

Books such as *National Cultures at Grass-root Level* by the great Polish intellectual Antonina Kloskowska could mediate the encounter with Eastern Europe's multicultural and intercultural

Kloskowska and the problem of interculturality

CULTURE 1

by Anna Czajka

existence. The book was one of the first to investigate multiculturalism, starting from Poland after the collapse of the Communist regime

I confess once and for all that I love France with the same passionate, demanding and complicated love as Jules Michelet, making no distinction between its merits and defects, the things I prefer and the things I do not easily accept. But this passion will in no way interfere with the pages of this work.

Fernand Braudel, *L'identité de la France*

In the international discussion on the problem of interculturality, one typically refers to specialist Canadian, American, British and French literature and, among these, to writers of Arab or Indian origin who write in one of the world's main languages. Even when the discussion relates to the issue of the European identity, there is a striking absence of references to Eastern Europe. The problem of national identity is actually more topical than ever in Eastern Europe. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the system of the so-called "States of real socialism" opened a literal Pandora's box of ethnic problems, minorities and different national groups, causing bloody, secessionist wars but

also bringing a wealth of different perspectives to places where there was a culture of cohabitation and reciprocal interests. In post-war Eastern Europe, social phenomena were observed attentively and, especially in Poland, subjected to rather more in-depth analysis than the pragmatic type of political analysis that is so widespread today.

Books such as *National Cultures at Grass-root Level* by the great Polish intellectual Antonina Kloskowska, with an introduction by Zygmunt Bauman, could mediate the encounter with Eastern Europe's multicultural and intercultural existence. Seven years after the Warsaw Round Table agreements, this was one of the first books to tackle the problem of multiculturalism in Poland, which people who had grown up in Socialist Poland were seldom aware of. But the book's innovative nature rests (and this is no paradox) on a tradition of sociological research that generally forms part of the wider multidisciplinary context of historical-social studies and on the ideas of major personalities such as Stefan Czarnowski, Florian Znaniecki, Stanislaw Ossowski and Jan Strzelecki.

The work stands out for the breadth of its



_ Above: the great Polish intellectual Antonina Kloskowska, whose writings investigate the subject of Polish multiculturalism. Below: an evocative view of the Palace of Culture in Warsaw

view, the interdisciplinary nature of the scientific procedures involved, its total mastery of international literature, an analytical approach adapted to the various concrete situations it describes and, finally, for its references to literature and art. There is a significant reference on the last page to art as the only environment in which Man can make himself entirely known. What significance could Kloskowska's book have for the current international discussion on the issue of multiculturalism and interculturality? To start with, it is an exemplary work because it is one of the very few to shed light on the problem of a concrete scientific and hermeneutic approach to the issue and analyse the problem in a detailed, critical, methodically aware and empirically considered way. The book tackles the issue in the light of a particular aspect: that of national cultures as the source and reference point of the awareness of identity and national belonging



on the part of individuals and groups, whether minority or majority. This aspect is of key importance for an understanding and non-superficial analysis of problems in today's world, which is experiencing tensions and conflicts frequently connected to ethnic origins or rather, at a deeper level, to the issue of the identity of specific groups. These are not merely local ethnic conflicts or the often violent disputes masked as religious differences or connected to some extent to genuine differences in religious traditions, as in the Israelo-Palestinian conflict. Nor are they the so-called "clash of civilisations" between the (backward and despotic) Islamic world and the (evolved and democratic) West. There are also the relationships between minority groups and national governments; between regional cultures and supranational entities and, not least, between specific traditions (historically differentiated ethnic groups, nations and cultures) and the general trend towards standardisation in the big globalized society of the economic, financial and IT world of today and even more of the future which appears to be impending, not to

mention the relationship between this legacy and these prospects on the one hand and the reality of a shared destiny and the ideal of a shared task (of reconciliation, agreement and co-operation) for humanity as a whole on the other.

