. There is an increasingly synthetic approach in subsequent sketches. Grzegorz Piątek is right to describe the book in a cover blurb as a 'backwards-rushing time machine', but only for these final parts. Is there a sufficient justification for the claim about the decrease in the number of sources and the shaping of the present city primarily by the modern era (p. 17)? I am not convinced, as I believe that there are many interesting and diverse sources that portray Warsaw, especially from nineteenth to eighteenth century, just as freshly but also with great impetus (even with omission of *belles lettres* or iconography). The second argument

is naturally irrefutable, but herein lies the issue. Perhaps a different, better form would be more suitable to show what emerges from the past, other than the one proposed by the author (and is it even that important in Brzostek's narrative?). In these later sections, the book gains in value as an elementary storytelling of the basic subjects, but loses its all-encompassing, panoramic view. Personally, I like the earlier Brzostek more. And I would prefer it if he wasn't in such a hurry.

Neither in the twentieth-century part with its extended narrative, nor in the later, more rapid parts, does Brzostek devote much attention to churches and religions, public religious life, processions and pilgrimages, or even cemeteries and mourning. Regardless of which interpretative and substantive narrative thread we assume, this is a conspicuous absence. There is some reference to animals, but more broadly, the themes of ecology and nature are underrepresented. These are the two spheres which absence I felt most strongly. Then, when it comes to lesser shortcomings, it should be stated first that omitting the classics of Varsavianist studies has its bad sides, too. For example, when Brzostek writes about the famous fragment from Adam Jarzębski's *Gościniec, or a Short Description of Warsaw* [*Gościniec* meaning in Polish the main road, but also 'a gift from a journey'] (p. 727) in which the poet described the last Masovian Piasts with the adjective 'German', it is as if he doesn't know about the two-decade long, sensible attempt to correct this word by Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki. The painting of Warsaw trams was naturally done in the early 1990s, that is before the ugly outburst of advertisement in 1993, but they were red-cream-yellow (with mostly red as a dominant colour), not yellow-red, as we could gather from the contemporary state of Warsaw's public transit (p. 78). It is difficult to describe the protagonist of *Czterdziestolatek* [The Forty-Year-Old] TV series as recalling his "poor rural childhood" (p. 139) – in fact, everything we know about him indicates rather his urban, or suburban roots. Sometimes Brzostek's work is burdened by careless citations, such as with the case of 'Kobra' [Cobra] television plays, filmed presumably in the hall of Intraco II "without end" (as stated by Jerzy S. Majewski, but this information is also available on Wikipedia). The *Kobra* series was actually in its declining phase (at the turn of 1970s and 1980s it had an average of only five premieres a year) when the Intraco skyscraper was completed. Indeed, various interiors and open air locations pretended to be English and American cities (which is itself quite an interesting, but separate issue), and indeed, some of the 'Kobra' episodes were shot there, but presenting the skyscraper's interiors of being the stage of 'many Kobras' is a gross exaggeration.

And in the end, a few nitpicks, perhaps less important, but they should be kept in mind still. It annoys me when Brzostek cites Jędrzej Kitowicz's *Opis obyczajów za panowania Augusta III* [Description of Customs during the Reign of August III] from the incomplete edition of Michał Janik from 1925 (p. 676),

as well as Kazimierz Brandys's *Letters to Mrs Z.* from the work of geographer Dobiesław Jędrzejczyk (p. 191)! I know that we are dealing with a work of a popular genre, but these are practices that everyone should avoid.

The book is published in a way to which the Museum of Warsaw has accustomed its readers. The proofreading is flawless. I mention this because nowadays such things are not a given. The high graphic quality of the work and the lightness of the paper are great assets, especially when you read the traditional paper version. That doesn't change the fact that in the copy I read, in the middle of sketch from 1970 I skipped ahead a bit to smoothly to the year 1956, as 32 pages of text seemingly had vanished due to a printing error. Fortunately, Błażej Brzostek's work is not avant-garde enough to sow doubt that it is another game with historical narration and another version of the *en passant* method.

proofreading Krzysztof Heymer

Igor Piotrowski

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6130-652X>

Matthias Asche, Werner Buchholz, Mathias Niendorf, Patrick Schiele, and Anton Schindling† (eds), *Protestantismus in den baltischen Landen und in Litauen: Nation und Konfession vom 16. Jahrhundert bis 1918*, Münster, 2021, Aschendorff Verlag, 559 pp., ill.; series: *Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte*, 170

The collection of articles reviewed is the result of the international conference 'Protestantismus in den baltischen Landen. Konfession, Ethnien und Politik vom 16. Jahrhundert bis 1918', which took place in Tübingen in 2013. Due to the death of the main originator and editor of the project, Anton Schindling PhD DsC, preparation of the publication was drawn out for years, until the book finally saw the light of day in 2021. The subject of the Reformation in the Baltic states was comprehensively discussed in the four-part series, *Die baltischen Lande im Zeitalter der Reformation und Konfessionalisierung* (2009–12).<sup>1</sup> The book reviewed here, *Protestantismus in den baltischen Landen und in Litauen*, was to be the continuation of the cycle, but in many respects it constitutes a separate work. The more attractive cover graphics are here only a preview of the changes made in the concept and content of the publication.

<sup>1</sup> Matthias Asche, Werner Buchholz, and Anton Schindling (eds), *Die baltischen Lande im Zeitalter der Reformation und Konfessionalisierung*. Livland, Estland, Ösel, Ingermanland, Kurland und Lettgallen. Stadt, Land und Konfession 1500–1721, parts 1–4 (Münster, 2009–2012), *Katholisches Leben und Kirchenreform im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung*, 69–72.

As opposed to previous installments, the collection of articles presented does not only pertain to the most 'heated' period of religious changes, that is early modernity, but extends to the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, until the breakthrough year of 1918, when the first national Baltic states were created. Such a broad view should be considered a positive since it allows for a better understanding of many processes which were not confined within the bounds of artificially determined epochs. This also applies to the process of confessionalisation and the evolution of Protestantism. The main reason for choosing such a lengthy chronological stretch of time was not the desire to study religious transformations themselves over a long period, but to analyse the influence of Protestantism on the shaping of national identities in the area of today's Baltic countries. The subtitle is *Nation und Konfession vom 16. Jahrhundert bis 1918*. The relationship between Protestantism and the shaping of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian nationalities is not always easy to perceive, but this makes it all the more interesting and worthy of discussion.

An important change is the inclusion of Lithuania into the area of interest; its absence was one of the criticisms from the reviewer of the previous volumes in the series, Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg.<sup>2</sup> The editors explain that Lithuania did not belong to the Baltic countries in early modern times, but only very recently, and that is why it was not accounted for in the series volumes that did not extend beyond the eighteenth century (although the concept of the Baltic countries as a community does appear in the nineteenth century). However, it looks as though the editors may have had certain doubts about their earlier concept, as in this volume we obtain several articles that fill in the gaps with information about the religious situation in Lithuania/Grand Duchy of Lithuania, precisely in the early modern era. In this it was difficult to avoid definitional imprecisions; the authors of the articles have various understandings of 'Lithuania'. In one instance it is the entire territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania together with the territory of modern-day Belarus; in another, it is the entire area inhabited by Lithuanian-speaking people along with a part of the Duchy of Prussia/Kingdom of Prussia. Either way, putting Lithuania under analysis should be considered a good (and necessary) decision.

Another one of Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg's accusations regarding the previous volumes in the series was the omission of Catholicism and the Catholic Ref-

---

<sup>2</sup> Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, 'Die baltischen Lande im Zeitalter der Reformation und Konfessionalisierung. Livland, Estland, Ösel, Ingermanland, Kurland und Lettgallen. Stadt, Land und Konfession 1500–1721, Teile 1–2 (Katholisches Leben und Kirchenreform im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung, 69–70) by Matthias Asche, Werner Buchholz, Anton Schindling (Aschendorff, Münster, 2009–10), 305 pp.', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, xxxix, 4 (2012), 702–4.



ormation in the series that deals with early modern denominational changes. The authors replied to this criticism, particularising the subject of their interests. In the reviewed volume, only Protestantism appears in the title and is the subject of interest, not the entire religious spectrum of the *Baltikum*. In light of this, the authors can no longer be accused of overlooking, for example, the issue of the Counter-Reformation activities of the Roman Catholic Church during Polish rule in Livonia. At the same time, it can be pointed out that taking up such a subject would have allowed for a better understanding of Protestantism itself, for example as an element of the identity of the inhabitants of the former Livonia (why and how did they effectively resist Catholic action?). There are more references in this volume to Orthodoxy.

The book is divided into five parts. After a brief introduction from the publisher, we move to an article on methodology by Werner Buchholz who analyses the origins of the terms *Baltikum* and Baltic states, and also attempts to reply to the question of when and by whom the Russian Baltic provinces began to be treated as a community. At the centre of his reflection are the German-speaking inhabitants of these areas, who were the first to adopt the adjective 'Baltic' in order to distinguish themselves from Germans living in the Reich. So this was originally a term used to describe the so-called *Deutschbalten*. It is a shame though that the article does not tell us when and why the non-German inhabitants of the *Baltikum* started to identify themselves with this idea.

The section 'Evangelische Glaubenspraxis in der Frühen Neuzeit' begins with the contribution by Aleksander Loit, dedicated to the attitude of the Lutheran Church of Sweden to other confessions in the Baltic province of the Crown. It is interesting that the author included pagan ritual practiced during the entire early modern era by most of the rural population with the confessions. This is not intended as a malicious remark; in fact, practitioners of paganism constituted a decidedly more popular and meaningful non-Lutheran religious cult than the small religious minorities of foreign merchants or residents of the Ingermanland province (belonging to Russia from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the present). Paying homage to ancestors, belief in protective spirits, burying the dead outside of church cemeteries, and nighttime gatherings by streams persisted, despite various strategies of action undertaken by the Church. One could ask the following question (for which, however, there was not enough room here): how much can one really speak of the Christianisation of the residents of Baltic villages at all?

