

**POLISH CULTURE AS THE NATION'S OWN CULTURE
AND AS A FOREIGN CULTURE**

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"...the longer I study the history of Poland, the longer I live among...Poles, the more difficult it is to me to answer a simple and common question: what is Polishness?"

Lepkowski (1989:21)

INTRODUCTION

This article presents conclusions of a research project, financed by the (Polish) State Committee on Scientific Research, on "Polish Culture as a Foreign Culture. Polish Culture in the Eyes of Cultural Minorities." In the project, cultural minorities were opposed to a dominant group (see Mucha 1999a). A broad concept of cultural minority status was accepted. We studied the Polish national culture as viewed from the perspectives of three ethnic minorities: Silesians (Opole Silesians and Upper Silesians from Katowice, both of the so-called German national option), Polish Ukrainians, Polish Belorussians, a subculture of Polish teenagers, an ethnic Polish "alternative culture" community and a Polish community characterized by a "culture of poverty"¹ In each case, we conducted in-depth interviews with 20-25 informants. The findings will be published shortly in Poland in Polish (see Mucha 1999b).

In this text, of necessity briefly and without ambition to cover the whole area, I will discuss only some issues. I will begin with the background, against which it is worth analyzing the conclusions of our research findings. We will first look at the Polish culture as the culture of the Polish nation in the process of its historical transformations. In order to carry out this task, I would like: (a) to present what are, in the opinion of some recognized Polish historians, Polish theoreticians of culture and sociologists, the particular features of dynamic Polish national culture (or, a particular synthesis of these features);

and (b) to show the opinions which, according to the surveys of various periods, Polish society has of itself and its own culture. Secondly, I would like to present conceptualizations of Polish culture as a foreign culture. Therefore, I will discuss, based on the literature of the subject, foreign stereotypes of Poland and Poles. Against this background, I would like to summarize the conclusions of our own research project. In particular, I intend to present: (1) categories in which our interviewees conceptualized Polish national culture; (2) categories, in which they conceptualized cultural domination; and (3) categories in which the reactions toward this domination have been conceptualized.

When relying on other findings, I will try to show, to the extent it is possible, the empirical background of generalizations and their methodology. Synthesis of Polish national culture (as of any dynamic national culture) is very difficult. There are various reasons and manifestations of this difficulty. Dramatic in their form and content, declarations of Tadeusz Lepkowski, Polish historian, like the one quoted in the motto to this article or others, to be found in his writings (see, e.g., 1990: 99) are one of the manifestations. Another manifestation of the difficulty is, in my opinion, the fact that in many books and articles published in Poland and devoted exactly to the issue of the meaning of the Polish culture, we find only interesting details and not significant generalizations (see, e.g., "Kultura polska a kultura europejska" 1987; "Kultura polska. Wspolczesnosc wobec tradycji" 1992; Bartnik 1996).

Problems with the synthetic presentation of any national culture are not very difficult to understand, but are intriguing to the student of a nation convinced of its own uniqueness, of the universal values of its own ethos (see, e.g., Skolimowski 1990), and of its greatness (see, e.g., Bystron 1935). Polish historical and sociological thought has devoted much attention to the concepts of the nation and of national culture.

About half a century ago, Florian Znaniecki presented some explanations of the difficulties scholars have when describing and analyzing national cultures. One explanation refers to their evolution, or constant transformation. Another refers to the fact that national cultures, unlike world religions, have no stable, authoritative foundations of the kind of the sacred books. Therefore, says Znaniecki, we have to trust historians. But, "historians have sometimes various

opinions concerning which cultural products and patterns of actions are the elements of a given culture" (1990: 31).

Antonina Kloskowska considers national culture as a broad and complex arrangement of "ways of action, norms, values and symbols, beliefs, kinds of knowledge and symbolic products, arrangement which is treated by a social collectivity as its own, as something to which it is particularly entitled, something emerging from its tradition and its historic experiences and binding within its boundaries" (1991: 51). According to this author, fully uniform and harmonious national cultures have in fact never existed, and for sure do not exist now. Kloskowska presents a slightly different from Znaniecki opinion on the "authoritative foundations" of national cultures. She speaks for the idea of the "canon character" of these cultures, even if this character must be limited. Like Znaniecki, Kloskowska stresses the dynamics of national cultures. Therefore, the canon must be dynamic as well. Moreover, she observes that the postulate of the canon character of national cultures was already questioned at the beginning of the 20th century, and that the next turn of centuries strengthened the criticism of the views that cultures are homogeneous. Kloskowska pays attention to another factor as well: some groups are socioeconomically and culturally underprivileged which may cause their unacquaintance with the cultural canon or its parts. In another place she notices that "the canon matters are not the everyday mental food" (1990: 10). Finally, the present cultural diffusion and mass culture can jeopardize the continuation of the separateness of many national cultures (see 1991: 53-55).