The issue of difference and the personal, collective and universally human identity and their concrete interlacing, which should be analysed according to the awareness of individuals and the possibility of future developments, has therefore become crucial. The biggest problem is precisely to formulate research capable of collecting, handling and critically interpreting complex, interdependent data. In this sense, the Polish academic's work is an instructive model, concretely demonstrating the methodological options available, the opportunity to combine different data gathering methods, different evaluation criteria and various interpretative

_Left: over 200,000 people turned out to hear Wladislaw Gomulka, the new leader of the Red Party, speak in Warsaw in October 1956. Below: the SS and Polish Jews in the Warsaw ghetto



perspectives capable of integrating and correcting each other in turn while always taking into account the problem of an objectified reading of statements regarding the sphere of personal self-awareness and cultural self-perception.

Another of the book's merits is that it opens a window onto a little-known European reality, calling the reader's attention to the fact that there are communities in Europe with their own differentiated dynamic and that, while they are marginal today, they could become essential elements in the future. The book demonstrates that Europe is not merely Rome or the Franco-German synthesis started by Charlemagne but also, for example, Poland and its border territories. It thereby incarnates, on a specific territory, the intention that Ryszard Kapuscinski expressed, demonstrating that there are more subjects in the globalized world than the ones who usually appear as players on the public stage. It can also be linked to Andrzej Stasiuk's more in-depth and radical views on identity: in *Travelling to Babadag*, Stasiuk makes a somewhat Herderian, albeit openly disenchanted remark:

“Small countries should be protected the way childhood is. Citizens from overlarge countries should visit them to learn something. It probably wouldn't be of much use, but one has to give people a few opportunities and create the possibility of reflecting on the multiplicity of meanings of this best of all possible worlds”



The translation of Kloskowska's book into Italian makes an important product of Polish humanistic research available to readers and offers the possibility of comparison with this tradition of thought and scientific elaboration which, although it comes from the periphery of Europe, demonstrates a "universal" character because of its close correlation to international research as well as because of the range of tasks it sets itself. The West has insufficient knowledge of this tradition of historical and social studies. The book also gives readers an insight into the wealth of the Polish cultural heritage, which is rich in literature as well as art and music, apart from science and philosophy. A characteristic feature of Polish culture is that an exceptionally high number of its writers were educated abroad. But it is also characteristic that its creative production has been intertwined more or less directly, and with striking continuity, from Kochanowski to Zeromski, with the problem of life within the national community.

Research itinerary

National Cultures at Grass-root Level was the last book by Antonina Kloskowska (1919-2001), one of the most eminent Polish sociologists of the second half of the 20th century, a lecturer at the University of Lodz and then at the University of Warsaw and editor of the magazine "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" (Culture and Society). The writer's high-profile research work was due in large part to the early stage of her career and the training she received from her illustrious teachers, Stanislaw Ossowski and Józef Chalasiński. These academics were, albeit in different ways, followers of the sociologist Florian Znaniecki, who combined empirical research with an antipositivist view which had a distinct neo-Kantian stamp. Znaniecki formulated a complex conception of culture which focused on the theory of social ties as an interlacement of culture and society. He was also the precursor of a culturalistic concept of the nation that emphasises the gathering of collectives around a set of actively shared values. One of Znaniecki's key ideas was the principle of the "humanistic coefficient", i.e. considering social phenomena to be subjects constituted by people's actions. He was the first sociologist to use the method of analysing personal documents such as diaries and autobiographies, making it possible to connect the subjective and objective views. Chalasiński continued with Znaniecki's theory, placing the emphasis on translating it into practice, especially in relation to the issue of participating in the national culture. Ossowski, on the other hand, focused on a more in-depth study of the concept of culture and developed the problem of cultural models, starting from his experience in aesthetics. All these academics also studied the issues of emigration and national rivalries as well as the themes of culture and the nation.