The next three articles form a whole, supplementing the previous volumes with a characterisation of the Reformation and the situation of Protestants in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Dainora Pociūtė precisely discusses the Protestant confessions of faith in the earlier phase of the Lithuanian Reformation; Ingė Lukšaitė characterises the state of affairs concerning the Reformed confession in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the sixteenth

and seventeenth centuries, and Wojciech Kriegseisen presents its further fate in the eighteenth century. In many respects, Lithuania differed from the other Baltic countries: the society was multicultural from the Middle Ages; Calvinism and Arianism, not Lutheranism, found many adherents there; its rulers were Catholic; and in time, the state increasingly made life difficult for Protestants. We must admit that Ingė Lukšaitė is correct that the term 'Polish Reformation' was improperly applied to the entirety of the Polish-Lithuanian state, since the course of the Reformation in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania differed in several ways from the situation in the Crown and Lithuanian Protestant churches maintained their autonomy from Polish ones.

The fifth article, by Jouko Talonen about the Herrnhuts in Livonia and Estonia from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, stands apart from the previous three articles, and it also does not fit chronologically with the section titled 'Religious Practice in Early Modernity'. Yet, it is the first article that relates to the main subject of the publication, that is the influence of Protestantism on the development of national identities in the Baltic states. That the radical religious movement from Saxony gained such a great following among Latvian and Estonian peasants, is in itself fascinating. No less intriguing is the question of how much it contributed to their national awakening. Unfortunately the author lacks source material to strengthen his theses and a more critical approach to older studies on the history of the Herrnhuts. Perhaps it is a matter of specialisation for Talonen, who is a theologian, not a historian.

The next part of the collection is dedicated to linguistic matters ('Sprache und Nationale Bewegungen'). It consists of three articles, each devoted to a different language: Lithuanian (Liane Klein), Estonian (Raimo Raag) and Latvian (Pēteris Vanags). All of them were folk languages [*Volkssprache*] and went through a similar course of evolution into a written language [*Schriftsprache*] and then a national one [*Nationalsprache*]. Protestantism played an important role in the development of these languages, thanks to translations and publications of religious texts and also due to the development of schooling, encompassing the teaching of reading and writing. The aforementioned Herrnhuts especially deserve credit for the literacy of Latvian and Estonian peasants. Prussian Lutheran printing houses also supported the development of literature in Lithuanian in a time when the Russian tsar ordered the issuing of Lithuanian publications in his country to be only in Cyrillic.

The subsequent part of the reviewed collection bears the title 'Nationale Bewegungen des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts'. The first four articles discuss the development of national identity in the context of Protestant confessions among the four Baltic nations: Estonians (Juhan Kreem), Latvians (Valda Kļava), Lithuanians (Silva Pocyte) and the Baltic Germans (Riho Altnurme). Each of the authors tried to answer the question of what influence Protestant denominations had on individual national movements. One can

say that these texts constitute the nucleus of the entire publication as they directly tie into the subtitle *Nation und Konfession*.

The situation of the Estonians and Latvians was similar. On the one hand, the Lutheran Church had a positive impact on the development of education, literature and science; on the other hand, it was involved in state and ethnic divisions. Mainly middle-class Germans became pastors, and oversight of village churches was carried out by German nobles, who, though Lutheran, did not strive for the improvement of education and the overall living conditions of their subjects. Both Juhan Kreem and Valda Kļava indicate that this ultimately determined a small, or at least indirect influence of Lutheranism on the national development of the German inhabitants of the *Baltikum*. The Hernnhuts, who carried out a literacy program for peasants more effectively than the Lutherans and, just as importantly, influenced the self-organisation of village communities, their democratisation and increased sense of agency and independence, had a more profound effect on the development of the Estonian and Latvian movements.

The influence of Lutheranism on the national development of Baltic Germans was much greater, as proven by Riho Altnurme. At the same time, the author points to the fact that Lutheran pastors anxiously watched the spread of nationalist ideas. Most of them believed that these ideas were in opposition to Christianity and that they would lead to a rise in social divisions.

The situation of the Lithuanians was more complicated because they lived in two different countries with differing religious conditions. In Lutheran Prussia, the Lithuanian-speaking populace could not complain about their lot: they could use their language in schools and in church, publish in their language, etc. As Silva Pocytyė argues, the attachment to Prussian monarchs was substantial and there was no thought of creating a separate, national state. Meanwhile, the national movement grew intensively around Lithuanian-speaking residents of the Russian Empire. However, the influence of Protestantism was not minor, in spite of the dominant position of Catholicism, and was mainly evidenced, as in other Baltic provinces, in the improvement of education and publishing activity.

Sebastian Rimestad researched the subject of relations between Protestants and the Orthodox Church in the Baltic provinces of the Russian Empire. The changing of the state church from Lutheran to Orthodox in the nineteenth century led to a great wave of conversions of Latvian and Estonian peasants. Despite this, in practice, it was hard to speak of Orthodoxy becoming an important part of their identity. There was no suitable Orthodox clergy that knew folk languages, no church structures were created, finances were lacking, and the Orthodox Church was also met with hostility from local Lutheran nobles and clergy. In effect, many peasants did not ultimately feel tied to any church, which accelerated the secularisation and 'un-churching' of Estonian and Latvian society.

The final article in this part of the book is the contribution by Trude Maurer, about the University of Dorpat (today Tartu). She examines it in three dimensions: 1. as a centre of Protestantism because it was the place where the Lutheran elites and clergy from the entire empire were formed; 2. as a centre of Germanness in Russia, since this university was founded with German-speaking elites in mind and from the beginning of its existence, German was the language of instruction; and 3. as a centre of Russification; at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the tsarist authorities introduced a Russification policy here through language and the recruitment of Russian-speaking and Orthodox instructors and students. After 1905 the university in Dorpat/Tartu was once again dominated by Lutherans, while many departments continued to be run in German.

The fifth and final part of the publication deals with issues from art history ('Literatur, Musik und bildende Kunst im Kontext der nationalen Bewegungen'). Vilis Kolms concentrates on the issue of Protestant church music in the Baltic states. First, he presents church hymnals, the personages of the composers and authors of the church hymns, and then he takes up the issue of the separation of church music from the service. At the turn of the nineteenth and twenties centuries, the music lost its connection to the liturgy and moved to secular concert halls. Danute Palionytė-Banevičienė supplements the subject of music with a short text on the choral movement among Lithuanians in the nineteenth century. In turn, Martin Klöcker focuses on the German literature of the *Baltikum*. He raises the issue of assigning German literature to the Baltic area, listing specific authors and literary genres. It is unfortunate, however, that this wide-ranging article does not contain short descriptions of more important or interesting literary works, characteristic motifs or literary heroes. According to Klöcker, Lutheranism played a key role in German and Baltic literature, which of course is not a surprise.

Krista Kodres prepared a thought-provoking text on Lutheran funerary rituals and art. Protestantism changed the perception of death and life after death; the dogma of purgatory was abolished. Instead of fearing death, the faithful were to live in the conviction of the resurrection; activities such as prayers for the dead or posthumous foundations lost their meaning in accord with the principle of salvation through faith. This had a decisive impact on the method of burial, since the funeral became a ritual for the living rather than the dead. In art, terrifying depictions of death and hell were no longer desired. It is true that the *memento mori* message remained, but only in the form of allegory. Kodres points to the characteristic features of Lutheran gravestones, like the Christ-centric motifs and the crucial role of text in relation to image. The article is accompanied by numerous, well-chosen illustrations, on the basis of which the author displays the evolution of early modern funerary art on the territory of today's Latvia and Estonia.

Ojārs Spārītis takes up the task of depicting sacred architecture on the lands of today's Latvia. He presents various artistic influences and the evolution of architecture under Swedish and Russian rule (until the twentieth century). The text is too long, however, especially in the first part where there are unnecessary, secondary issues and information on the political history of the region. It is incomprehensible why it was decided to describe in detail a gravestone that has already been analysed in the previous article by Krista Kodres. The inclusion of a picture of the same piece of art from exactly the same perspective does not make sense and should be considered an editorial error in the volume.

The section on the history of architecture is supplemented by Irena Vaišvilaitė's text on Reformed churches in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. According to the author, too little of the historic material has survived to say more about this architecture. Nevertheless, she includes a photograph that depicts various, intriguing examples, so it seems that a better attempt could have been made towards a deeper analysis and presentation of some hypotheses. Again, an illustration is repeated; the author includes exactly the same photograph (from the Kėdainiai Regional Museum website) as her predecessor, Ojārs Spārītis. The liberal use of colour photos is irrational, at least when considering the high price of the book.

The book lacks a conclusion that would connect the various issues and perspectives presented in the articles and tie them into a broader context. Although certain authors at times point out similar phenomena in different countries, the publication as a whole is missing a view of the Baltic states in the European perspective. Also missing is an attempt to engage with the question of how much the Reformation and confessionalisation there were similar in other regions? Did Protestantism influence the shaping of national identities to a greater or lesser degree here than elsewhere? Can we distinguish features unique to the *Baltikum*?

With such a wide-ranging publication it is obvious that individual articles will vary in quality. The price for wanting to highlight so many research issues briefly and all at once is too much superficiality in the arguments and a textbook style. It must be admitted though that many of the articles were prepared with diligence and were noteworthy. The question should be asked at whom the publication is targeted and what its purpose is. Specialists in the history of the Baltic states may feel unsatisfied with many of the articles being more of an introduction to the subject than a detailed research analysis. It seems that those most satisfied will be readers whose research only peripherally relates to Baltic issues. Thanks to this publication, they will be able to quickly obtain the most essential information and orient themselves in the specifics of local history.