POLISH CULTURE AS THE NATION'S OWN CULTURE. AUTOSTEREOTYPES OF POLES

Opinions of several recognized Polish historians and theorists of culture, to be presented in the next few paragraphs, have been published in their own authored books, or in chapters in collections which came out during the last 30 years (most—during the last ten years). Works to be referred to are essays synthesizing the former literature as well as the authors' own research findings, presenting their own, very competent views. I will attempt to draw from them the basic tendencies in the dynamic Polish national cultures and the values making up

this culture. The culture is sometimes conceptualized in categories of legends and myths, of stereotypes of the Pole, of Polish national character, or finally, of the dominant in Polish society attitudes or dispositions to action. This variety of conceptualizations is not very troublesome here, since national cultures are often conceptualized in terms of embedded in them personality types and characteristic of it basic patterns of action and attitudes. In this section I will also pay attention to the relations of the Polish culture with the European culture.

It is well known that what we consider the national Polish culture between the Middle Ages and the second half of the 18th century, is the nobility culture. This turned out to be very vivid and continued to play a dominant role at least until the end of the 1940s (see, e.g., Lepkowski 1989: 13, 15-16). If we observe more accurately the dynamics of the nobility culture, we can see that only since the 17th century we have to do with its full Polonization in the sense of language spoken, observation of what is today considered the Polish folkways and mores, and in the sense of belonging to the Roman Catholic Church (see Tazbir 1973: 83). In addition to the above mentioned features and values, other declared significant values constituting the national culture, were the Polish state (serving the interests of the "nobility nation") and its territory (Lepkowski 1989: 15).

The times discussed in the above paragraph were important for the formation of everything we considered typically Polish, even today, but were also times in which Poland was "actually an absent partner in the development of the European culture.... The closed attitude was accompanied by the glorification of the actual state of affairs, the apology of the 'golden liberty', of the Sarmatian customs..." (Klimowicz 1973: 169). Soon after (at the beginning of the 19th century or at the dawn of the times of her partitions between Russia, Germany and Austria), "myths of the priority" of Poland in Europe emerged. When, in this mythology, the "civilization superiority" of Poland was located in the prehistoric times, in referring to the historic period the outgoing of Europe was accentuated in the area of the love for freedom and in the fight for freedom (see, e.g., Jedlicki 1990: 23). Freedom, as one of the supreme declared values of the Polish national culture is stressed by very many historians. However, they show at the same time how easy it came to the majority of Polish

nobility to give up its personal freedom and the freedom of its own state (see, e.g., Kieniewicz 1990: 100-114; Maczak 1994: 112-160, 249-297).

The gentry period introduced to Polish culture, as its supreme values, liberty, the Roman Catholic religion (Tadeusz Lepkowski writes even of the "symbiosis" of Polish culture and Catholicism at the end of this period), language and literature written in it (later, during the partition times, particularly the romantic literature), the history of the nation and of its state and the heroes of this history. Henryk Samsonowicz writes about "positive myths" like the myth of forefather Lech, the myth of the adherence to the "true faith" and of Poland as the bulwark of Christianity, the myth of tolerance and of the chivalry of Poles. The scholar turns our attention to the "negative myths" as well: anarchy and short-lived enthusiasm (1990: 154-158). Other features belonging to the self-image of Poles of the pre-partition and partition period are emotionality, love for rural life, lordly manners, respect for honor, concern for the great matters (see Walicki 1990: 44; Morawska 1990: 72; Skolimowski 1990: 138-148).

Historians accentuate the role of the territory of the Polish state as an important value belonging to the system of the Polish national culture. Mieczyslaw Porebski, philosopher of art, raises in this context the issue of some particular places which became symbols of Polishness and the representation of these places in paintings created by Polish artists (but also by Canaletto), of some concrete paintings presenting important episodes of the Polish history, and finally of the "Polish colors" (red and white) (see 1990: 135).

Other issues are the folkways and mores, the "typical Polish" ways of behavior, and of observing holidays (particularly important Church holidays). These were described by historians and ethnographers of Poland many times. Tadeusz Lepkowski thinks these mores, folkways, and typical ways of behavior, are together a common characteristic of contemporary Poles, even if they have a long tradition, and are the first of all of the 20th century's nature. He sums them up very bitterly: "...to eat in the Polish way and the Polish food, to get drunk in the Polish way, to fight in the Polish way, to brawl "fair" in the Polish way, not too much, meaning—in the Polish way—to work, to bungle and get dirty in the Polish way, to be moved for the fatherland but to emigrate easily, to be untrustworthy the neighbors, to go

often to church but not to believe much" (1990: 99, also, e.g., 1989: 21). A penetrating analysis of the fiction, memoirs and the historical literature leads Edmund Lewandowski, a sociologist, to point out nearly identical values characteristic of Polish culture and nearly identical features of Polish "national character" (1995) as those presented by Lepkowski.

Adam Podgorecki, another sociologist, in his "comprehensive theory of the Polish society" observes the same problem from another point of view. He searches for "particular features" of this society. In order to find them, he takes advantage of some historical literature, but first of all of findings of the post World War II sociological surveys dealing with the basic attitudes and patterns of behavior of the Polish intelligentsia. Some of these surveys were broader in scope: they used the representative all-national samples and were, from 1962 to 1975, systematically repeated (1994: 44-48). Let me present the results of that analysis (in my interpretation of Podgorecki's text).