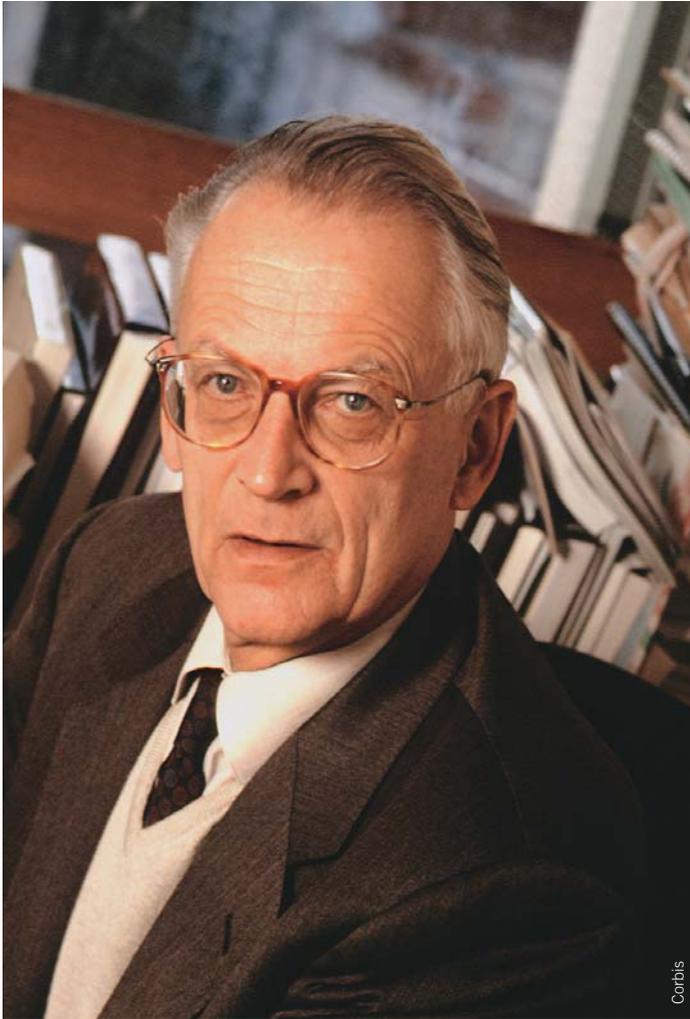
The first line of Kloskowska's interests related to the individual's socio-cultural education and the interiorizing of culture. Almost simultaneously, she carried out critical analysis on the national character and conducted research on the origins of ethnic stereotypes, including the German stereotype and the self-generated Polish stereotype. Kloskowska continued her research in collaboration with a group of UNESCO

academics from various countries who were studying the problem of sources of tension in international relations under the direction of Otto Klineberg and subsequently with the Groupe de Psychologie Appliquée in Neuchâtel. She later joined a group of experts that UNESCO commissioned to put together a report titled *Les notions de race, d'identité et de dignité*. The subject of her text in the report was the meaning and positioning of the different values of individual ethnic communities in the heritage of humanity as a whole as well as the ways in which to perceive and react to the values of other cultures.

Kloskowska's work was typically based on a concept of culture (and the theory of culture) in its widest sense on the one hand and, on the other, it was aimed at a sociological interpretation of cultural phenomena. A further element that emerged increasingly strongly in her writings was the reference to the problem of personality, interpreted in sociological terms and subsequently detailed philosophically as well. Her research into specific questions such as the "hereditary" transmission of culture was conducted through surveys of primary (elementary) groups. In the 1960s and 70s, Kloskowska devoted herself to family sociology, working with many foreign scholars such as Alain Touraine, Pierre Bourdieu and Luc Boltanski, who visited Poland on several occasions. From 1950-1956, when sociology was dropped from the academic curriculum for political reasons, the scholar concentrated on the problems of the history of culture and social thought, which led to close contact with specialists in historical research.

Kloskowska always worked on the theoretical construct of sociology as a nomological science which formulates general laws on the lines of the pure sciences. At the same time, in Stanislaw Ossowski's wake, she supported the theory that it is impossible to overlook the historical and cultural variability of social phenomena. Her scientific orientation can be defined (to use her own understanding of it) "culturalistic sociology".