A great advantage is the international and interdisciplinary character of the collection of articles reviewed. An extensive part is dedicated

to the history of art, and the linguistic section also really enriches the analysis. Moreover, the originators of the project also wanted to go beyond the narrow, national perspective, and they successfully achieved this. I am glad that this publication deals with all social classes, treating both peasants and intellectuals with equal seriousness. The issue of the role of women is missing from the series, though important patronesses of various Protestant communities are mentioned more than once. Editorial deficiencies are an irritant such as the repetition of illustrations or the improper structuring of articles. The compensation is an attractive, richly-illustrated edition. In summary, the publication *Protestantismus in den baltischen Landen und in Litauen: Nation und Konfession vom 16. Jahrhundert bis 1918* is definitely worthy of recommendation.

transl. Nicholas Siekierski

Jaśmina Korczak-Siedlecka

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7865-4376>

Aleksander Łupienko, *W stronę systemu. Infrastruktura techniczna dziewiętnastowiecznego miasta na przykładzie Galicji* [Towards a System. The Technical Infrastructure of a Nineteenth-Century City: Example of Galicia], Łódź, 2021, Księży Młyn Dom Wydawniczy, 345 pp., bibliography, ill., indexes, English sum.

The subject of modernisation of the Polish lands in the second half of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century remains, in spite of many existing publications, incompletely researched. Therefore, there are a number of reasons why it still is a fertile field for further study, both in terms of a comprehensive perspective covering the whole of the Polish lands, or at least the individual partitions, and in monographs discussing the processes which took place in individual regions, or even urban centres. The latter subtheme is the most represented, as evidenced by a large number of monographs on the history of towns and cities, which inevitably include a discussion of the local modernisation processes; they are supplemented by publications on the history of municipal utilities which emerged in the last half-century of the partitions of Poland era, and which were part of the modernisation processes taking place at the time.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Kazimierz Dohnalik, *Geneza i rozwój wodociągów i kanalizacji Miasta Krakowa 1882–1982* (Kraków, 1986); Tomasz Dywan, *Miejskie zakłady i obiekty infrastruktury technicznej Lwowa w latach 1858–1918. Zarys dziejów* (Łódź, 2021); Marian Gajewski, *Urządzenia komunalne Warszawy. Zarys historyczny* (Warszawa, 1979); Rafał Kowalczyk, 'Rozwój gospodarki komunalnej w Królestwie Polskim na przełomie XIX i XX stulecia', *Przegląd Nauk Historycznych*, 2 (2006); Aleksander

Studies that transcend the framework of localism are much harder to come by, as they either do not exist at all or only address selected sections and aspects of modernisation; they are usually devoted to those most spectacular – and therefore inevitably already the best researched.<sup>2</sup> The state of research into the processes of building modern municipal infrastructure more than a century after the restoration of independence has to be evaluated in a similar way. In spite of the numerous and often excellent detailed studies, which undoubtedly significantly contribute to the body of knowledge on the civilisational progress taking place in the various urban centres, there is still a visible deficit in works synthesising these processes. The situation is similar in the case of Galicia, which has been commonly regarded as a particularly backward region since at least the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

The book by Aleksander Łupienko, which the author himself describes in the introduction as “pioneering to some extent” (p. 24), is an attempt to break new ground in this area. A few lines below, however, he stipulates that

---

Łupienko, *Przestrzeń publiczna Warszawy w pierwszej połowie XIX wieku* (Warszawa, 2012); Hanna Polańska, *Tramwaje konne 1866–1908. Początki komunikacji miejskiej w Warszawie: jubileusz 150-lecia Warszawskich Tramwajów Konnych* (Warszawa, 2017); Jan Szajner and Marcin Rechlówic, *Tramwaje lwowskie 1880–1944* (Łódź, 2020); Miron Urbaniak, *Modernizacja infrastruktury miejskiej Leszna w latach 1832–1914* (Poznań, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Maciej Bukowski, Piotr Koryś, Cecylia Leszczyńska, Maciej Tymiński, and Nikolaus Wolf, ‘Wzrost gospodarczy ziem polskich w okresie pierwszej globalizacji (1870–1910)’, *Ekonomista*, 2 (2018); Andrzej Jezierski, *Problemy rozwoju gospodarczego ziem polskich w XIX i XX wieku* (Warszawa, 1984); Irena Pietrzak-Pawłowska, ‘Przewrót przemysłowy i warunki kapitalistycznej industrializacji na ziemiach polskich do 1918 r.’, in *ead.* (ed.), *Uprzemysłowienie ziem polskich w XIX i XX wieku. Studia i materiały* (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków, 1970). An attempt at a new approach to the problem is a study published as part of the project ‘W drodze ku modernizacji. Niepodległa Polska i wolni Polacy w XIX–XX wieku’ [On the Road to Modernisation. Independent Poland and Free Poles in the 19th–20th Centuries]: Paweł Grata (ed.), *W drodze ku niepodległości. Przemiany modernizacyjne na ziemiach polskich w II połowie XIX i na początku XX wieku* (Rzeszów, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Suffice it to say that the first attempt at a synthetic discussion of the subject at the scale of a single partition is a relatively short work by Miron Urbaniak from 2019, see *id.*, ‘Miasta Poznańskiego w drodze ku modernizacji. Budowa nowoczesnej infrastruktury technicznej w okresie zaboru pruskiego’, in *W drodze ku niepodległości*, 391–418; some approximations for Galicia are included in the studies of Krzysztof Broński and Sabina Rejman, see, e.g., Krzysztof Broński, *Rozwój gospodarczy większych miast galicyjskich w okresie autonomii* (Kraków, 2003); *id.*, *Rozwój społeczno-gospodarczy Stanisławowa w latach 1867–1939* (Kraków, 1999); Sabina Rejman, ‘Procesy modernizacyjne w miastach Galicji Zachodniej w II połowie XIX i na początku XX wieku’, *W drodze ku niepodległości*, 419–42.

the publication is “the first approximation of a comprehensive and, I would like to emphasise, large-scale subject, and therefore has a probing character; it is a kind of concept book, i.e. an attempt to problematise this seemingly uninteresting and down-to-earth (literally and figuratively) subject” (p. 25). One has to agree fully with the author's opinion, which, however, should not be understood as a reproach, but as a confirmation of the accuracy of the diagnosis presented at the outset; I shall return to this matter later in the review.

This carefully edited book explores the origins, formation and development of Galicia's urban technical infrastructure from the beginnings of modern networks that provided essential utilities and services to the inhabitants of developing urban centres, until the outbreak of the First World War. It is therefore a book about the modernisation of Galician towns during the autonomy period and about their, often bumpy, road to modernity, a journey on which not all municipalities managed to embark, or embark to the same extent, in the period under discussion. The book also affirms the Galician civilisational accomplishments, which are admittedly insular in character but nevertheless have visibly changed the living conditions of the inhabitants, mainly of the two national metropolises of Lviv and Cracow; but also, in some cases, of smaller provincial centres aspiring to a modernity – a goal perhaps less accessible to them in many respects, but one that was set by the local elites, both ambitious and increasingly aware of the needs of the urban organism.

Moreover, the book is not just a story about the technical infrastructure of Galician cities taken out of its historical context, but was reliably supported by an in-depth analysis of the origins and formation of modern urban networks in Western Europe, in the Kingdom of Poland and the western parts of the Habsburg monarchy. This richly drawn backdrop and models for the modernisation taking place in Galicia are documented by a wealth of literature on the subject, which is not only informative, but also provides valuable bibliographical references for the reader interested in this topic. In spite of this praise, it is not entirely understandable why the modernisation achievements of the Polish towns of the Prussian partition were omitted from the narrative. The introduction suggests that the book's aim was to show the processes taking place in the Kingdom of Poland, often treated in Galicia as comparative material, but it is unfortunate that the whole picture lacks at least an outline of what was happening in Poznań or smaller towns in Greater Poland in the period under discussion (all the more so because references are made to Vilnius, which was not located in the Kingdom of Poland and had little in common with Galicia).

The study consists of an introduction, six chapters, conclusions summarising the whole, a bibliography, a list of illustrations and indexes of names and geographical names. The first of the six chapters is devoted to the general conditions for the development of municipal infrastructure during the period in question, the next four deal with its individual elements, while the last



discusses 'management and linking', which could briefly be described as a system of infrastructure-related institutions. Both the introduction and the substantive chapters are divided into subchapters.

The book is based on a rich collection of printed sources, with particular emphasis on the press of the period, and on numerous Polish and foreign-language studies on the topic. The source base assembled and employed by the author is worth appreciating; however, one cannot fail to mention the omission of archival sources in the course of the query. Although the author mentions this in the introduction, justifying this absence with the "great constraints on international travel" (p. 24), we should nevertheless point out the archives relating to the history of towns in Western Galicia are mostly to be found in Poland. On the other hand, we know that the modernising transformations taking place in these cities have their own body of literature, which in part exempted us from conducting research in this area. There is an unquestionable dearth of sources from Eastern Galicia, which the author acknowledges and tries to compensate for, at least in part, through an extensive press search and the use of other materials. The scarcity of source material is, however, evident in many places and confirms the thesis quoted above about the preliminary and probing character of the book under review; at the same time it testifies to the remaining great research potential of the topic.

Moving on to an analysis of the book's content, a few words should be devoted to the introduction. In it, the author presents basic definitions, outlines the subject scope of research of technical infrastructure, the place of this infrastructure in the public debate, the influence of development and urban sovereignty on its formation, while emphasising the relationship of infrastructure development to modernisation, and pointing to the issue of the cost of its construction. The introduction goes on to discuss the spatial framework of the book, the peculiarities of Galician localities in comparison to such settlement centres in Western Europe, the basic research questions, the thematic scope of the publication and its source material.