The most important Polish attitudes and patterns of everyday life strengthened, in the opinion of that author, only under socialism (since 1944), but had their source in the more fundamental, particular features of Polish society. Podgorecki ranks among these basic features "the basing of the social life on legends" and myths; the founding of social life on the "authotelic reference groups" which treat themselves as independent values and do not take the "outside world" into account; and finally the "facade-self" which is a result of the mythologization of someone's life. This kind of self embraces a tendency to present to the social milieu someone's false image and later to treat this image (even for someone's sake) as something real (1994: 63-73). A specific kind of constraint imposed on Poles by the partitioning powers (1792-1918) and later the socialist system resulted, according to Podgorecki, in certain consequences. Attitudes of citizens toward the official law became negative; the so-called "intuitive law" gained social support. Self-help activities developed, some of a positive, and some of a negative character, but always omitting the formal state structures. Some informal circles became very respectful, and aspired to be the "governors of souls" of Poles. A "gesture culture" developed and continued to remind Poles that the lasting constraint of the nation prevented it from making something

stable and real. Youth were taught to place the interest of the nation above its own particular interest (1994: 77-79).

Podgorecki introduces a concept of "meta-attitude," understood as a latent and petrified general attitude, a disposition to react in a stable way, a disposition which is not visible at the superficial observation of human behavior but which structures "from inside" the human motivation system. The author thinks that the meta-attitudes condense the fundamental features of societies (1994: 48, 153-154). For this article, I understand the meta-attitudes as patterns of culture which are hidden from the perception of social actors but which social scientists can reveal; I understand the "combination of meta-attitudes" as a configuration of such patterns.

The findings of the surveys of the socialist period, as analyzed by Podgorecki, reveal some meta-attitudes which are sometimes contradictory, if taken as characteristics of the whole society. The author is, however, cautious and attributes various dispositions to separate social strata.

The most significant is the "fiddling of survival," enabling people to preserve flexibility in their reactions to difficulties. This attitude leads to strong ties with the close family and friends, but also to the emergence of the "dirty togetherness" of communities which use illegal methods of action and pursue of illegal aims. The second meta-attitude is called the "spectacular principledness." It celebrates values and norms because of their "sacred" character and symbolic meaning. According to Podgorecki, Poles respect first of all what is related to the fatherland, to its independence and martyrology, and are skeptical toward the everyday, systematic work. Symbolic values dominate the realistic values, and legends and myths become factors of the strategic significance. The third meta-attitude is called "instrumentality." Unlike the first two, it depends on calculation. The fourth is the "ubiquitous insecurity," and the fifth one is the "all thumbs attitude," depending on the learned inability to perceive an adequate means of achieving desired goals (1994: 46-62).

As we can see, the sociological interpretation of empirical findings of the socialist period, collected by the Podgorecki's team, support conclusions drawn by historians who studied much earlier periods of Polish history.

The Center for the Public Opinion Research (OBOP) at the Radio and TV Committee in Poland conducted in 1966 a survey on the 1907 people large all-national sample of the urban population above 15 years of age (Szacki 1969: 5). Not everything in this survey dealt exactly with problems of interest in this article. However, two issues can be analyzed here. The first has to do with the canon of the national Polish culture during the period when this canon was far from its present disintegration. Informants were asked whose behavior was, for them, an example of patriotism. Tadeusz Kosciuszko won nearly 31% of votes, Adam Mickiewicz (and characters of his poems)—nearly 18%, heroes of Polish national uprisings—more than 15%, Nobel Prize winner Henryk Sienkiewicz (and characters of his novels)—nearly 10% (Szacki 1969: 17). These findings support the thesis that Poles value very highly the heroism, fights for independence, national literature and national myths.

In the OBOP survey, the autostereotypes of Poles were also researched. According to the findings, "Poles are particularly often characterized by the positive features (in the sequence of frequency): 1. bravery, 2. greed for knowledge, 3. laboriousness, 4. altruism. The negative features were: 1. lack of self-discipline, 2. extravagance, 3. lack of endurance and short-lived enthusiasm, 4. boastfulness, 5. dishonesty, 6. deceitfulness" (Szacki 1969:47). As we can see, the features underlined by the 1966 sample present the durability of the core of autostereotype and stability of the image of the Poles' own culture.

Twenty years later (in 1988), Ewa Nowicka's team conducted a survey (a 1000 person random representative, national sample) on the sense of "strangeness" and "closeness" in Poland. During this research, the problem of the "national self-definition of Poles" emerged. According to findings, cultural criteria of Polishness turned out to be of a minor importance. Command of the Polish language was second place as a criterion of the Polishness (after the criterion of having of a general sense that someone is a Pole) but the knowledge of the Polish culture and history was fifth, observation of the Polish customs—seventh place, Roman Catholic faith—tenth place (Nowicka 1990: 64).

Let us look at a similar survey, conducted by the Center for the Study of Public Opinion (CBOS) in 1994. Among the criteria of Polishness, the command of the Polish language was in first place,

belonging to the Roman Catholic Church—in seventh (“Czy jesteśmy dumni...,” 1994). CBOS’ survey of the next year revealed what conditions must have been met if a foreigner was to be recognized as a Pole. Cultural criteria were not on the top of the list. Command of the Polish language was in fourth place, the knowledge of the Polish culture and history—in fifth place, the observation of the Polish customs—in sixth place, the acceptance of the Roman Catholic faith—in tenth place (“Czy cudzoziemiec...,” 1995; see also Kurczewska 1997a).