In the 1960s, Kloskowska studied the differences in the concepts of culture in anthropology and sociology and the history of the concept of culture in general while



_In the 1960s and '70s, Kloskowska devoted herself to family sociology, working with many foreign scholars such as Alain Touraine (above), who visited Poland on several occasions

also studying the phenomenon of mass culture. The result of this research was the formulation of an original theory of culture according to which cultural phenomena can be retraced to three categories: the culture of reality, social culture and symbolic culture. The three books she devoted to these three categories, *Mass Culture* (1964), *The Social Framework of Culture* (1973) and *Sociology of Culture* (1981), were aimed at also investigating the interdependencies among these different contexts and have had a decisive influence on the research, understanding and practice of culture in Poland.

In the light of the increasing parcelling out of concepts of culture in studies in the international context, Kloskowska's essential contribution was to circumscribe and emphasise, in respect to culture as a whole, one relatively autonomous sector to which a determining significance can be given: symbolic culture. This sector contains

cultural elements that are "autotelic" (i.e. having themselves as their only purpose), which do not have direct instrumental references but are found in varied relations with other cultural levels and human actions. This formulation allowed for a sociological approach to phenomena that had until then been relegated to a sphere designated quite intuitively and generically as "spiritual culture". It thereby started an investigation into the social aspects of circulation and reception of symbolic culture, giving rise to intense co-operation among sociologists, historians, philosophers and literary scholars.

In the course of her research, Kloskowska thoroughly analysed the issue of the symbolicity and autotelism of culture. She based her work mainly on semiological investigation but also referred to the concept of "actions that are an end in themselves", formulated by Stanislaw Ossowski in relation to analysis of the reception of works of art. The scholar then transposed analysis on social and personal reproduction of the canonical elements of symbolic culture to the terrain of the problem of national cultures.

The book

National Cultures at Grass-root Level is the crowning achievement of the author's work, in the above-mentioned elements of her formulation come together and interact. The book is basically divided into two parts, the first historical-theoretical and methodology-related, the second devoted to analysing examples of national identification.

I will limit myself here to calling the reader's attention to some important theoretical problems and significant concrete examples of identification, leaving the reader the task and the possibility of studying the book's extremely substantial content in depth, as it cannot be dealt with exhaustively in an introduction such as this one.

Kloskowska outlines the key aspects of the book in the preface. The first is the approach to the issue of the nation, investigated in a particularly intense way in Polish historical-social research and experienced just as intensely in the national reality. This issue had in fact been central in the 19th century

and re-emerged at the end of the 20th century in the form of the problem of (collective) identity. Reconnecting to her great teachers, the author declares that she is in favour of a culturalist concept of nationality. Her first step in the book is a critical review of the theories and concepts of the nation in which she rejects the naturalist and stalist views, referring instead to anthropological formulations that view the social group as a cultural unit. In this way, she arrives at the elementary definition of the nation as a social collective with the character of a cultural community. A further essential moment is the conception of national culture as a common, concrete and symbolic framework of reference for individuals in a given collective. A link is thereby formed between two meanings of culture, which presents itself on the one hand as a form of life with its own particular code which is localised and ethnically differentiated, and on the other as a common symbolic universe that is typical of a given collective but is wider and more complex and necessarily dialogues (and sometimes conflicts) with other cultural worlds. There is a significant and fertile possibility of defining the level of intersection of these two meanings of culture, the particularist and peripheral one linked to the "little homeland" and the universalizing and centralizing one connected to the "big homeland".