The first chapter presents the general conditions of the creation and development of technical infrastructure in nineteenth-century European cities. The author outlines the problems of large cities in the past, the changes taking place there in the nineteenth century which enabled (and forced) their future development, and discusses the peculiarities of Galician towns, which differed significantly in terms of the level of district industrialisation even from urban centres located in the Kingdom of Poland. The following section discusses the major ills of rapidly growing cities in the nineteenth century and the primary sources of hope for preventing these problems.

As already stated, the subsequent chapters address the four most important components of urban technical infrastructure. The first is devoted to 'provisioning', i.e. the development of water supply networks. The chapter begins with a brief introduction, then discusses the experience Western European

cities had with water supply and the resulting breakthrough idea of municipal waterworks usually built by city authorities. The next subchapter presents the history of water supply in the Kingdom of Poland (and Vilnius), while in the last subchapter the narrative turns to the cities of Austria (specifically Vienna) and Galicia (it is not entirely understandable why they are considered together). The author presents the discussions about water supply in Cracow and Lviv, the implementation of plans resulting from these debates, and the often unsuccessful fate of similar initiatives in the smaller towns of Galicia. In conclusion, he points out that the waterworks had been a rather elitist 'attraction' in Galicia during the period in question and remained such also in the inter-war period.

The third chapter deals with 'disposal', i.e. the problem of getting rid of the increasing amounts of waste generated in cities. It discusses the European origins of modern sewerage construction and the public debates associated with it, as well as the patterns eventually developed there and subsequently adopted by areas less advanced in modernisation processes. Aleksander Łupienko presents the combined sewerage system, which is considered to be the most effective, using examples from Western European cities, but also from the Kingdom of Poland, before proceeding to describe the attempts made in Galicia to solve the sewage problem. Pointing to the unsatisfactory or even 'poor' state of the sanitation system in the second half of the nineteenth century, he discusses both the works being carried out on the construction of the sewers network, still incomplete at the time, and the debate on the subject in the largest cities of the Austrian partition. Despite a growing conviction among the urban elite that sewerage networks had to be established, and in spite of visible successes in this field, the author concludes that comprehensive sewage disposal systems accompanying the networks did not materialise in Galicia. The reason being both a lack of resources (often allocated to more profitable investments) and a shortage of specialists, but also a lack of waterworks, the existence of which was a prerequisite for a modern sewage network.

A more positive conclusion can be drawn from the chapter on energy supply. This is because the Galician cities fared much better in this respect, building their own gasworks and power stations far more often than water supply or sewage networks. The development of the gasworks was based, as in Western Europe and the Kingdom of Poland, on a system of licences, which initially meant the possibility of acquiring this important infrastructure for street lighting, but over time became a factor blocking its further development, due to the reluctance of licence holders. Importantly, gasworks were profitable ventures, which encouraged Galician municipal authorities to buy them outright. This also facilitated decisions on investments of this type, resulting in 16 municipal gasworks in operation in Galicia by 1914.

In a sense, municipal power stations had similar origins and fates as the gas plants; the former were a later development and competed with the latter over time. Again, these were revenue-generating investments that local authorities were keen to undertake even when, as in the case of Rzeszów, the town did not yet have its own water supply (considered to be “superfluous”, p. 184). By the way, the initial attempts at using electricity were interesting, sometimes even quite surprising. In Lviv, the power station was built to provide energy for the electric tramway built for the National Exhibition in 1894, but in Cracow the first powered building was a theatre, established in 1900. The author emphasises the fact that the era of electricity began relatively early in Galicia: as many as 22 towns had their own power stations before the First World War. He also points out that the first district power stations began to be built in this period, and plans for hydroelectric power stations also emerged.

The last infrastructure component under examination is ‘movement’, i.e. modern means of urban transport emerging in the nineteenth century. The author presents early solutions (horse-drawn omnibuses), the few attempts to apply them in the Polish territory (including Cracow), the origins of the horse-drawn tram and its implementation in Galicia, i.e. Lviv and Cracow, and last but not least: the relatively early arrival of the electric tram in the region. Importantly, it was established not only in the two metropolises, but also in Tarnów, which meant that Galicia overtook the Kingdom of Poland in terms of the number of cities with an electric tramway.

The last chapter discusses questions of organising and managing new urban infrastructure within democratising municipal communities; given their always limited financial capacity, the infrastructure was increasingly supported by investment loans. This section also reflects on the essence of technical infrastructure and its increasingly important place in the functioning of modernising cities. The author demonstrates the apparent divisions within the infrastructure: parts of it were profitable, some ‘only’ cost-effective, and some loss-making. He also discusses the effects of this division (p. 254). Łupienko also points out that, over time, the construction and maintenance of even loss-making infrastructure became a kind of mission for municipal authorities, who even undertook investments that were doomed to economic failure in advance, but were considered necessary, in the changing world, to ensure decent living conditions for the inhabitants (pp. 263–4). The chapter also presents the ‘heroes of the age of steam and electricity’, i.e. the most outstanding creators of the urban technical infrastructure of the Galician cities of the autonomous period.

In his concluding remarks, the author emphasises that the development of infrastructure was an aspect of the redevelopment of Galician cities on their road to modernity, and its construction became an area of pride for their inhabitants. Bearing in mind that modernisation defined in this way did not reach the majority of provincial towns in that period, Łupienko

nevertheless gives a positive assessment of the 'late Austrian period' in this respect, noting that many of the investments unfinished at that time were not implemented in the inter-war period either (p. 286).

Putting aside the somewhat overly affirmative view of Galician reality, it is worth appreciating Aleksander Łupienko's attempt to present the modernising changes taking place in the local cities in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite their clearly isolated nature, the beginnings of the construction of modern municipal infrastructure depicted in the book deserve our attention, as they constitute an important contribution to the academic debate on the emergence and development of modern urban technical infrastructure in the Polish lands in the aforementioned period; but also to the much broader discourse on the development processes taking place in the territories of the former Commonwealth during the partition period.

*transl. Krzysztof Heymer*

*Paweł Grata*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2358-3475>

Katarina Horvat, *Kućna služinčad u Zagrebu 1880.–1914*. [Domestic Servants in Zagreb, 1880–1914], Zagreb, 2021, Srednja Europa, 354 pp., ill., bibliography

The study of social history, especially of groups that can be defined as socially 'marginalised',<sup>1</sup> poses quite a challenge for the historian. It is very difficult to give voice to people whose point of view is virtually elusive in the sources. Illiteracy is the most common reason for this, as we are talking about people who have not been given the chance to acquire even a minimal education. Therefore, a researcher wishing to learn about the history of such people must turn to materials that only indirectly provide some information, such as the press publications. Another possibility is to study sources generated by people in contact with the so-called 'socially marginalised classes'. In the case of servants, these can be accounts (preserved in the form of diaries or correspondence) by their employers. Thus, already at the stage of collecting source material, the author has to keep such problems in mind.

The second, perhaps even more important issue, is that of the methodological approach. Some male and female researchers tackling social history topics (both pertaining to the 'marginalised groups' and to certain behaviours),

---

<sup>1</sup> I.e. social groups such as the urban poor, prostitutes, the disabled, or servants, whose history is far less visible than, for example, that of the aristocracy, a national group, etc.

tend to approach the presented problem in an extremely subjective manner, which in turn leads to the perpetuation of stereotypes.<sup>2</sup> Such topics, in spite of library or archive queries, often constitute more historical journalism, based on sentiment intended to evoke in the reader the exact effect expected by the author, than a scientific study.<sup>3</sup>

That is why I was very keen on taking a close look at the research of Croatian historian and archivist Katarina Horvat, who in 2021 published a monograph on servants working in Zagreb between 1880 and 1914. I should mention that the study has received acclaim in Horvat's home country, as can be seen from the positive reviews<sup>4</sup> and, above all, the Croatian Academy of Science and Arts [*Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti*, HAZU] award.<sup>5</sup>

The author, who is employed by the State Archive of the City of Zagreb [*Državni arhiv u Zagrebu*, DAZ], defended her doctoral thesis at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Zagreb in 2018; the dissertation was the basis of the monograph in question. It is worth noting that the publisher, Srednja Europa, has provided the book with a hardcover, while the pages are not glued but rather sewn together. The book has 354 pages and consists of 13 chapters (including an introduction and conclusion). It is rounded out with a bibliography, a short note about the author and a list of illustrations. While the lack of an index of surnames and geographical names does not bother the reader too much, the absence of a separate list of tables does. This has to do with the nature of the book. In Horvat's work, the servants are shown as a collective character and only when necessary does the name of a servant, or more often his or her 'master', appear. Therefore, a glossary of names would not be particularly useful. The same goes for the names of towns or villages, which also rarely appear in the book, as its subject matter is limited to Zagreb. It is different in the case of statistics. The author very often refers to figures and presents them in tables. This is, in fact, a very good solution, as it is the numbers that clearly demonstrate various phenomena, such as the statistic concerning the increasing number of women servants while the number of men servants was decreasing at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This

<sup>2</sup> See Joanna Kuciel-Frydryszak, *Służące do wszystkiego* (Warszawa, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> An excellent example of such work is the book by Anna Golus, which deals completely ahistorically with the problem of corporal punishment used against children throughout history, cf. *ead.*, *Dzieciństwo w cieniu różgi. Historia i oblicza przemocy wobec dzieci* (Gliwice, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Veronika Završki, 'Katarina Horvat, Kućna služinčad u Zagrebu 1880–1914' (Zagreb, 2021), 353 pp., *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, liv. 2 (2022), 525–8.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.info.hazu.hr/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Dobitnici-NAGRADE-HAZU-za-2021-godinu\\_dodjela-na-svecanosti-29-4-2022.pdf](https://www.info.hazu.hr/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Dobitnici-NAGRADE-HAZU-za-2021-godinu_dodjela-na-svecanosti-29-4-2022.pdf) [Accessed: 26 July 2022].

was due to the increasing cost of employing men, who at the time were able to earn more working as labourers etc. Therefore, a list of tables would certainly help, as there are a total of 47 in the book!