I would like to stress the fact that for the Polish people studied by Nowicka and (after a few years) by the CBOS, the Roman Catholic faith was not very important to recognize oneself as a Pole nor to accept a foreigner as a Pole. This conclusion is in my opinion very important. Institutionalized public opinion presents different views. Other views are represented by the institutions which consider themselves (and are considered by majority of the population) as the “embodiment of the Polishness.” It is interesting that the members of the non-Catholic minorities in Poland have also a different view on this issue.

POLISH CULTURE AS A FOREIGN CULTURE.

THE OUTSIDE VIEW

Our next issue is the image of Polish culture as foreign culture and the stereotype of Poles in the consciousness of foreigners. Tadeusz Lepkowski writes that strangers have for a long time described the Poles as a nation brave to excess. They have also attributed to the Poles features like inconsistency, the lack of systematic approach to life and unreliability (1989: 37-38). Much more data on today’s opinions on the Poles and on the Polish culture can be found in the proceedings of a conference on nations and stereotypes which took place in 1993 (see “Narody i stereotypy” 1995). This collection presents stereotypes of various nations but I will discuss here only the images of the Pole in the consciousness of the Poland’s neighbors (in the next few paragraphs I will draw upon my short article—Mucha 1996).

The chapters of the above mentioned collection are various in their character. Some of them are based on personal observations of

competent authors, some are the analyzes of proverbs, novels, short stories, poems and documents—both very old and recent. This variety of sources make it difficult to answer the question if there exists at all a “generalized stereotype” of Poles in the eyes of the strangers. Bearing in mind the fact that it is not obvious if we are entitled to “translate” national stereotypes into national cultures, I will ask some questions the book and its contributors did not ask themselves: how is the Polish culture presented in national stereotypes constructed by European nations close territorially and culturally to Poland? From the point of view of my own research project and the next sections of this article, it is particularly interesting to compare what Belorussians, Ukrainians and Germans think, with the perception of Polish culture by representatives of the respective minorities who live in Poland.

Among Russians, according to Konstantin Duszenko, the image of the Pole has been ambivalent. In the 19th century it was possible, in his opinion, to observe three cognitive perspectives. The first was the perspective of the revolutionaries. Whilst they were sympathetic to the Poles, this was not due to respect of Polish culture, but because of respect to anti-tzarist attitudes. The second was the perspective of “simple people.” Poland was not interesting for them. The third was the perspective of “learned strata.” They were interested in Poland but emotionally their attitude was not univocal. Polish literature was known (particularly Adam Mickiewicz) and translated into Russian but in Russian literature Poland was rather absent. Since the Second World War, says Duszenko, not much has changed regarding Poland in “high” Russian culture. In everyday contacts, however, the Pole was first of all a petty trader and a drunkard (the latter being positively valued). Henryk Sienkiewicz’s novels were read by educated Russians. For Russian intellectuals, Poland was a positive example of the “socialism with a human face,” and Polish culture was a “gate to the West.” Therefore, Polish culture was known in Russia and Polish books and periodicals were quite often read in the original language.

History of mutual relations seems to influence much more dramatically the Polish stereotype in the eyes of Lithuanians. According to Greta Lamanaitė, until the Second World War, the Pole was for the Lithuanian first of all the occupant who, with the help of the Roman Catholic Church, attempted to Polonize his/her country. Poles were, in addition, thieves, swindlers, liars and various kinds of

criminals. After the war, the Pole was primarily a speculator and petty trader, still valued negatively. The situation became more complicated after the independence of Lithuania at the end of the 1980s. Now, the image of the Pole is split: the "Vilnius (Lithuanian) Poles" were perceived as pro-Soviet and anti-Lithuanian, as liars, swindlers and idlers. Poles from Poland became cultural, educated people, intelligent and religious. Their negative features were no longer exposed by the Lithuanians.

Oleg A. Lojka studied Belorussian documents and poems from the 16th century on. He also analyzed the novels of the interwar period. In the early texts, Poles are described as "Lachs" (a term without negative connotations)—nice, elegant people who can and like to dance. In the 18th century, the Pole is for Belorussians an enthusiast of political liberties and of freedom of speech, he is a great trooper, a brave, hospitable, open-minded person. However, he is a "big-mouth" rather than a "doer." He has no enthusiasm to endeavor, he is a patriot abroad rather than at home. During the interwar period, Poles were characterized as negatively valued big landowners and settlers, as peevish teachers who tried to Polonize Belorussians.

The stereotype of the Pole in the eyes of Ukrainians is of a negative character. In Marja Zubrycka's opinion, in Ukrainian literature between the 16th and the 18th century, he was presented as a boastful, mean, arrogant person. The term "Lach" was also in use in the Ukraine, but (unlike in Belorussia) had a negative meaning. Lach was a lord (as opposed to the Ukrainian peasant) who wanted to annex the Ukraine, who was irritable, full of hatred, and deceitful. Later, the Pole was still a nobleman, Roman Catholic meaning a member of the dominant religion (the Ukrainians were Greek Catholics), and having a "Jesuit mentality." Bohdan Struminski studied Ukrainian proverbs from the collections published in 1864 and 1908. Their "Polish content" does not differ much from the above. The proverbs criticize the Poles. They are "damned," diabolic, stupid, deceitful, villainous. They oppressed the Ukrainian nation. Their religion is disgusting. They are not able to work as farmers nor to be servants. There was chaos in Poland. Roads and bridges were in a bad shape. Some "neutral" proverbs stress the good appetite of the Poles, their courtesy (but to excess), their capriciousness, but also their rebellious character. Very few positive proverbs expose the fact that the Poles like to

have a good time, are cautious when looking for a spouse and like a good beer.

