
Section 1.

REGIONAL POLICIES

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EVOLUTION OF REGIONALISM IN POLAND – TIMES OF RESISTANCE

Abstract

The author discusses the evolution of regionalism in the Polish territories before regaining independence. The purpose of this paper is to present the ideological principles and different expressions of regionalism as well as the characteristic tendencies influencing the transformation of regionalism in the time of partitions.

Key words: *regionalism, forms of regionalism, the evolution of regionalism in Poland of the 19th and 20th centuries*

As an idea in terms of culture and a socio-cultural and political practice, regionalism first emerged in a relatively mature form in France as late as the second half of the 19th century. It was a manifestation of a social and cultural movement stemming from the French provinces and aiming at gaining partial independence from the prevailing influence of the centre in Paris. The movement expressed itself in fostering regional traditions and diversity (Damrosz, 1987, p. 81; Kubiak, 1994, p. 29). The leader of the socio-cultural movement aiming to emancipate the French provinces, Charles Brun (1934, p. 273) wrote that “in her perfect unity, France presents an unquestionable mosaic of races, climate, soils, culture and human temperaments; regionalism attempts to examine all that and inspire respect for regional diversity.”

In Poland, the origins of regionalism understood in this way can be sought as early as the beginning of the 19th century. It was inherently bound to the social, economic and political situation of the Polish territories and society upon the loss of sovereignty and incorporation into the relatively new administrative systems of the partitioning powers, each of which conducted its own policy towards the conquered territories and their inhabitants. One of the outcomes was the emergence of certain regionalist, mainly cultural, trends, showing the attempts at adjusting to the new political situation or seeking to regain sovereignty. Edward Chu-

dziński (2013b, p. 52) stresses the significant role of the intelligentsia in this process, as he writes that “[t]he genealogy of Polish regionalism which goes back to the beginning of the 19th century is therefore strictly related to the increasing activities of this social class [intelligentsia – RK], in particular in the field of culture, academia and education. Consequently, as early as the 19th century, we can observe a number of manifestations of regionalism although, unlike in other European countries (such as France or Germany), it was not expressed in terms of an independent ideology, it did not evolve to become a broad organised social movement and did not establish any institutions representative of such a movement. Regionalism in Poland acquired these properties as late as the 20th century, or – to be more precise – in the interwar period. The beginnings of regionalism in the Polish territories cannot be separated from community-related and organic movements whose main task was to ‘replace cultural institutions of the non-existent Polish state under the conditions of national bondage’.”

The idea and, later, practice of regionalism (Chudziński, 2013b; Gołębowski, 1969) that was shaped in the Polish territories during the partitions and later on, was influenced by the changing socio-political, economic, artistic and literary trends reflecting the then current political events and political and territorial circumstances, and it changed over time (Konieczka-Śliwińska, 2011, pp. 60–98; Kossak, 1969; *Przemiany*, 1999; *Rozwój*, 1999). The core of regionalism, however, remained unchanged and its assumptions, goals and activities are accepted and continued at present as well (*Czym jest regionalizm?*, 1998; Omelaniuk, 1998). These principles, properties, role and achievements of Polish regionalism are referred to, among other things, in the *Programme declaration of Polish regionalists 2006*, adopted by the participants of the 8th Congress of Regional Culture Societies, held in Warsaw from 27 to 28 June, 2006: “[r]egionalism is rooted in a thousand-year-old covenant of humans with the landscape and the land, its history, religion, climate and flavour as well as the fate of the population inhabiting it. This multi-faceted and multi-generational movement promoted the ideas of nationality, indigenousness, nativity, regionality and Polishness fulfilling a most important mission in the 19th and 20th centuries. It also fulfilled a great civil obligation in terms of society, nation and state-building. It established a model of being rooted in tradition, the respect and love Poles have for their own place on earth. It propagated the concept of the ‘identity of the place,’ the desire for self-definition and the regional and intra-local relations based on them. It revived the spirit of both local and national patriotism. It shaped the atti-

tude of civil concern and selfless social generosity. Several successive generations of Polish regionalists had consolidated the operating patterns that became a standard of thinking and acting in the political system of the sovereign Third Polish Republic.”