However, let us proceed to the content of the dissertation. The time frame, although defined by specific dates, is rather arbitrary. The specific nature of the subject often forces the author to use sources created at a later date, as is the case, for example, when she refers to the magazine *Kućna pomoćnica: zadružni list zadruga kućnih pomoćnica* [Housekeeper: Cooperative Sheet of the Cooperative Housekeepers], published in the 1930s and targeted at domestic servants. Also as far as Zagreb is concerned, although it dominates as a setting, in some instances the author cites examples from Osijek, the second largest city of the Triune Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia.

Two initial chapters (pp. 19–73) introduce the reader to the subject matter by focusing on the dynamic changes that took place at the turn of the twentieth century. This allows the reader to better understand existing relationships such as the migration of impoverished women from the countryside to the cities, a process that could never have flourished as it did without the development of the railway network. The author uses the ‘from general to particular’ method, first presenting the situation of servants in Europe, then in the Triune Kingdom. In the second chapter, statistics presented allow us to better characterise the servants, for example what percentage of Zagreb’s inhabitants they constituted (p. 64).

The next chapter provides us with information on the changing legal status of the service. Horvat goes into detail on the subsequent changes to the legislation relating to domestic servants. Thus, some progress can be seen, such as granting special protection to young girls. On the other hand, however, a person employing a servant or a maid had many opportunities to abuse their power, although, as the author points out, from time to time servants were able to argue their case in court.

Despite the majority of servants being the ‘do-it-all’ types, we should bear in mind the internal categorisation of the help. This is particularly valuable as often publications on servants treat this group uniformly, whereas there were significant differences between, for example, a cook, a cleaner and a nanny. These were both financial and social disparities, as a good nanny was often dearer to the child’s heart than constantly absent parents, as the author mentions towards the end of her study (p. 307). In the fifth part, dedicated to the origins of the servants working in Zagreb, we can learn that they were mostly young rural girls, Catholic women speaking Croatian or Serbian. Often these were Slovenian women. Various institutions acted as intermediaries in the employment of servants, and the state was also involved. This was a win-win situation, as both the service-seekers received certain guarantees (each servant had to have necessary documents, which also included written credentials) about the person employed, while the servants themselves could,

at least in theory, count on assistance in their search for employment, because the biggest problem was the scarcity of jobs (pp. 159–62).

This scarcity led young or vulnerable (e.g. those with illegitimate offspring) servants in particular to engage in other activities, such as prostitution, in addition to their employer's prescribed duties. Chapter 7 is devoted to such social issues, as that is where the author analyses the situation of the most disadvantaged; servants who were prostitutes, the infirm, or the elderly, as well as the aforementioned single mothers, all of whom were struggling to make ends meet in nineteenth-century Zagreb. They were the reason for the creation of various welfare institutions, which, however, were established later, after 1914.

The servants were usually poorly educated or altogether untrained. This situation was changing, however, as skilled workers were in demand. Therefore, both the state and private individuals decided to set up schools for servants, where they could acquire a basic education and thus the necessary knowledge that could later be put into practice. Unfortunately, there had been few institutions of this kind in Zagreb and it was not until the inter-war period that significant progress was made with regard to the professional training of servants.

The last three chapters focus on the daily life of the servants; their duties, leisure time, and relationships with their employers. In Croatia, as well as in the Balkan Peninsula as a whole, the number of ego-documents such as diaries or journals of this type are rare.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, providing insight into the daily life of the service was a particularly difficult task, as the author had very few sources at her disposal. In order to fill in the gaps, Horvat even uses the wills of individuals who bequeathed part of their property to their servants. Some of them, such as the rector of Zagreb University Tadija Smičiklas or Countess Tilda Vraniczanyja, were very attached to their servants (p. 330). Relationships were not always positive, however, and the commonly held view about servants was more often unfavourable, as best evidenced by press publications denouncing this group as lazy, prone to theft, and disloyal.

The book under review is another excellent publication on the social history of Zagreb by the Croatian historian. With this study, Katarina Horvat has joined the ranks of such eminent researchers of Croatian everyday life as Iskra Iveljić<sup>7</sup> or Božena Vranješ-Šoljan.<sup>8</sup> This is an excellent example of how

---

<sup>6</sup> Back in the 1960s, Tomislav Kraljačić and Miodrag Čanković drew attention to the scarcity of diaristic sources. See *iid.*, 'Memoarska građa kao istorijski izvor i problem njenog prikupljanja, arhivističkog sređivanja i obrade', *Prilozi Institut za istoriju radni kog pokryta Sarajevo*, 2 (1966), 329–42.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Iskra Iveljić, *Očevi i sinovi; privredna elita Zagreba u drugoj polovici 19. stoljeća* (Zagreb, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Božena Vranješ-Šoljan, *Stanovništvo Banske Hrvatske. Demografska slika Banske Hrvatske u kontekstu društveno-povijesnih promjena od 1850. do 1910.* (Zagreb, 2009).

to tell the story of the 'margins' while maintaining high academic standards. In Horvat's work, there is no gratuitous use of evocative examples designed to emotionally affect the reader. Instead, the author concentrates on portraying the group she researched, showing what traits its members exhibited, and how they functioned. Of course, the book is not flawless, but in summation its merits definitely outweigh some of the shortcomings mentioned above. The latter include, apart from the absence of a list of tables, moments when the author deviates too far from the main topic, e.g. by focusing attention on educational issues not directly related to servants. Nevertheless, the study has rightly received praise in Croatia because, in an age of books focusing on various excluded groups, Katarina Horvat's monograph provides a blueprint on how to approach this type of topic without turning into, more or less deliberately, an inept 'spokesperson' of the group or the problem in question.

Moreover, it is a work that falls under the heading of local history, as its thematic scope is limited to the Croatian capital. Nevertheless, the monograph does not dwell on superfluous details, as is often the case with this type of publication, but, using the example of a single city, shows certain processes that are universal, on a national scale. For the reasons mentioned above, I therefore look at Croatian historiography with a certain degree of envy, as it is capable of putting out such mature scholarly works on social history. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to consider a Polish translation of Katarina Horvat's book, which could serve as a model study for how to tell the story of groups that up to this point have functioned on the margins of historiography.

transl. Krzysztof Heymer

Tomasz Jacek Lis

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0188-5755>

Bartosz Dziewanowski-Stefańczyk and Jay Winter (eds), *A New Europe, 1918–1923. Instability, Innovation, Recovery*, London–New York, 2022, Routledge, 239 pp., bibliography, index

Attention equally divided between the Eastern and the Western Front; acceptance of the fact that hostilities did not conclude on 11 November 1918 and the war lasted another five years; and finally, appreciation of the curious mixture of modernisation and chaos which typified the states that emerged on the ruins of empires – these are the necessary conditions that the editors of *A New Europe*, Bartosz Dziewanowski-Stefańczyk and Jay Winter, have set for the alteration of the established (and hence erroneous) image of the First World War. They also made us realise that out of the embers of the conflict came not only the modern, twentieth-century Europe, but also the world we inhabit today, one supposedly not that distinct from that of a century ago.



The conviction with which the introduction to the volume advertises this narrative as one that is fresh and novel seems less justified with every passing year; the first time I heard someone proclaim that we are still living in a post-Versailles world was almost a decade ago. In the meantime, this thesis has taken root in modern historiography, gaining in nuance and surviving the test of contemporary events – celebrations of decennial anniversaries of events of the Great War, a right-populist revolution, or the current, new war. Since the book drew me back to topics I had explored before, I decided to adopt a more broad and synthetic approach, claiming a greater liberty in the questions I posed. Does the volume meet the postulate put forward at the beginning of the text, concerning its transformative nature for the established narrative? Does it fulfil the promise found in the subtitle, actually leading us down a path from instability, through innovation, and into recovery? Do the findings of the subsequent articles inform the final conclusions, and do they justify the claim that we still inhabit a world shaped by the national-democratic revolutions of a century ago? The answer to at least two of those questions is negative. Paradoxically, however, this does not reflect badly on the articles themselves, but rather on the subject some of them share – the extent of power memory has over the future. In this sense, *A New Europe, 1918–1923* is, to a degree, a case study of the problem it purports to address.

The authors diligently pursue the research objectives described in the introduction to the volume (and to this text). Though the immensely suggestive story recounted by Winter, about a seismograph used by the US Signal Corps to register the intensity of shelling suddenly flatlining at 11 a.m. on 11 November 1918, suggests otherwise, the first part of the volume provides a very extensive explanation of the causes and progress of the second act of the world war – the war of nations. Its title – ‘Patterns of Violence’ – hints at a concern with various aspects of physical violence, as a means of combat as well as social communication (along the lines of studies by Ota Konrád and Rudolf Kučera); however, a more fitting title is found on the cover: ‘Instability’, in its political sense. The texts reconstruct key events almost chronologically: the collapse of the imperial system in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans, the arrival of social and national revolutions and the accompanying plague of commingled, multifaceted (military, paramilitary, economic, ethnic, religious) violence, and finally the attempts to impose a new order and the supposed triumph of the rule of national self-determination with democracy on top. Nearly all offer a synthetic view, describing the continent from a fairly distant perspective, without sparing much thought to particular events and their participants, in the service of a general portrayal of the matters at hand, in terms of both theme and geography.