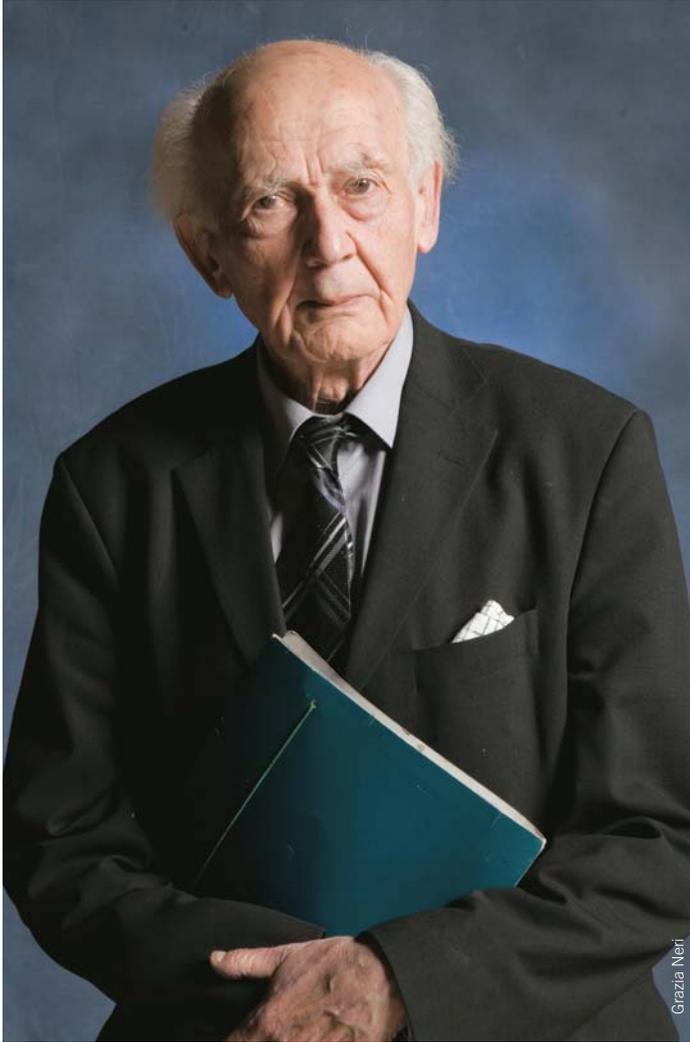
The scholar conceives of culture as a dynamic unit constituting the result of creative and receptive actions by individuals: it is the permanent outcome, however variable, of the integration of different systems of signs and symbols in a communicative community. It is a relative totality composed of many elements ("building blocks", to use Karl Deutsch's expression) such as language, habits and occasionally religion as well as certain literary figures or works, the variable constellations of which decide whether the level of a relative identity and relative demarcation has been reached. The existence of a culture is based on individual options carried out in certain concrete circumstances, which can be defined in many ways: social, political, biographical and personal (memory). The current individual option is achieved through a comprehensive reference to the so-called "small homeland", i.e. concrete images

and experiences connected to the places of one's childhood or youth (or decisive moments in one's life) as well as through reference to the "big homeland" and the collectively shared concepts and values that define it.

The act (or comprehensive attitude) of individuals' national identification is to be grasped and measured with reference to two connections characterising the intersubjectively shared configuration, in some way normative of a culture: its "syntagm", which indicates the relatively ordered and yet historically variable ensemble of contents, values and behaviour models that make up its specificity and its "canon", which represents the relatively stable and more directly recognisable nucleus of the complex.

“National culture is in fact
an intersubjective
phenomenon which is
subjectively achieved and
refers to objective facts: to
the syntagm of culture and
the essential nucleus that
forms its canon”

On the basis of a series of by now fairly substantial studies, Kloskowska also sets out the problem of "stereotypes" as mechanisms that allow one to economise on the description and perception of phenomena (Walter Lippmann) and that in any case, besides consolidating one's own profile, constitutively contain elements of depreciation of the outsider (Józef Chalasiński). The scholar refers to a long line of theoretical proposals related to the issue of defining identity (William James, Wilhelm Dilthey, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Erik Erikson, George H. Mead, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Malek Chabel and Peter Weinreich).