The collection "Nations and Stereotypes" does not inform us about the stereotypes of Poles in the eyes of the Slovaks (who are also their neighbors) but we can learn what the Czechs think about the Poles. Jasna Hlouskova believes that we observe two Czech images of the Pole. According to the first one, he is a romantic, grappling lonely with the world, a knight who fights in the name of God and honor, a daredevil hurrying on his horse with a bare sword in his hand. In the 1980s, he was an inviolable dissident and activist of Solidarity, fighting with communist totalitarianism. This Pole-romantic is not a perfect figure, though. He is also a boastful nationalist. His infatuation is stronger than his common sense. According to the second image, the Pole is a speculator and thief. This negative image is strengthened by the Czech media, even at the beginning of the 1990s. The media, writing about the great Poles, expose their individual merits, and writing about the negative cases stress the Polish nationality and the "typical character" of behavior.

Alfred Lempp thinks that there is no (particularly in the western part of the country) German image of the Pole. If a German thinks of a Pole at all, he has in mind an illegal car dealer and a petty trader of cheap and low quality merchandise.

It is time to conclude this section of the article. I will begin with stereotypes. It seems to me that according to the authors of the discussed above collection, these stereotypes are unusual in the sense that they are quite dynamic. The elements of which these stereotypes are built, change as well as their evaluation. These stereotypes are social constructs influenced by the changing reality like the political situation of the economic transformations. They can be manipulated, for instance by the state controlled media.

Now, I would like to turn our attention to a total image of the national Polish culture and the dominant personality type that can be drawn from the collection discussed above. The image of the "culture-personality" syndrome will not be rich but it still is interesting.

Polish national culture is based on supreme values such as freedom, religiosity, patriotism. These values make up the background of everyday behavior of Poles and also of their art. Polish art is well known only to the educated Russians, though. Other foreigners can

imply values solely from the everyday behavior of ordinary people. Freedom is important for Poles only if they apply it to themselves. Their patriotism (nationalism) has a strong ethnocentric flavor. Consequently, Poles attempt to dominate other peoples. Their tendency to dominate is embedded in the personality type of men. The Pole feels always comfortable, he is good-natured, he is brave and even impudent, impertinent, rebellious, peevish, intolerant for anything strange, he does not like to work in a regular way but prefers petty trading, stealing, deceiving.

Let us move to another but similar issue. Some foreigners know Poland because they live there for a short or long period. Until 1989, the largest part of this collectivity were students. There are at least two sociological-anthropological reports on their experience (Carvalho 1990, "Gość w dom" 1993). The data elaborated in the collection "Gość w dom" ("Invite a Guest to your Home") come from 1988 and the result discussed in Paul Carvalho's book refer to his field research collected one year later. In the collection, we can read on the attitudes of the Polish society toward nonwhite "racial" groups, as seen by the representative of these groups residing temporarily in Poland.

Paul Carvalho studied a 10% sample of the 3453 people large group of the foreign student of various "races" and nationalities. He was interested in their reception of the attitudes of the Poles toward foreigners rather than in foreigners' image of the Polish national culture. The image (stereotype) of the Pole is in his book very complex (due to the heterogeneity of the sample)—it is different for each national/"racial" group. Considering the above mentioned heterogeneity, Carvalho concludes: "The features constituting the image of the Pole, which repeat themselves in various ethnic groups of students belonging to the sample (the sequence from most often to the least often declared) are: friendliness, drunkenness, selfishness and hospitality" (1990: 116). "Only among students coming from Eastern Europe is the image of their own group worse than the image of the Pole..." (1990: 149). Among "...the foreigners studying in Poland, the stereotype of the Pole consists of the three basic features: hospitality, drunkenness and religiosity..." (1990: 168). As I have mentioned earlier, due to the book's purposes we cannot learn more about a broader vision of the Polish culture among the foreigners.

Studies on foreigners in the post-socialist Poland are in the initial stage only (see Szymanska 1998) and until now we cannot answer any questions interesting in this article.

POLISH CULTURE AS A FOREIGN CULTURE. SOME CONCLUSIONS OF MY OWN RESEARCH PROJECT

As I have noted above, the summary of our research project will be presented in three subsections, dealing with: (a) conceptualizations by our informants of Polish national culture (and of the image of the Pole); (b) conceptualizations of the cultural domination; and (c) conceptualizations of the reactions toward cultural domination. Unlike the formerly presented images of Polish culture as a foreign culture, the images discussed below are "foreign" in a very relative way, are cultural creations of the "strangers within": our informants and the groups with which we identified them have undergone a large part of their socialization process within the Polish national culture. Therefore, they are much more competent observers (and participants) of that culture than the "actual" foreigners. It will be very interesting to compare conceptualizations of the "strangers within" with the above discussed historical and sociological findings about Polish culture as the nation's own culture and findings about Polish culture as a foreign culture in the strict sense of the term.