According to Bronisław Gołębiowski (1969), one of the main functions regionalism played in the post-partition period included “cultivating Polishness by demonstrating the tradition of a given region and using this tradition to teach native history, improve language by various types of periodicals dealing with regional and educational matters, folklore and collectors, chronicle keeping, cultivation of Polish customs and rituals, and so on. (...) Under such circumstances, the integrating function of culture that developed the sense of nationality was successfully fulfilled by various and apparently decentralist and allegedly disintegrating regional initiatives.” Under partitioning, the protection of Polish national identity, manifested first and foremost by language and culture, became the main interest of regionalism. Leszek Kołakowski (1995, pp. 44–55) enumerates five fundamental factors which, in his opinion, reinforced and strengthened national identity: 1) the idea of national spirit, 2) the experience of continuity (historic memory), 3) anticipation, or focusing on the future and development, 4) placement in a concrete space, 5) the awareness of a defined beginning. Krzysztof Kwaśniewski (1982, pp. 95–96) sees national identity as a “significant and real aspect of every social reality (...) although not to the same extent in different societies, but to the extent directly proportional to cultural homogeneity, length of settlement, the range and extent of isolation, continuity of tradition and potential counter-acculturation. Cultural identity therefore exists passively, in terms of the adaptation process of keeping up with the changes in the environment, and actively, in a given society’s seeking to modify their environment (directed culture change). It exists in a potential aspect inherently encompassed in the artefacts and behaviours, and in the aspect realised by way of confronting other, different cultural identities, or rather as a context of the degree and range of various bilateral configurations. The awareness of cultural identity formed in this way can be divided into a self-preservation aspect (both aggressive and defensive) and accommodative aspect (which is the proper pursuit to retain human substrate without retaining its distinguishing principle, being a cultural identity in this case).”

The conceptual and factual connection of the language and thinking with culture, including national identity – and regional identity at that – need to be stressed here. Claude Lévi-Strauss said: “[f]or many reasons

language is in my opinion the most essential cultural fact. Firstly, language is a part of culture (...). Secondly, language is the fundamental instrument, a privileged means facilitating our internalisation of culture of our group (...). Finally, and first and foremost, language is the most perfect of all the manifestations of cultural order which generates systems on the basis of various principles" (Charbonnier, 1968, p. 142). Barbara Oczkowa (1999, p. 234) is therefore right to note that "language is more than the object of linguistic studies, analyses and classifications. It is also a material that arouses strong emotions in its users, because it is associated with and treated on a par with terms from the canon of the highest values, such as nation, homeland and liberty." Therefore, language as a mark of a defined spiritual and material culture and a standardised form to symbolise the world, is the fundamental instrument to construct cultural identity. It has the ability to mobilise, direct and – consequently – also organise human activities; by this token it objectivises the relations between individuals, groups and societies as well as creates a kind of imagined homogeneous community (Anderson, 1997; Mach, 1989). It is founded on a common origin, language, history and culture (Gellner, 1991; Wierzbicka, 1999). As a consequence, cultural variations are the fundamental factor in distinguishing the nations and hampering their mutual contacts (Huntington, 2007).

When partitioning powers were trying to denationalise Poles (by means of Germanisation and Russification), the main goal of the regionalist movement became to retain cultural identity, which was primarily expressed by the language and historical awareness of the nation, as seen from the regional perspective. Therefore, regionalism in Polish territories, in contrast to many other states that retained their territorial continuity, was originally formed as a form of resistance against partitioners. By this token, it promoted the self-organisation of a society suffering from the denationalising pressure of the partitioning powers. It relied on the performance of patriotic tasks of educational and cultural nature (organising lectures, theatrical performances, concerts, establishing libraries, gathering regional collections) as well as publishing tasks (publication of periodicals, brochures, books – both prose and poetry, which all represented the idea of literary regionalism) (Bujak, 1938; Kisielewski, 1930; Konieczny, 1966; Kosmanowa, 1980; Mochnacki, 1995; Patkowski, 1932; Pigoń, 1974; Uliasz, 1996, pp. 115–129). This was a way to compensate for the lack of formal statehood of Poland and its institutional manifestations in various fields of socio-cultural life. This is stressed by Edward Chudziński (2013a, pp. 14–16), who notes that "[t]he beginning of regionalism in Pol-

ish territories cannot be separated from community-related and organic movements whose main task was to ‘replace cultural institutions of the non-existent Polish state under the conditions of national bondage.’ (...) The intelligentsia from the provinces was particularly meritorious for regionalism in Poland. In the 19th century, it inspired the emergence of numerous societies and organisations with justifiable academic ambitions, museums, book collections, archives and, first and foremost, periodicals. (...) The press in the provinces played an important role in shaping the regionalist consciousness of Polish society in all three partitions. As it focused on both current and past facts, and events connected with a defined territory, it strengthened the sense of bond among its inhabitants, it taught them about the history and tradition of their region, its values and merits. This strategy encompassed the concealed patriotic function of a press which, on account of censorship, could not write about Poland as a sovereign country not long ago, but could remind and present the issues and history of the country on the *paris pro toto* principle. In this way, the region (the ‘little homeland’) had to replace the ideological homeland.”