_One of the merits of Kloskowska's book, which has a preface by Zygmunt Bauman (above), the renowned Polish sociologist, is that it opens a window onto a little-known European reality

She analyses and discusses the Weberian idea of "ideal types", which she uses in her own investigations. She also introduces the concept of "valence" to indicate the appropriation of a given culture recognised as one's own, which constitutes a factor and an element of a global and unitary personality and identity, formed in its turn by multiple elements which are variable and often tension-filled. The final distinctive concept the author proposes is that of a "border zone", which describes the situation of those who find themselves acting in the context of influence of more than a single culture and should therefore be understood

not only in the sense of a territory or group but also of personal consciousness. Kloskowska applies these concepts to the analysis of groups of people who find themselves in a cultural "border" situation and, for this very reason, are subjected to a more pressing need to define their identity. Her investigatory method is fairly complex and adapted in individual cases to the group studied, combining different procedures with virtuosity so as to give rise to a more faithful presentation of the reality. The key material for her analysis is supplied by autobiographies, descriptions of a person's life in which the individual course of life is subjected to an evaluative reflection. These are existing writings on the one hand with, on the other, a prevalence of taped and transcribed interviews conducted especially for the purposes of her research, with carefully selected groups of people composed of a free part (in which interviewees are asked to describe the important events of their lives) and a guided part of targeted questions. To interpret the autobiographical material, she refers not only to the conceptual system of Znaniecki's sociology but also to hermeneutic models and tools formulated by philosophers: the *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* categories developed by Dilthey, which are central to the formulation and interpretation of the biographies and to understanding historical phenomena; the phenomenological notion of the "life-world" (*Lebenswelt*), the notions of "horizons to understand" and "fusion of horizons" introduced by Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur's concept of "distancing" as a condition to objectify the content of a text. When the autobiographical data is insufficient to formulate an interpretation, she resorts to additional interviews and questionnaires on the unclear passages. She compares the data thus obtained to the results of historical, demographic, economic and political analyses as well as specific literature on the subject while also taking into account the particular experiences of eminent personalities such as Stanislaw Lem and Czeslaw Milosz. While she recognises the priority of the individual perspective, the scholar also resorts to the supplementary hypothesis according to which national cultures, although located essentially in the realm of the "imaginary", are simultaneously a real

factor in the context of the community's actions. Her procedure combines Znaniecki's social attitudes and hermeneutics, social sciences and empirical sciences. On the basis of this multidimensional formulation, it becomes possible to distinguish different characteristic types of national identification, which are moreover always conditioned by the discretion of the researcher, who makes the choice of evaluation methods and criteria.

Kloskowska's analysis of concrete cases of Polish-German conversion can be included in the complex problem of "border zones": on the one hand, the "Polonisation" of Albert von Winkler, who grew up in an environment of German culture, was educated at the Potsdam military school and graduated from the University of Königsberg but subsequently transformed himself, after having adopted the original name Wojciech Ketrzynski, into an active supporter of the 1863 insurrection, a scholar of the Masuria and Slesia regions and Polish history, a librarian and finally director of the Ossolineum Institute in Lvov; on the other, the "Germanisation" (before he finally returned to Polishness) of Jakub Wojciechowski, the son of peasants who lived between the late 19th and early 20th centuries and became a worker in Berlin and subsequently an activist in Polish emigrant organisations. The analysis of both biographies demonstrates that conversion is not an unequivocal and unidimensional process; on the contrary, various factors interact within the process that must be identified case by case, since they become active in biographical circumstances and historical strings that are different in each case. Analysing these conversions, four types of appropriation of national culture can be identified: univalent, bivalent, ambivalent and polyvalent, and four types of national identification: monolithic (integral), double, uncertain and cosmopolitan. These distinctions would be used and checked in subsequent analysis.