Lastly, I would like to repeat that in our research we did not limit our understanding of cultural minorities to ethnic groups. In the reminding parts of this text I will, in each subsection, deal with the visions of the cultural phenomena first in the eyes of ethnic minorities and later in the eyes of other groups.

Conceptualizations of the Polish Culture

In our research program, we intended to study the image of Polish culture among cultural minorities represented by our informants. We were ready to accept the fact that culture could be conceptualized in terms of a stereotype of the Poles, who realize the cultural values and norms in their everyday life. We succeeded in the reconstruction of these two kinds of images even if our informants were not always interested in what was important to us.

Ethnic communities we studied were regional communities living at the borders of the country. They are collectivities which potentially could conceptualize the dominant national culture not in terms of Polish, but in terms of Belorussian, Ukrainian and German national cultures. In the first two cases we do not have to deal with this situation at all. What refers the Silesian community is more complex. Based on our empirical material it could be said that in small towns and villages of the Opole Silesia the significance of the German culture has risen during the last decade but in the big-city and heavy-industry environment of the Upper Silesia region that significance is rather the well remembered past than the present experience. Now we can return to the Polish culture and the Poles.

Representatives of Polish ethnic minorities define Polish culture first of all as a complex, heterogeneous and full-fledged normative system. Their own cultures are, for them, only regional cultures: in case of Polish Belorussians and Polish Ukrainians it is a rural, folk culture and in case of Upper Silesians it is a culture of a big but peripheral, local city. Besides this "formal" similarity, there are significant differences between the perception of Polish culture by Belorussians and Ukrainians on the one hand and Silesians on the other.

For Belorussians, Polish national culture is a "high" culture to which they aspire. The Ukrainians do not aspire for Polish culture but they have accepted its "present superiority" and their own minority position. What is particularly well visible to Belorussians and Ukrainians in Polish culture is the special place of the Roman Catholic religion, very closely bound, in their opinion, with Polishness in actual activities of people and institutions. According to Belorussians (whose opinions on this matter are more strong), other significant values characteristic for Polish culture and reflected in the actual everyday activities of Poles are: language, patriotism, Messianism, tolerance (actually, depending on the context, this feature or its opposite is stressed), hospitality, national solidarity, sense of dignity, sense of assurance. Poles are the "lords," urban people, industrious, having social skills, cheerful, but also arrogant, having no interest in minority cultures. It should be stressed, though, that Polish culture is very attractive for Belorussian and the Poles are positively evaluated.

A different image of Polish culture can be found in the perception of the Silesians. Both the inhabitants of the big city of Upper Silesia and of towns and villages of the Opole region consider this culture as a full-fledged, "high" culture but are not particularly interested in it. It is foreign for them in the sense that they hardly know its canon and in the sense that what they were forced to have learned does not belong to their collective memory, contains values and norms which they do not accept, which are not treated by them as their own. In particular, the romantic attitude and tradition, being in their (and not only their) opinion something very important for Polish culture, is something they do not understand, appreciating higher the pragmatic and "civilizational" values. The Silesians think that features characteristic of Polishness are internal antagonisms, chaos, mismanagement, misadministration. Poles are drunkards, thieves and lazy. On the other hand, for Polish Germans (Silesians), the Polish-language mass culture makes up an area of convergence between them and the Poles.

The image of Polish culture in the eyes of ethnic minorities seems to be stable and has hardly changed under the influence of the economic, political and cultural transformations taking place in Poland during the last decade.

What does Polish culture look like in the eyes of other cultural minorities? For our informants coming from the youth subcultures, Polish culture is foreign in the sense that it does not pose any interesting problems for them; it is not important in their everyday life, and does not cause any positive emotions. They have no consistent image of this culture. The world that exists outside their own group culture is called a "system" by them. The system is a cultural configuration consisting of three basic elements: capitalism, opportunism and materialism. Patriotism is only a means to mobilize the people to political activities which otherwise would not be taken by them because they do not feel that they are important. Strong Catholicism is for youth something in the core of the Polishness. The whole of Polish culture, to the extent they perceive it, is called "pathetic," "pitiful," (as we can remember, the Polish culture is much higher evaluated by all ethnic minorities). For our countercultural community, Polish culture does not seem to be very important. Its members perceive the traditional "high" culture, but when looking around, observing the everyday life of the ordinary people, they pay attention first of all to the concentra-

tion on the traditional religious holidays and the attachment to the mass media (TV). For them, Polish culture is rather "other" than "foreign."

What is very interesting, in my opinion, the Polish culture is not of a foreign character for the undoubtedly marginalized community of the "culture of poverty." Our informants coming from this milieu are not interested in the out-of-their-group-life but, to the extent their low education lets them, are acquainted with the basic traditional canon of Polish national culture. They have no cultural competence to pay attention to its heterogeneity and transformations and they consider themselves as the core of the Polishness. It is them and not "the rich ones" (the social structure means for them only the differentiation into the "poor ones" and the "rich ones") embodying the traditional Polish folkways and mores, it is them who observe in the traditional way the traditionally Polish (meaning—Roman Catholic) holidays.