As mentioned above, literary works and various forms of periodicals were significant carriers of regionalist ideas. A particular role in the development of the regionalist idea in the field of cultural activities was played by literary regionalism, which one of the definitions understands as: “[d]ifferent literary trends representing various artistic programmes, whose common denominator is their being associated with a certain region, its language, customs and culture contrasted with national culture. They are frequently characterised by returning to local dialect in parts or in whole (in dialogues)” (Popławska, Szelag, Kotowski, 2004, p. 185). One can also speak about regional schools in the literature and poetry of the 19th century (for instance the Eastern Frontier school – Belarusian, Livonian, Ukrainian and Vilnius). Maurycy Mochnacki (1995, p. 141) referred to them in a symbolic and metaphorical way at that time: “[f]orgotten voices have reached us from various directions, from different parts of Poland. Our nativeness has emerged in more than one form. All the leaves on the tree that was petrified and mute for so long have rustled together [in the voice – RK] of native poetry.” Maria Ruszczyńska (2012, p. 112) notes that regional literary schools of that time played also other functions, as “they were treated as a certain socio-cultural movement, (...) they were to manifest and be the voice of the region and province (...).”

The ideas of regionalism can be found in Polish literature in the early 19th century, as early as in Romanticism. They were strongly connected

with the dramatic struggle to regain independence and marked a turn towards folklore and nativeness, mainly in the spiritual dimension. Stanisław Makowski (1990, p. 493) writes that “Romanticists considered folk people and their spiritual culture, condemned by the Enlightenment which treated it as superstitions, to be the primary source of national distinctiveness. In the opinion of the Romanticists, this culture of pagan, Slavic, native and northern nature was the fundamental factor of national distinctiveness. (...) It is the property of folk culture that it is primal and native.” The intellectual culture, ideological specificity and socio-political practice of those days led to the emergence of a Romantic identity: “[t]he image of a human shaped by the syndrome of Romantic culture is that of a being that follows his anticipatory and postulatory consciousness, allowing human beings to express themselves by means of intentional acts. Due to such an interpretation of humans, anthropology assumes an imperative approach and treats the human as a conscious being orientating his existence ‘towards something’ and capable of overcoming his ‘deficient form’ in order to ‘become spiritually elevated’ (...) What was characteristic of the anthropological considerations concentrated on the question of human attributes was the tendency of Romantic anthropology to stress the ability to undertake efforts that exceeded individual capacity, and the activities aiming to achieve the values and goals which could reveal individual subjectiveness and the potential of self-creation, as well as that of the extrapolation of reality” (Bittner, 2010, pp. 18–19).

The ideological assumptions, values, goals and aspirations of Romanticism to a varying degree were referred to and continued later on, leaving their mark on the literary works of Positivism (Realism, Naturalism, organic work) and that of the Young Poland (Impressionism, Symbolism, neo-Romanticism). The term of ‘nativeness’ [in Polish: *krajowość*] was applied to describe this literary trend as the concept of regionalism came into a broader socio-cultural circulation in Poland in the interwar period, similar to Germany, where regionalism was named ‘national studies’ [in German: *heimatkunde*]. In his analysis of the term regionalism and regionalist movement in those times, Erazm Kuźma (2000, p. 95) writes that “[i]n the early stages of the movement, the names provincialism, federalism, decentralism and regionalism competed against each other; the last one won as devoid of any ideological marking.” As he stresses the multicultural and multiethnic composition of Polish territories, reflected also in their literature, he notes that “in individual regions literature was written not only in Polish and its dialects, but also in German and Yiddish”

(Kuźma, 2000, p. 95). Literary regionalism was therefore, in principle, characterised by multiple forms and subjects, but it had a common denominator of a strong and emotional connection of art with the nature, language and culture of a given region (Oracki, 1976). Regional literature encompasses also folk literature or folk written works reaching back to the first half of the 19th century. Stanisław Pigoń (1974, p. 31) notes, however, that “it emerged as a mass phenomenon around 1870.” As time went by, literary regionalism was also a subject taught at schools (*Regionalizm w nauczaniu*, 1975).