The author studies the Ukrainian minority in Poland taking various factors into account: the awareness of historical events (which are conflictual or even tragic for Poles and Ukrainians living alongside each other in the same territories), administrative decisions regarding the forced transfer of Ukrainians

from their original places of settlement, their experiences in Poland, the attitude of Polish people towards them and other factors. The autobiographical statements of the Ukrainians interviewed are classed according to the focalizing value of nationality (whether declared or implicit). The analyses demonstrate, however, that the forms of identification are highly differentiated and quite far from Polish stereotypes regarding Ukrainians. One key moment is the definition of identity by contrast, in relation to administrative coercion, the hostile attitude of Poles and the so-called labelling. Ukrainian national identification is linked above all to the common call of the "small homeland", experienced within the borders of post-war Poland and the shared experiences of everyday life, mainly rural, while for the most part it lacks strong ties to the "big homeland", which can be politically referred to as the Ukrainian state which became independent in 1991, but also to the language, limited here to daily use, and literature, known fairly superficially. The range of identification behaviour oscillates between the unequivocal form and the "double" form via the ambivalent form, and shows strong adhesion to nationality as an "autotelic" element of culture, without instrumental political conditioning but focused on the experience of "instants of gratification" and the feeling of dignity. The constellation of the perception of identity by Belarusians in Poland is different. The factor distinguishing this minority group is its traditional connection to the territory and a marked sharing of its own popular culture. Once again it is the link to the "small homeland" that prevails, with the reality of everyday life. There is relatively little knowledge of Belarusian literature (they are decidedly more familiar with Russian literature) and here too, linguistic skills do not go beyond everyday needs. Belarusians find it hard to define their identity; at most they limit themselves to saying "from here". In general, they refer to the autochthonous ethnic culture while demonstrating a clear distance from the Belarus state and conversely largely accepting their placement within the Polish state, possibly because of the lack of alternatives. The general scepticism towards Europe, mainly because of its indefinable

nature, is significant.

The national dilemmas of the Slesians are analysed with all the precision of the sociological apparatus and makes reference to two generations: those born in the 1930s (who experienced the wounds of World War II and its consequences) and those born in the 1960s (who mainly experienced the change related to the collapse of the Soviet bloc). Analysis of the autobiographies of Slesians shows that their focus on national identification is not as strong as that of the Ukrainians. They show a strong feeling of ethnic and regional ties that however, unlike that of the Belarusians, is intensely ideologized in defence of their “small homeland”, which they basically view as part of the framework of possible future developments in the European Union’s regional policy.

Kloskowska also sketches a portrait of national identification in the central part of Poland, choosing here, too, to examine two generations: wartime youth and “post-

Solidarity” youth. This confirms the well-known theory of the particular suitability of the concept of “imagined homeland” with respect to the phenomenon of the Polish nation. It is in fact precisely because of culture that the Polish nation was able to not only survive without the institutional existence of an autonomous state in the 19th century but to actually widen its sphere of influence and intensify its level of self-awareness and community ties in the face of the greatest threat of extinction. At the same time, an examination of the autobiographical material shows that the national identification of these people, however particularly obvious, has neither a monolithic nor an unchangeable shape. In reference to the war generation, the author rebuilds various models of “pretend life” during Hitler’s occupation, under the surface of which the real life of the national community, which culminated in the 1944 Warsaw insurrection, was lived, animated principally by the “flower” of society, intellectual youth including many poets, artists, men of letters and scientists, creators of the symbolic sphere. A typical feature of the autobiographical memories related to this event is that the axiological reference points were not experienced as national values but rather as universal and existential ones and that they did not include negative references to the concrete national enemy; it was human dignity in general which was felt to be at stake and had to be defended, as was the case in the universalist tradition of Polish thought in the Romantic era (Mickiewicz), here and now, in Poland. With the post-Solidarity generation, this model of national identification seems rather diluted. The autobiographies of Polish people during the change to democracy do not focus on the national issue, although there are references to many activities in favour of the cause of a national community. There seems to be feeble awareness of the “canon” (especially literary) of the nation and even links with popular culture (despite the fact that most of the people interviewed come from peasant stock). There are frequent references to religious symbols, while indications of actual experience of religious life are absent. The canon of national culture is sometimes actually questioned, although the “autotelic” (not instrumental) value of the homeland is