Two of the authors endeavour to engage in more in-depth analyses of the subjects at hand. In Chapter 3, entitled ‘Violence and the New Europe:

The War That Didn't End', Jay Winter – professor emeritus at Yale University and a foremost American historian of the First World War – highlights the disparity that typified Allied policy, which combined a declared adherence to the principle of national self-determination and imperialist governing practices. The war may have led to the collapse of four more or less authoritarian empires – Russian, German, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman – but it also concluded with the triumph of an equal number of counterparts: weakened, though still stable, like England and France, or only beginning to expand their colonial ventures, like the United States and Japan. The latter applied the principle of democracy and national self-determination wherever it suited them or where it did not hinder their own interests – in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Balkans – but abandoned it when it came to Austria and Germany, the Middle East, or Asia. Their triumph was owed to human and material resources drawn from the colonies. Giving lip service to principles of self-determination, they provided fuel for the demands of the inhabitants of these parts, which resulted in more problems for them. The same year the peace treaties were signed, overseas territories including India, China, and Korea were swept by a new wave of anti-imperialist protests which prompted the major powers to withdraw their attention and resources from the tensions flaring up in 'New Europe'. As Winter forcefully proclaims, peace had failed; the continent and the world would see decades of warfare, up until the collapse of the Soviet empire.

The inconsistency of the Western powers, both in terms of basic rules of conduct and the responsibility for ensuring the security of the geopolitical system they put in place, is addressed in the article 'The Collapse of the Versailles System during the Interwar Period', written by Jan Rydel, a historian from the Jagiellonian University. Wilson's vision of a "peace without victory" guaranteed by the League of Nations was dismembered by his allies and the Republican opposition in Congress; the French plan of total military and economic deconstruction of Germany, which the American military leadership had supported, was rejected by the British; and in the meantime, everyone joined hands in treating Soviet Russia to an unsuccessful military intervention that allowed it to grow into another resolute supporter of counter-treaty revisionism. Victorious, but weakened or indifferent, the Allies pursued a normalisation of relations, surrendering the initiative to the erstwhile vanquished. The mutual recognition of the Western boundaries of Germany in the 1925 Treaty of Locarno seemingly reinforced security. In practice, though, failure to address the problem of Germany's eastern borders and the beginning of German-Soviet cooperation (including military affairs) defined the future battle-lines. Already at the time, the regional mechanism of stabilising international relations – and, as a consequence, the treaty itself – was effectively dead. Rydel describes it using a quote from Henry Kissinger: "Rarely has a diplomatic document so missed its objective as the Treaty

of Versailles".<sup>1</sup> And yet, this quote from a former guru of American diplomacy is not the final word in the chapter.

Winter and Rydel's diptych ruthlessly uncovers the inconsistency and hypocrisy of the Western powers. The principle of self-determination only mattered so long as it could be used to batter the competition, and the toxic jumble of weak pseudo-nation-states it served to produce became a repository of replacement goals, as indicated by their subjection or dissolution in later years. Within this narrative, the final sentence of Rydel's article – "Although in no sense an antidote to all problems facing Europe in the 20th century, self-determination, fashioned at Versailles in 1919, has permanently entered the realm of European politics" (p. 63) – does not seem justified, at least in view of the war in Ukraine. Unjustified, but not unintelligible – this dissonance, the disparity between the content and the final conclusion, typifies subsequent parts of the volume, posing a challenge that informed readers must face on their own.

It raises its head again in the second part, devoted to the transformation of public life in countries of 'New Europe'. It does not seem a stretch to assume that its motto is "Innovation"; likewise, it stands to reason that the term is deployed in a positive sense. However, the array of texts found therein give much reason for optimism, unless individual or generally less important matters are at stake. The crucial role experts in geography played at the Paris conference, discussed by Maciej Górny from the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, certainly informed their sense of self-importance and helped raise the intellectual level of the negotiations, but in view of the purely nationalist motivations of the scholars, the impact they had on security and stability in a region whose map was being drawn anew is at least debatable.

It is a similar story with 'Red Vienna', the public housing project implemented in 1918–34 and designed to foster access to education and culture while promoting gender equality – a group protagonist of the article 'New Cities in New States' by Helmut Konrad of the University of Graz. Progressive to the core, the project actually drew on the long tradition of Austrian Marxism, which combined radical rhetoric with pragmatic practice; Vienna had been a social-democratic stronghold since 1911. The collapse of the monarchy likely hastened the implementation of the project, but it seems to have bucked the Central-European trends rather than following them. What typified the inter-war Prague or Bucharest was the strict correlation between the economic and cultural contributions of the ethnic minorities in those cities (mostly Jews) and the degree of racist prejudice they faced.

In the context of the direct and indirect consequences of the birth of 'New Europe' discussed in other articles in the volume, such as the Gordian knot

---

<sup>1</sup> Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York, 2014), 84.

of dominant and oppressed ethnicities, the permanent economic crisis, or the aggressive policies of revisionist states, cultural diplomacy – which Bartosz Dziewanowski-Stefańczyk describes as a major achievement and innovation of the period – seems of purely anecdotal significance, as illustrated in the history of the tour of the Ukrainian National Choir, whose international renown continued long after the collapse of independent Ukraine.

As a historian, but also an active practitioner of the fine arts, I am loath to downplay the artistic rebirth of the newly-formed nation-states or the role the arts played in improving their international standing. What I insist on is that the right proportions are applied. Meanwhile, the article concerned with the perfecting of the cultural image of the states in question is followed by a bitter offering from Panikos Panayi of De Montfort University in Leicester, treating of the failure of the policy of defending minority rights defined at the Paris conference. In the post-war reality, the minorities faced two possibilities: ethnic cleansing by way of mass deportation or (worse) genocide, as happened between Greeks and Turks; or the unwilling and forced compromise consisting in attempts to stake out a place in the new, foreign, and often hostile political environment – and it should be said that, from the perspective of the entire half-century, the former option eventually reverted to the latter. Yet, the arrangement of the near-equally long chapters seems to suggest that this deeply tragic conclusion, which effectively discredits the entire political and ethical concept of ‘New Europe’, is balanced out by the story of the success of Central and Eastern European national pavilions at the World Fairs in Paris.

Two articles – ‘Doctors and Diplomats’ by Sara Silverstein of the University of Connecticut and the somewhat unwieldy-sounding ‘The International Committee of the Red Cross and the Reconstruction of New Europe, 1918–1923’ by Kimberly A. Love of Lesley University in Massachusetts – convincingly describe the aforementioned third watchword from the title of the volume: the jumble of chaos and modernisation, the disparity between the wide-ranging initiatives and the eventual results of their confrontation with actual realities of that period in the area in question. Both discuss attempts by the health services of the states of ‘New Europe’ and international organisations to resolve the crisis of sanitation, epidemiology, and migration. Though their goals were seemingly common, the motivations of the specific actors could differ, which affected the progress and results of their actions. The central authorities, e.g. the creators of the Polish Ministry of Health, believed that a modern state was duty-bound to ensure basic healthcare for its citizen and saw the establishment of regional structures as a state-forming activity contributing to administrative integration and political legitimacy. In contrast, the actions of foreign charitable organisations such as the Red Cross, inspired though they were by an altruistic desire to bring aid to the victims of war, revolution, and natural disaster, were largely defined by political exigencies – particularly the common belief among the Western states that the epidemics and

the social 'scourge of Bolshevism' might reach their own borders. Around 1923, both actors began to falter. Facing a massive economic crisis, and with the epidemics ending gradually following sanitary action (though mostly due to the ending of hostilities and the closing of the borders), the Polish government abandoned the futile dream of establishing a modern system of healthcare, as indicated by the liquidation of the Ministry of Health. In turn, the dissipation of revolutionary fervour led the fear of revolution to decline, and with it fell the interest, and then financial and political support from the states which enabled Eastern-European missions of organisations such as the Red Cross to operate.

International – mostly American – humanitarian aid for Eastern Europe was an unprecedented event of fundamental importance that is still often underappreciated. It allowed states in the region to avoid collapsing under the burden of hunger or epidemic and removed the threat of more radical political solutions from the left – which its organisers would likely have labelled Bolshevism. It was the only successful attempt – Allied military interventions being of dubious merit in that regard – to stabilise the new political order in a region consumed by chaos, and it would set the standards for the future (Jay Winter's mention of George C. Marshall, who served in France in 1918, is hardly coincidental). Again, though, both the two articles and knowledge gained over many years of research into the epidemiological crisis of 1918–22 lead me to reject the notion that the foreign rescue action was a token of success for the countries that were its object, serving instead to symbolise the failure of self-determination: the inability to secure the biological existence of a significant number of their citizen.

The last part of the volume is devoted to the legacies of 'New Europe' – its place in history, collective memory, and (for the most part *avant la lettre*) political history. Even though 'Wars Over Memory', written by the late Włodzimierz Borodziej and Maciej Górny, meticulously traces the development of various aspects of post-war reality over decades and across state maps, what seemed of greatest interest to me in *A New Europe, 1918–1923* was what it says between the lines of the articles comprising it – and not only those dealing with memory – about the current condition of the paradigm of the nation-state and about the traditions of its formative years. The questions formulated above will be of aid in deciphering and interpreting this message.

And so: do the conclusions presented in the texts (easy to find, since most of the chapters include a final section under that heading) justify the optimistic perspective suggested by the subtitle of the volume? In my view, they do not. The chapters in the first part share broadly the same conclusions about the rapid dissolution of the post-war security system, the erosion of the democracy that clearly did not suit the elites of 'New Europe', and the increasing spread of dictatorships and totalitarianisms. Part two is just as bleak. The title of the chapter on the post-war economic situation optimistically proclaims

a “revival” (p. 69) only to reach the conclusion that it was merely a “partial and sluggish recovery” (p. 77). The attempt to construct public health services in reaction to a structural crisis, along with the humanitarian activities, gained in significance only after the Second World War; in turn, the policy of safeguarding minority rights proved a failure. Worse than that – it laid the groundwork for the later, far more tragic developments by mid-century. Even practices of memory (as Attila Pók indicates in part three of the volume) seemed to increase, rather than mitigate, the tendency to engage in violence again.