Regionalism in Poland at the time of the partitions had a characteristic expression in the form of the activities of various academic associations, friends of towns, admirers of lands, as well as associations dealing with regional studies, national and artistic ones whose main purpose was first and foremost the strengthening of Polish consciousness and the protection of the cultural heritage and tradition of individual regions. The following can exemplify the socio-cultural, academic and artistic regional societies established in the Polish territories in the 19th and early 20th century: Royal Society of Friends of Sciences (Warsaw, 1800), Lublin Society of Friends of Sciences (1815), Krakow Academic Society (1816), Alfred Wiłkomirski Kalisz Musical Society (1818), Płock Academic Society (Płock, 1820), Bydgoszcz Society for Town Beautification (1832), Society of Collectors of National Antiquities (Szamotuły, 1840), Pomeranian Society of Academic Assistance (Toruń, 1848), Krakow Society of Fine Arts (1854), Poznańskie Region Society of Friends of Sciences (Poznań, 1857), Society of Fine Arts ‘Zachęta’ in Warsaw (1860), Przemyśl Musical Society (1865), Aleksander Fredro Dramatic Society ‘Fredreum’ in Przemyśl (1869), Galician Society of the Tatras (Zakopane, 1873), Singers’ Association ‘Lutnia’ in Kościan (1876), Motherland of the Cieszyńskie Land – The Society of the Region’s Admirers (Cieszyn, 1885), Society of Admirers of Śrem (Śrem, 1887), Society of Friends of Cieszyn and the Region (1890), Wielkopolska Association of Choruses and Orchestras ‘Macierz’ in Poznań (1892), Krakow Photographic Society (1895), Society of Admirers of History and Historical Monuments in Krakow (1896), Society of Friends of Sanok and the Sanockie Region (1904), Polish Highlanders Alliance (1904), Society of Admirers of Ołtarzewo (1905), Society of Admirers of Ciechocinek (1906), Society of Admirers of Nałęczów (Nałęczów, 1909), Society of Friends of Sciences in Przemyśl (Przemyśl, 1909).

The regionalist movement was also characterised by relatively intensive activities in the field of periodical and book publishing. Different

socio-cultural and academic societies and the circles dealing with regional studies carried out publishing activities, such as the Society of Friends of Sciences in the Poznańskie Region (which published its yearbooks from 1860), the Society of Admirers of History and Historical Monuments in Krakow (publishing the *Rocznik Krakowski* yearbook from 1898), Polish Society for Regional Studies (publishing *Ziemia* [The Land] from 1920 and *Wierchy* [Mountain Summits] dedicated to the mountains from 1923), the Society of Friends of Sciences in Przemyśl (publishing *Gazeta Podhalańska* [Podhale Gazette] from 1913, and later *Rocznik Podhalański* [Podhale Yearbook] affiliated with the Tatra Mountains Museum). Regionalist periodicals of that time played a significant social, cultural and political role. According to Zygmunt Rościszewski, the founder of the *Korespondent Płocki* [The Płock Correspondent] (1876), “a regional periodical is more than the picture and memoir of the area (...) it attracts and concentrates the thinking people and diverts them from the path of lonely and futile dreams to that of the noble intellectual work for the common good” (Chudziński, 2013b, p. 53).

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Streszczenie

Autor omawia ewolucję regionalizmu na ziemiach polskich przed odzyskaniem niepodległości. Celem tekstu jest prezentacja zasad ideologicznych oraz różnych przejawów regionalizmu, a także charakterystyka tendencji oddziałujących na transformację tego zjawiska w okresie zaborów.

Слова-ключове: *regionalizm, formy regionalizmu, ewolucja regionalizmu w Polsce w XIX i XX wieku*

Резюме

Автор обсуждает эволюцию регионализма на польской территории до обретения независимости. Целью текста является представление идеологических принципов и различных проявлений регионализма, а также характеристика тенденций, влияющих на трансформацию этого явления во время аннексий.

Ключевые слова: *регионализм, формы регионализма, эволюция регионализма в Польше в XIX и XX веках.*

Анотація

Автор обговорює еволюцію регіоналізму на польських землях перед оголошенням незалежності. Метою статті є презентація ідеологічних принципів та різних проявів регіоналізму, а також характеристика тенденцій, які впливають на трансформацію цього явища в період окупації.

Ключові слова: регіоналізм, форми регіоналізму, еволюція регіоналізму в Польщі в XIX i XX століттях