In search of the european identity



The series published by DIABASIS is intended as a contribution to research on European identity, introducing the most significant events in Polish Culture into a “polylogue” among peers. The series opens with Antonina Kloskowska’s volume “In search of the roots of national

cultures” (1996), with an introduction by Zygmunt Bauman, translated by M. Bacigalupo and edited by A. Czajka. Truly fundamental for the study of intercultural issues, the work examines the question of national identity taking as its starting point a concept of culture as a complex system of symbols, analyzing existential situations (of “conversion” and of emigration) and border social groups (the minorities of Ukraine, Belarus, Silesia). The work thus brings to light the possibility of cultural polyvalence and new, revitalized community spaces. In addition, it offers a cross-section of Polish sociology, from Znaniecki to Bauman, by way of the “small fatherlands” of Stanislaw Ossowski.

In progress: works by Jan Bialostocki, Maria Ossowska, Stanislaw Brzozowski, Jan Niecislaw Baudouin de Courtenay, August Cieszkowski.

always expressed. Current events and personal life now occupy the central place in these autobiographies. One typical feature is the incongruity and incoherence of attitudes of identification, for example people saying that they are cosmopolitan while also declaring themselves ready to fight for the homeland.

In the book's epilogue, Kloskowska analyses the issue of Polishness in a group in which the problem of national belonging is particularly important: writers and artists who have contributed to national culture precisely by finding themselves in the "border" situation of 20th century Polish emigration. She draws up a scale of Polishness on the basis of autobiographical documents and works by some authors. To evaluate the method and level of identification, one of the criteria applied is the intellectuals' active relationship with the national interest. The condition of emigration sharpens national attitudes, the forms of which can also be very differentiated, especially when related to creative personalities, for the most part complex and living in limited situations. Three examples are representative of the extreme positions and a kind of synthesis among them. The writer Witold Gombrowicz, who emigrated first to Argentina and then to France, adopts the radical attitude of contesting any national character (starting with the Polish one) while, paradoxically enough, basing his own work on the transformation (to the point of grotesqueness) of forms of Polishness, to which he therefore remains indissolubly linked, as his full immersion in the Polish language also demonstrates. It is also paradoxical that Gombrowicz, who so radically championed the abandon of any form of national culture, was perceived by the world as a "typical Pole" and that his universalist claim was interpreted as "Sarmatism" raised to a philosophical level. At the opposite end of the scale is Jan Lechon, who emigrated to America and whose attitude can be called an "obsession" with Polishness, notwithstanding his in-depth knowledge of foreign literature, particularly French literature. Lechon declared himself in favour of emigration as an idea impossible to sacrifice and criticised writers who returned to post-war Poland, but

he focused all the work of his American period on Polishness: landscapes and places of memory, symbols, beliefs and literature. Józef Czapski was different from the other two. This writer and painter lived in a "border" situation in many ways: genealogical, ethnic and biographical. His aristocratic origins (von Hutten-Czapski) emphasise the features of his Polishness precisely because his family was a mixture of German (the Baltic version), Austrian, Czech and Polish elements in a form created in the context of Belarus and the Russo-Baltic connections. Czapski spent only about a dozen years on Polish territory; as an emigrant, his "small homeland" became the hub he circled at the Paris magazine "Kultura", but he was equally an example of rich and intense Polishness. The first form of it started in his infancy as a result of his Austrian mother's decision to have him educated in Polish. The second form came to him through the values of great Russian literature (Tolstoy), which he discovered and interiorised as a child and encountered anew in the works of Brzozowski, Zeromski and Norwid, brought together within him in the idea of a universal humanity that could only be achieved by passing through Poland with its system of symbolic values. At the same time, Czapski had a cultural polyvalence to which he was initiated from his infancy and which, cultivated through Russian and especially French studies, allowed him to choose the best of the various cultural systems and preserved him, despite his experience of war and the Soviet concentration camps, from negative images of Germany and Russia. His opting for Polishness was based on wide and in-depth knowledge and determined by ideally valid cultural elements that he viewed as "golden nails that keep one alive", essential not only to define national belonging but also to support an integral human identity. ■■■