Conceptualizations of the Cultural Domination

The concept of "cultural domination" (see Mucha 1999a, 1999c) embraces some issues interesting in the context of this article: cultural domination is closely connected (but not identical) with political domination (via the taking advantage of the state administration and public education); chances of a minority group's usage of the society's resources depend on its—at least partial—participation in the dominant culture (for instance understanding the cultural senses); attitudes of the dominant group toward minorities vary between the pole of the assimilationist tendencies and the pole of marginalization; there are various reactions of the minorities toward the cultural domination, like resistance, "living beside," minority ethnocentrism; this domination can be conceptualized in terms of the internal colonialism and relations between the center and the peripheries.

Cultural domination, as it exists in the perception of our informants, is a very complex phenomenon. The interpretation of the opinions of the minorities' members demands first of all the distinction between: (1) the more or less intentional discrimination realized by the apparatus of political or administrative power; (2) economic, political or sociocultural processes which spontaneously, "out of themselves," independently of any intention, result in the cultural assimilation of minorities; and (3) "dispersed" and far from intention-

ality, cultural domination manifested in the everyday life, attitudes, and behavior of individual members of the dominant group.

Let us begin with the problem by whom and how is discrimination conceptualized. The Polish border regions can be, in the opinion of ethnic minorities who live there, treated as peripheries, colonized by the center. The center used to send its functionaries to the peripheries and realized here are the central policy. The educational system is controlled by the center. According to our informants, this system acted under socialism in an assimilationist way toward Belorussian and Ukrainian minorities. In the case of the Silesian minority it was marginalizing it and reproduced the ethnic hierarchy. The native population of Upper Silesia was punished for speaking German in school and in boarding houses (but not in other institutions), but simultaneously not much chance was given to them to learn fluent and perfect Polish. As a consequence of this kind of tolerance toward the Silesian dialect, but also of the fact that this dialect was not a full-fledged language of the status equal to Polish, it became possible to label the Silesians, discriminate them for their wrong accent in Polish, encouraging them to keep low social positions which would not demand a high communication competence and making it difficult for them to occupy higher social positions demanding the perfect command of the literary Polish. We can say that enabling a kind of acculturation, the authorities made the access to some social resources difficult for the Silesians. It should be added that there was no educational pressure on behalf of the Silesian which would oppose this kind of activities. Most Silesians accepted the traditional, in their culture, positions which did not demand higher education but gave them, as coal miners, relatively high wages.

Under socialism, discrimination of ethnic minorities via the educational system (and mass media controlled by the state) depended also on another type of "symbolic violence": on the imposition on minorities of the image of history of the Polish state and the international relations accepted by the center, the imposition on them a version of historical tradition that could not be found in their collective memory, and on the intentional obliterating of facts of historic presence of minorities in their territories. Very one-sidedly edited Polish textbooks helped in this discriminatory policy. The socialist state monopolized mass media and made it impossible for ethnic

minorities to have their own collective and public cultural transmission. After 1989, in the case of Belorussian and Ukrainian minorities, a veiled but real discrimination by local authorities made it difficult to get higher positions in local administration by those who had the minority consciousness and particularly by those who were members of the Orthodox or Greek Catholic Churches.

There are two particularly significant, "objective," unintentional social processes which lead to the weakening, or even decline of the traditional (in small towns and villages, but also at the peripheries of big cities) cultures of folk character. The first is the urbanization, but also reconstruction, of big cities (like in Upper Silesia), the second is the growth of mass culture which uses English and Polish and not minority languages. We can add one factor more, very well known in international sociological literature—since 1989 in Poland—the democratization process. Acceptance of the full participation of minorities in public life leads simultaneously to two opposite consequences. On the one hand, it enables an overt participation in minority cultures and their reproduction and growth, and on the other hand, when added to the processes mentioned above, decreases group isolation and the necessity to limit oneself to one's own minority culture. In our research, this last process was particularly visible in the case of the Belorussian minority. It should be added, though, that their isolation was initially broken by the post World War II industrialization and urbanization.

Let us move to a more "dispersed" cultural domination, manifesting in the everyday interactions of the Polish Belorussians and Ukrainians with individual Poles. Representatives of these two minorities living in the eastern regions of Poland conceptualize domination in a nearly identical way. They say there is no sociocultural space in Poland for other religions than Roman Catholicism, that Poles do not want to give such a space to what is particularly important to minorities. The Belorussian and the Ukrainian minorities relate their group identity first of all to the public aspects of their own religious life and they believe that everywhere, where they publicly act as the Orthodox or the Greek Catholics, they face antipathy. It should be reminded that they believe that what they defend is the core of their culture, that they have already given up the realization of

many other ethnic values (like speaking their ethnic language in public places).

Poles, in their everyday behavior, are not, in the opinion of our informants, overtly discriminatory. The "dispersed" domination is not intentional. What Poles do is "solely" the acceptance of only the Polish version of social situations, the acceptance of the true religion as only Roman Catholicism. They are not sensitive to cultural otherness, and are contemptuous of cultural minorities. This "dispersed" cultural domination, when taken together with institutional discrimination, is so strong that even the Polish-Belorussian school and Polish Belorussian family are not able to oppose them. In order to enable Belorussian youth smooth functioning in the Polish environment, these basic ethnic institutions became unwilling factors of assimilation into Polish culture.

The Opole Silesians, after 1989 and on their own territory, do not feel they are culturally deprived or dominated. They consider themselves members of very strong German symbolic culture and civilization.