All of this meant that at a certain point during the reading, I was beset by radical thoughts: the socio-political model of ‘New Europe’ devised after 1918 was an entirely failed civilisational project. A toxic combination of the Wilsonian impulse, imperial policies of the major powers (even those vanquished!) and internal political, economic, and ethnic strategies of the nation-states did not achieve a pacification of the world and the continent, but rather its increased destabilisation. Lower social classes were degraded; the bases for the future destruction of national minorities and elites were reinforced, not weakened. Though this is the conclusion the volume points toward, it is not formulated within it. Instead, one finds sentences insinuated into some of the texts that seem designed to weaken their polemical resonance. Rydel’s reflections on the supposed rootedness of the principle of self-determination in European political practice has already been mentioned; Jörn Leonhard of the University of Freiburg openly advances that, since the new system of states in Central and Eastern Europe had brought in “a degree of relative stability” (p. 13), it could never be deemed a failure. Citing Sara Silverstein, Jay Winter claims that public health programmes contributed to the promotion of democracy. It seems as though the authors, despite being conscious on a scientific level of the spoiled fruits of the inter-war period – populism, anti-democratism, crisis, xenophobia, and violence – occasionally contrived to give in to the power of the myth of the states of ‘New Europe’ that persists in collective memory, with all the attendant idealisation of national rebirths, struggles for independence, the establishment of public institutions and industrial projects, and the innovations in art; or, as the editors concisely put it, “daring creativity and evident hope” (p. 228).

Perhaps it is simply the natural consequence of the origin of the publication, whose co-publisher – the Office of the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity – has prepared a touring outdoor exhibition under a very similar title as a companion piece. The main task of the art of public exhibiting, aside from public education and entertainment, is politics of history, whose goals are naturally inconsistent with those of critical historiography – which might account for the occasional positivist intervention. In my view, however, the latter come from a different place entirely; it is an idea I came upon when trying to find an answer to the last of the questions that the contents of the volume suggested to me, the one concerning the connection between

Europe in 1918 and Europe in 1989. The editors answer it in a typical, but also somewhat schizophrenic way. On the one hand, they admit that excessive violence during the 1930s and 1940s severed all potential continuities of political and social traditions; on the other, they contend that most of contemporary Europe traces its origins to the Great War.

Unsatisfied with this ambiguous answer, I decided to provide one myself, using Poland as an example. The Second and Third Commonwealth are divided by everything: boundaries, political systems, class and ethnic relations, their roles in the regional system of security, and (I would venture to say) to a considerable degree even culture. Language aside, the sole common element is the idea of the nation-state. It is its durability, its deep-seated roots in the identity most of us share – both politically and ethnically – that make us believe in an indelible connection between us and the pre-war Poland and lead us to idolise it (consciously or not), much as some of the authors in the volume in question do.

I will conclude with a quote from Hayden White: “If the Comic conception of history produces the historiography of social accommodation, the Tragic conception is the basis of what might be called the historiography of social mediation”.<sup>2</sup> A few exceptions aside, *A New Europe, 1918–1923* subscribes to the tragic conception. Had the editors dared to take the risk of finally abandoning the dominant comedic view of the inter-war period, the subtitle of the volume would not have talked of Instability, Innovation, and Recovery; instead, it would have embraced the terms provided by its own concluding chapter (p. 224) – “Injustice, Violence, and Loss”.

transl. Antoni Górny

Łukasz Mieszkowski

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2478-5151>

Łukasz Bertram, *Bunt, podziemie, władza. Polscy komuniści i ich socjalizacja polityczna do roku 1956* [Mutiny, Underground, Power. Polish Communists and Their Political Socialisation until 1956], Warszawa, 2022, Wydawnictwo Scholar, Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Instytut Studiów Społecznych im. Profesora Roberta Zajonca Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 745 pp., annex, bibliography, list of tables, index of persons

Łukasz Bertram’s book is an innovative and important approach to the issues of the party-state elite [*elita partyjno-państwowa*, EPP] that ruled Poland

<sup>2</sup> Hayden White, ‘Tocqueville: Historical Realism as Tragedy’, in *id.*, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973), 223.

in the years 1948–56. The subject of the researcher's interest was the element whose ideological roots derived from the pre-war communist movement, as evidenced by their membership – be it in a party organisation or in a youth group associated with it. The starting point was therefore a group of 214 communist men and women who held important functions in the new system of power, that is exactly half of the political establishment of the time.

The essence of the monograph under review – despite the adoption of the positional method – is not, however, the mechanisms related to processes of promotion, including selection, which was so important to them. Therefore, we will not find out directly why these people, and no other, gained particular political influence and functions. The author's goal is to capture and analyse the individual experiences of people who held particular positions at a certain time, before they were appointed to them. In other words, to what extent was the way in which they exercised power determined by personal experiences in their adolescence and during their activity in the illegal, pre-war communist movement? To what extent is it possible to find 'personal' communisms among a community that would seem so homogeneous in terms of worldview?

In looking for answers to these and many other questions, the author conducted an extensive query, the dimensions of which are impressive. Its value is not so much the number of archives explored and the collections within them, but the careful reading of the analysed materials. The main focus is ego-documents, so personal materials of various origins – from questionnaires collected by the party, autobiographies written for its use, profiles and opinions, through numerous memoirs left by and involving the main actors. And last but not least, that is correspondence and accounts. They were made by family members and relatives of the analysed community and in my deep conviction they should be considered unique testimonies. Apart from the informational layer, they capture the fleeting atmosphere and moods felt by the protagonists of the book at certain moments in their lives. They present their views expressed in trust, not to say secretly, outside the political scene but tied to it. Thanks to these 'scraps of memory', the author guides the reader through a no longer existing world of youthful fascinations, books read and dilemmas experienced, through emerging ideas, entry onto the path of rebellion and forging ideological dogmas. In this way, Bertram searches for and creates the habitus of Polish communist men and women – based on the concept of Pierre Bourdieu, he also goes beyond the framework of 'class', because – as he notes – "the intensity and density of socialisation processes in the communist movement led to numerous transformations of habituses" (p. 43).

A strong suit of the publication is its methodological layer. It is dealt with in extensive introductory deliberations, in which the author presents the definitions used and the source base, outlines research perspectives and the methods adopted with exceptional competence. Demonstrating proficiency in recognising sociological concepts and historical approaches,



he does not shy away from giving them his own interpretations and authorial yet thoughtful commentary. The core is an innovative concept that constitutes the narrative axis of the book, that is, the classification of six types of communist biographies. Embedding particular people in a given group depends on the “form and depth of involvement in the activity of the movement in the interwar period”, focusing on highlighting the diversity of experiences and the variability of “being a communist” (p. 47).

The model is as follows: the most numerous category, numbering 72 people, were functionaries [*funkcjonariusze*], referred to as ‘funks’ or ‘professional revolutionaries’. They formed the organisational core of the party and were its leadership cadre for which they were paid. The ‘bottoms’ [*dołowi*] (58 people) were at the lower levels of the organisation and constituted the fundamental membership base. The next ones are ‘lifers’ [*życiowcy*] – members of the Socialist Youth Organization ‘Life’ [Organizacja Młodzieży Socjalistycznej ‘Życie’] (26 people); then ‘legals’ [*legalni*], combining participation in the party with functioning in legal professional life (24 people), and ‘loose’ [*luźni*], whose activity was informal and sporadic (25 people). The last category, and the least numerous, are ‘cominterners’ [*kominternowcy*] (9 people), operating mainly in the Soviet Union, which allows them to be distinguished from functionaries.

The book is divided into four parts, the first three of which present the road towards reaching the fundamental point, that is placement into the party-state elite – to which the fourth part is devoted. In chronological sequence, we get the description of ‘Mutiny’ [*Bunt*], that is, the socialisation into the movement; the ‘Underground’ [*Podziemie*], that is, the socialisation within the movement and ‘Power’ [*Władza*], the socialisation to power. Each part (except the last one) has been divided into three subchapters: the first presents the contextual framework and the *Zeitgeist*, the second, against such a background, presents an analysis of the experiences of the particular biographical types. In the third subchapter, Bertram presents a synthetic summary in which he gathers the collected information. In this way, the reader receives a substantial dose of knowledge about environmental conditions, modernisation processes, as well as social and political tensions. The meticulously collected data on the place of origin, age, sex, nationality, religion, family and material status as well as the level of education, have been thoroughly analysed by the author. Thanks to numerous tables (their list is included on pages 719–22), they become transparent. Bertram is also interested in reactions to historical processes and events (Poland’s regaining of independence, the Russian revolution, the Polish-Bolshevik war,<sup>1</sup> the Great Depression) and the accompanying and

---

<sup>1</sup> For more see Andrzej Friszke, *Państwo czy rewolucja. Polsky komuniści a odbudowanie państwa polskiego 1892–1920* (Warszawa, 2020).

growing sense of discrimination or injustice. Although the pool of issues under consideration is repetitive, the personal experiences of future EPP members entering the path of revolt constitute a multi-coloured array of impulses and reflections. The leading Marxist of the post-war period, Adam Schaff (a 'lifer'), saw the source of the evolution of his worldview in his early childhood, when he discovered pictures of murdered Jews in his father's desk: "the first impulses for the development of my character are rooted in the 1918 pogrom in Lemberg" (p. 146). In turn, for Ignacy Loga-Sowiński (a 'bottom') born in 1914, the experience of "entering adulthood during the most acute crisis" was crucial (p. 132). On the other hand, the then 15-year-old Leon Kasman (a 'funk') was most affected by the workers' demonstrations sweeping through rebellious, working-class Łódź at the turn of 1918–19 (p. 112).

Due to the durability of the 'Judeo-Communism' [*żydokomuna*] myth, the conclusions regarding the number and position of people of Jewish origin in the communist movement are important. Bertram tends to consider them 'communist Jews' instead of 'Jewish communists'. He also emphasises their "far-reaching acculturation, gradual secularisation and Polonisation" (p. 188). He captures the absence of references to Jewish identity in their testimonies as well, which was influenced by personal motives and "the pattern of the party's politics of memory, in which the display of Jewishness was definitely not welcome" (p. 189).

