



RECONSTRUCTIONS AND MODERNIZATIONS OF HISTORIC TOWNS IN EUROPE IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

**NATION
POLITICS
SOCIETY**



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Building National Identity through Negation: Problem of Orthodox Churches in the Second Polish Republic

After the end of World War I, Poland regained its long-awaited independence. For the newly reborn state, the question of material and spiritual reconstruction and rebuilding the sense of national identity among its inhabitants became a priority. National identity may be built on positive as well as negative attitudes. By focusing on the Orthodox Church and situation of its properties, especially church buildings in the interwar Poland, this paper presents part of the policy of building national identity implemented by the Polish authorities, as well as results of founding it on negation of the 'Other,' to use Emmanuel Lévinas' term.¹ Changes in Polish architecture after the Great War were primarily fueled by restoration and reconstruction of towns and cities, which is the leading topic of this book. But, such perspective seems to be incomplete: architectural landscapes of many big cities, small towns and even villages were also modified through destruction of buildings that survived from the wartime, or as a result of their rebuilding.

The concept of 'national identity' is difficult to define. It has been imported from the field of psychology and psychoanalysis, and originally used by representatives of symbolic interactionism who

* Author would like to thank Anna Jaško for the proofreading of this essay.

¹ E. Lévinas, *Całość i nieskończoność. Esej o zewnętrzności*, trans. M. Kowalska, introd. B. Skarga, Warszawa 1998 (orig. *Totalité et infini : essai sur l'extériorité*, 1991), The term 'the Other' here generally refers to a person/a social group being outside the center, being different, considering i.e. cultural, ethnic or religious difference.

emphasized the dynamics of social interaction processes as fundamental for identity formation.² It was also used in sociology of culture to express autonomy and peculiarity of culture of different national groups.³ Issues related to national identity, be it individual or collective, for many years have been a topic of interest for different scholars, mainly sociologists, who produced a huge body of literature in this field.⁴ And despite that, or maybe for that very reason, defining the term ‘identity’ in a simple manner useful for historians seems to be impossible at the moment. Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper in their article *Beyond “identity”* (2000) argued that social sciences and humanities “have surrendered” to the word ‘identity,’ because it may mean too much, too little or – because of its sheer ambiguity – nothing at all.⁵ National identity may be considered to be a group identity, which – according to some scholars – has not got its own consciousness, in that case construed metaphorically only.⁶ Others, however, relate the term to the social subjectivity which is able to function regardless of whether it is realized by subjects or not.⁷ Despite problems with defining the term ‘national identity,’ several of its undoubtedly important aspects should be mentioned. These include: memory of one’s own past and awareness of the future, distinction between ‘us’ and ‘others,’ but also culture and religion, consolidated by the common language and ethnic origins.⁸ Anna Szyfer paid attention to the fact that scholars, while perceiving continuity and also a peculiarity of tradition, seldom define

² M. Melchior, *Spoleczna tożsamość jednostki*, Warszawa 1990, pp. 35-39.

³ J. Konieczna-Sałamatin, *Tożsamość narodowa a wartości polityczne, religijne i moralne w transformacji ustrojowej. Ukraina na tle Polski i innych krajów Europy Wschodniej*, Warszawa 2002, typescript of doctoral thesis supervised by prof. dr hab. Aleksandra Jasińska-Kania in the Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw, pp. 9-10, http://www.is.uw.edu.pl/zaklady/zsocog/spis_tresci.htm (accessed 20th December 2014).

⁴ A. D. Smith, *National Identity*, London–New York 1991; *Tożsamość a odmiennność kulturowa*, eds. P. Boski, M. Jarymowicz, H. Malewska-Peyré, Warszawa 1992; R. Jenkins, *Social Identity*, London 1996; A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge 1991; Z. Bokszański, *Ponowoczesność a tożsamość narodowa*, [in:] *Obszary ładu i anomii. Konsekwencje i kierunki polskich przemian*, eds. A. Miszalska, A. Piotrowski, Łódź 2006, pp. 229-242; Idem, *Tożsamości zbiorowe*, Warszawa 2008.

⁵ R. Brubaker, F. Cooper, *Beyond “identity,”* “Theory and Society” 2000 (29), p. 1.

⁶ Konieczna-Sałamatin, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁷ K. Kwaśniewski, *Tożsamość społeczna i kulturowa*, „Studia Socjologiczne” 1986 (26), no. 3 (102), pp. 5-15, qtd after: *Ibidem*.

⁸ L. Grześniakowska, *Być Francuzem – analiza debaty publicznej o tożsamości narodowej na podstawie artykułów prasowych oraz publikacji rządowych*, „Kwartalnik Kolegium Ekonomiczno-Społecznego. Studia i Prace” 2012, no. 3, p. 138.

the phenomenon of ‘identity’ in theoretical framework.⁹ Summarizing this short review, a general definition provided by Antonina Kłoskowska may be accepted in the following study. According to Kłoskowska:

...national identity of any national community involves its collective self-knowledge, self-definition, building its own image and the entire content, the essence of this self-knowledge and not externally created image of the nation’s personality.¹⁰

Also useful may be a simpler one after a Korean scholar, Yoonmi Lee, who proposes to define ‘national identity’ as: “An awareness of difference, that is, a feeling and recognition of “we” and “they.””¹¹ Methods of building this identity – as mentioned above – may vary and may be expressed through positive or negative social or cultural activities.