At the end of this subsection, let us discuss "our" other cultural minorities. The youth treats the "system" as a "net of constraints" and institutions which particularly actively attempt to implement the cultural domination are, in its opinion, the state apparatus, the Church and school. Young people try to reject them. It seems to me that views of youth can be interpreted in terms of intergeneration conflict. The members of "our" counterculture community live "beside" the dominant culture, attempting to avoid any contact with it. Their problems with the local administration must not be considered as examples of the cultural conflict. Representatives of the culture of poverty have no subjective sense of being culturally deprived. Their worldview is quite simple and concentrated on economic matters. The strange world of the "rich people" is not understood by them and is considered to be worse.

Among the conceptualizations of cultural dominance which were revealed in our findings, I would like to stress some. We have here conceptualizations which can be related to the theory of internal colonialism, to theories of the center and peripheries, symbolic violence and dispersed domination. We found a marginalized group which seems to misunderstand its own cultural situation. The issue of the

religious domination seems to me to be very interesting. As we remember, according to the declarations of Poles during at least last decade, revealed in the survey findings, they did not stress Roman Catholicism as a factor of supreme significance when talking about the criteria of Polishness. Everyday behavior of Poles, though, and since 1989 of numerous Polish public institutions, convince non-Catholic minorities that they are not full-fledged members of Polish society.

Conceptualizations of Reactions to Cultural Domination

Naturally, reactions to domination can be conceptualized only, when domination is perceived at all. In my opinion, in our empirical material we can find several patterns of these reactions. Basically, we have not to do with cases of ethnocentrism of minority groups. However, the native population of Silesia is quite close to ethnocentrism. It feels superior in relation to the Polish population of that region. The Opole Silesians stress that Poles who came there after the Second World War accommodate to Silesian folkways and mores. The native Opole Silesians consider themselves a dominant group, having higher civilization and more attractive patterns of behavior than the civilization of the immigrant Poles. The Upper Silesians used to react to perceived discrimination first of all by the "self-closure," self-marginalization, "living beside." They accepted institutional domination, exerted first by the German state and later the Polish state and population, as their own "fate," something "natural," something to what they had to get used to. Since the late 1980s, we have noticed a great growth of the number and membership of the associations of the Polish German minority, "Silesian minority" ("the native population"), associations filling all niches of social life. Upper Silesians have been developing or creating their own, minority culture, attempting to valorize it as a full-fledged "high" culture. They try to "advertise" this culture: in Uppers Silesia, many inscriptions are printed in the Silesian dialect, programs in this dialect are broadcast, regional education has been institutionalized. We can therefore say that today Silesians publicly disagree on their cultural domination, and wish to stress that they are "at home."

Polish Ukrainians also defend themselves by self-organization but have turned over to Polish dominant culture numerous cultural

areas, agreeing on the secondary importance of their own culture, on self-closure, self-isolation in their own group, particularly within the family. Both they and Belorussians resist on one public line only. This line is defined by their own religious life. As I have said before, in their opinion retaining their traditional religiosity (respectively Greek Catholic and Orthodox) is very difficult in the situation of the domination by Polish Roman Catholic culture. Withdrawal is in the case of Belorussians more voluntary than in the case of the Ukrainians, but in both cases it is a manifestation of their understanding of the fact that they are culturally dominated.

The reaction of our youth subcultural group can be considered a cultural resistance, having various manifestations. It is manifested in a reluctant distance, but also in more active forms like happenings, public contempt, public ridiculing. This resistance uses, however, some cultural threads, for a long time present in the "high" culture, both Polish and "universal," at least Western. It utilizes also the well known contestation patterns, non-classic, non-academic threads. Members of our countercultural community take advantage of the traditional elements of the dominant culture as well and transform them into an alternative culture. Besides, they are trying to live their own lives: to celebrate their own holidays, to stress the so-called "deep ecology" in everyday life. They are engaged in the "missionary activity" and are attempting to propagate their own life style. "Ethnocentrism" is present only in the case of our informants coming from the culture of poverty community, who consider themselves the embodiment of Polishness. This collectivity has neither resources nor interests in propagating its own life style.

CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis leaves many questions unanswered or only partly answered. Let me name some of them. It seems to me that mechanisms of reaction to particular types of cultural domination should be studied more precisely (for instance, using the Clifford Geertz's methodology of "thick description") It would make sense to study the problem in what sense, in which situations, from which points of view, in the system of liberal democracy of the turn of the second millennium, a cultural domination, and therefore symbolic violence,

can fulfil an emancipatory function. It would be reasonable to study the role of religion as a factor constituting ethnicity. This could be done studying other than the native population of Silesia Roman Catholic ethnic minorities in Poland. We could concentrate on dominant collectivity and design a research project concerning the "dispersed domination." We could elaborate the issue of the consequences of the new class structure in Poland on cultural composition and ask if they can be conceptualized or not in terms of the cultural domination. We could also ask how the acceptance of Poland into the European Union and the NATO influences cultural relations in Poland.

NOTES

1. The authors of the partial projects were respectively: Teresa Soldra-Gwizdz, Kazimiera Wodz with Jacek Wodz, Grzegorz Babinski, Andrzej Sadowski, Barbara Fatyga, Kazimierz Kowalewicz and Anna Sliwinska with Katarzyna Osinska.

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