The internalisation of views and party patterns, transmitted mainly by 'significant others' [*znaczący inni*], was also important, and these – with the passage of time – required violent jolts, the elimination of self-steering and also the frequent renouncing of erstwhile heroes. Acquiring the skill of 'speaking Bolshevik' [*mówienie po bolszewicku*] was a difficult art and challenging to present objectively – we will never be sure to what extent this art was dictated by the belief that "it should and must be so", and to what extent it resulted from the dogmatic belief in the communist absolute. Were Polish communists able to fulfil the declaration made by the Bolshevik Georgy Pyatakov: "if it is necessary and important for the party, we can, by an act of will, within twenty-four hours remove from our minds the views we professed for years"?

Bertram pays due attention to the process of Bolshevisation and Stalinisation – he extracts individual examples, presenting similarities and differences. These are nuances, hesitations and small differences, so often overlooked or simply ignored in drawing panoramic collective portraits. They are tied to the sphere of emotions that the author skilfully captures. The "damned year 1937"<sup>2</sup> was experienced differently by the professional

---

<sup>2</sup> Karl Schlögel, *Terror und Traum: Moskau 1937* (München, 2008); Polish edition: *Terror i marzenie: Moskwa 1937*, transl. Izabela Drozdowska-Broering (Poznań, 2012).

'funks' or 'cominterners' than the 'loose' and 'legals'. Their position occupied at the time was important, both within the structure of the Communist Party of Poland [KPP], branded as anathema by Stalin and the Comintern, and the physical place. The higher up they were and the closer to the Moscow headquarters – the worse. For many of those at risk of death, the sentences served in Polish prisons and in the isolation camp in Bereza Kartuska turned out to be a salvation.

A noticeable gap in the sources on the people Bertram is interested in who were imprisoned there are their personal files. This prison documentation is either in the State Archives of Brest Oblast [*Gosudarstviennyi Arkhiv Brestskoi Oblasti*], or – as was the case with Roman Zambrowski, for example – in the Russian State Archives of Social and Political History [*Rossiyskiy Gosudarstviennyi Arkhiv Sotsialno-Politicheskoi Istorii*, RGASPI], where the former archive of the Communist International (Comintern) is stored. The materials kept there may be of key importance for the reconstruction of the process of the investigation of communists by the state police (surveillance, informants, arrests and prisons). They also constitute a valuable database of personal data, opinions and written profiles, among others for the Personnel Department of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. What is also missing from the research perspective is social alienation – while in each biographical type Bertram took into account 'prison socialisation' and the associated 'scale and forms of state repression', we learn little about the stigmatisation and exclusion accompanying the participants of the movement. The 'besieged fortress' syndrome did not only come from police repression – expulsion from schools and universities, difficulties with employment, the stigma of being a 'subversive' and 'anti-statist' broadcast in numerous press articles, pushed and cast them out of society. An open question remains the particular non-alternative nature of the chosen path and the actual participation of the Polish state (through the use of such mechanisms) in the creation of subsequent revolutionaries, somehow 'condemned' to the choice made in their youth. Of course, traces of such attitudes cannot be found in official biographies subject to deep self-censorship, as they would expose their authors to the aforementioned repressions. Avoiding topics difficult for the party is also noticeable in relation to such important (and traumatic!) events such as the liquidation of the KPP and the murder of its leaders, and also friends and family members, or the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact and the Red Army's attack on Poland in 1939.

It should be emphasised that Bertram is aware of this and despite the scarcity of materials, he finds 'scraps of memory', recalling, among others, the memoirs of Celina Budzyńska (published in 1997) referring to her reaction to the Soviet Union's defeats at the front in 1941 caused by the attack of the Third Reich:

somewhere deep down the thoughts were knocking around that the disgraceful catastrophe of the policies of the 'infallible father of the nation' was some kind of revenge for the fourth partition of Poland, for the tragedy of my Homeland. But I stifled these thoughts within myself and I was even ashamed of them (p. 412).

In the part devoted to the fate of communists during the Second World War, the detailed mapping of their whereabouts is of great significance, breaking the dichotomous division into 'natives' [*krajowcy*] (those who spent the years 1939–45 in occupied Poland) and 'muscovites' [*moskale*] (those who stayed in the USSR). Undoubtedly, the proportions are so distorted that it is worth departing from this simplified scheme and replacing it with a more fluid division into more 'ours' [*nasi*], that is Polish, and more 'theirs' [*ich*], that is Soviet (p. 457). The wartime experiences of the future elite are also important, such as stays in German concentration camps, Soviet labour camps or participation in the Warsaw Uprising. Bertram's statement is correct that "the time of war also brought a change in hierarchy. New leaders grew up to replace Communist Party of Poland's leaders. This time, their position was not limited to a small party that was not popular in society" (p. 427).

The question, then, is how did the erstwhile 'destroyers' become 'creators'? How did they deal with the power they had seized and what were their tactics? What stance did they take towards the USSR and how did they react to the Stalinist terror carried out on its behalf and by their hands? How did they finally position themselves in the face of the great upheaval of 1956? Considerations on these topics are found in the third and fourth parts of the book. Bertram remains true to his assumptions – while analysing a very specific and tangible community, he is still looking for differences. He realises, however, that "the currents of the six variants of socialization drew closer to each other starting in 1944... the unification, however, was never complete" (p. 529). The typology used is reflected in the positions and career paths of the communists. It was a natural course of events for 'funks' to take a position in the party's full-time apparatus (54 per cent) and to combine activity in the party field with important state functions (19 per cent). Members of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party are simultaneously: the president (Bolesław Bierut), the deputy prime minister and minister (Władysław Gomułka), the minister of public security (Stanisław Radkiewicz), the deputy speaker of the Sejm and the head (Roman Zambrowski) of the Special Commission for Combating Fraud and Economic Sabotage [*Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym*]. The 'bottom' on the other hand, "worked mainly in the party apparatus, but their position was much weaker" (p. 480). They could mainly be found among the first secretaries of the Provincial Committees of the Polish Workers' Party [*Komitety Wojewódzkie PPR*], (10 per cent), or as deputy members

of the PPR Central Committee (9 per cent). Well-educated 'lifers' used their capital to manage specialised departments of the Central Committee (including industrial, communication, and economic). They could also be found in universities or in industry. A significant percentage of the 'legals' (25 per cent) ended up in the state political apparatus, and three of them – as a result of the great advancement in the movement they experienced during the war – reached the top (Jakub Berman, Hilary Minc and Marian Spychalski). The 'loose' also held mostly state positions (32 per cent). Naturally, few 'cominterners' joined the party apparatus. It was similar in 1948–56, that is in the initial period for the analysed biographies. The 'funks', 'bottoms' and 'cominterners' were tightly and closely linked to the party apparatus, whereas the 'lifers', 'legals' and 'loose' that operated on the orbit of the organisational nucleus would usually occupy administrative positions.

Did it transfer into their attitudes towards the phenomena mentioned above? Were those who were more radical in introducing the new order and obedient to Moscow the first ones and did they distinguish themselves from the latter in their reactions to Stalinisation and then the de-Stalinisation of Poland? As Bertram indicates, "the constant experience of the highest-placed people in the party and the state was uncertainty. Stalinist socialisation taught that there is no position or such a degree of commitment and loyalty that would protect against a downfall" (p. 582). And here, however, he finds differences – he points to attempts to defend Polish economic interests undertaken, among others, by Jakub Berman and acts of informing carried out, for example, by Władysław Wolski (aka Aleksander Piwowarczyk, who had connections with Soviet intelligence). Submission and obedience to the USSR were revised after Stalin's death, which does not mean that everyone revised their views. Among the strategies for the crisis, which manifested itself in full force in the years 1954–6, the author indicates resistance to changes and maintaining the status quo; striving to change the current order and meandering "between one's own intuitions and unclear expectations" (p. 612). These divisions are clearly represented in a very skilful analysis of the factional conflicts in the Polish United Workers' Party, which – to put it very simply – can be reduced to the separation of 'natolins' [*natolińczycy*] (dogmatic trend) and 'pulavians' [*pulawianie*] (reformist trend) groups. Among the former, we find mainly the 'bottom' – people with lower education, non-Jewish origin and supporters of strong rule. The second formation, although it would be more correct to describe them as a milieu, was more diverse, with a noticeable representation of 'funks' of Jewish origin. They were better educated, pragmatic and often associated with ideological activity. In this dichotomous arrangement, however, most of the EPP is missing. As Bertram points out, "centrists, the ambiguous and inscrutable" totalled 75 per cent!

As Jaff Schatz pointed out, "in order to paint a panorama of a collective, the individual typification, through which an analysis of collective change

along a time dimension is made possible".<sup>3</sup> Łukasz Bertram managed to wisely and convincingly combine what is individual with what is collective. By presenting the fate of Polish communists, he empowered them and made them actors of social and political life in a universal dimension. As Padraic Kenney rightly pointed out, the model he used can be successfully applied to the analysis of other communist parties under Moscow's domination. Bertram's original contribution is also a look at participation in the communist movement in the context of social advancement, determined not so much by final participation in power, but by the pre-war period. The study also brings an important reflection on political radicalism – from youthful, practically romantic visions of building a 'new, better world', to creating its totalitarian and criminal counterpart.

Finally, I would like to emphasise that Łukasz Bertram's book is very carefully edited and, above all, well written. The reader receives a flowing narrative, colourful and vivid descriptions that allow you to follow the stories presented with interest. The argument is clear and consistent, and the author does not (fortunately!) avoid sharing his doubts and does not try to force answers to all questions. *Mutiny, Underground, and Power* opens up new fields of research, providing them with a valuable – and for me an obvious – background.

Katarzyna Rembacka

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4009-3390>

---

<sup>3</sup> Jaff Schatz, *The Generation. The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Communists of Poland* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-Oxford, 1991), 16.