In the first years of the Second Polish Republic, architecture became an important, positive element of creating/building national identity. Many cities and villages were completely devastated during the war, not only by military operations, but also by the exploitative policy that the German and Russian occupants had pursued. Newly-designed buildings, especially representative public architecture sponsored by the new state, were created according to the proposals of the Polish ‘national style.’ Michał Pszczółkowski in his latest monograph of the Polish public architecture erected between the years 1918-1939 called this style as “traditionalism” in the broadest sense, in accordance with the prewar statements of Polish architects Lech Niemojewski (1894-1952) and Alfred Lauterbach (1884-1943).¹² Without delving into a terminological dispute, it is fair enough to conclude that this style continued the neo-romantic search for ‘Polishness’ (understood as the revival of the former Poland’s splendour through selected references to the historical buildings) in architecture that had begun in the 1900s.

⁹ A. Szyfer, *Tożsamość kulturowa. Implikacje teoretyczne i metodologiczne*, [in:] *Studia Etnologiczne i Antropologiczne*, vol. 1, *Śląsk Cieszyński i inne pogranicza w badaniach nad tożsamością etniczną, narodową i regionalną*, eds. I. Bukowska-Floreńska, H. Rusek, Katowice 1997, pp. 159-160.

¹⁰ A. Kłoskowska, *Kultury narodowe u korzeni*, Warszawa 1996, p. 99. All translations from Polish, if not otherwise stated, by Author.

¹¹ Y. Lee, *Modern Education, Textbooks, and the Image of the Nation. Politics and Modernization and Nationalism in Korean Education 1880-1910*, Routledge 2012, p. 29.

¹² M. Pszczółkowski, *Architektura użyteczności publicznej II Rzeczypospolitej 1918-1939. Forma i styl*, Łódź 2014, p. 87. On this issue see sr. Anna Tejszerska’s essay in this volume.

This style, popular during the interwar period in Poland, was based on patterns of the idealized past of the state and its culture, reflected, among others, in the so-called 'manorial style.'¹³

The need to manifest national distinctiveness was given the crucial meaning in the case of '*Kresy Wschodnie*' (the 'Eastern Borderlands'). Their quick Polonization was intended to confirm historical claims laid by Poland to these territories, today forming large parts of Belarus and Ukraine.¹⁴ The question of the eastern border of the Second Polish Republic, just as of other Polish borders, remained unsolved after the Versailles conference. Only after a two-year-long fights of the Polish troops with the Ukrainian and Bolshevik armies, the three contracting parties signed the Treaty of Riga on 18th March of 1921. Architecture became quickly one of the resources intended to confirm cultural and political 'Polishness' of the 'Eastern Borderlands'. In this context, a statement of architects in the introduction to the book summarizing first achievements in the postwar construction campaign of the Polish authorities in this region (presenting completed and pending projects to be used as templates for houses for government officials) published in 1925, is not surprising:

...by referring through the style ... to traditions of Polish architecture, we shall continue the work of our ancestors who had brought Polish culture to the East, and we shall free the local population from unbearable and, regrettably, quite widespread impression of temporariness of the Polish authority on eastern borderlands of the Polish Republic.¹⁵

After the final demarcation of Poland's borders had been completed, the question of social and territorial integration of a multinational and a multi-faith country became an important issue. Regarding multinationality, Poland was no exception in Europe and in terms of the number of minorities, it came only fifth after the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Belgium, Yugoslavia (in 1918-1929, under the name of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) and Czechoslovakia.¹⁶ But,

¹³ 'Manorial style' continued the tradition of Polish manor house architecture – the country seats of landowners – with colonnaded porch and mansard roof. M. Leśniakowska, *The Manor House – Towards a Retrospective Utopia*, "Polish Art Studies" 1992 (13), pp. 31-41.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 91.

¹⁵ *Budowa domów dla urzędników państwowych w województwach wschodnich*, Warszawa 1925, p. 12.

¹⁶ M. Białokur, *Mysł społeczno-polityczna Joachima Bartoszewicza*, Toruń 2005, pp. 213-214.

selective and emotional attitude towards Poland's history fundamentally influenced the religious and closely connected national policies of the new Polish authorities. Despite the fact, that basic regulations protecting rights of national minorities were accepted by Poland in the so-called Little Treaty of Versailles (28th June of 1919), assuming that "...all Polish citizens shall have the right to practise, in public as well as in private, any faith (*foi*), religion (*religion*) or belief (*croynance*) in an unrestricted manner,"¹⁷ they were not fully respected by the officials. Especially when the idea of the unified state with a single 'national identity' was supposed to be based on Roman Catholicism.

This was particularly problematic for the governance over the eastern territories, inhabited by Ukrainian and Belarusian minorities, being mostly Eastern Orthodox in their faith; however the Polish population had the majority in general.¹⁸ It is important to recall that after the Third Partition of Poland nearly all dioceses of Uniate Church – one of the largest religious communities in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – came into Russian Empire's protection. Except for a relatively tolerant reign of Tsar Paul I and his son Alexander I, Russian rulers starting from Catherine II, pursued a repressive Russification policy aimed at elimination of Uniate rites and conversion of its followers to Eastern Orthodox faith. This activity was sealed with the dissolution of the last Uniate diocese – Chełm Eparchy – in 1875 and its incorporation into the Russian Orthodox Church.¹⁹

During two subsequent general censuses of 1921 and 1931 demographic data was collected according to declared nationality and person's mother tongue. The results showed highly diversified distribution of population in the eastern voivodeships especially.²⁰ Among members and believers of the Orthodox church, especially the

¹⁷ *Traktat między Głównymi Mocarstwami sprzymierzonymi i stowarzyszonemi a Polską podpisany w Wersalu 28 czerwca 1919 r.*, Dziennik Ustaw (henceforth Dz.U.) 1920, nr 110, poz. 728.

¹⁸ Of course, there was also a large Jewish minority in Kresy, although it is beyond the interest of this paper.

¹⁹ W. Osadczy, *Święta Ruś. Rozwój i oddziaływanie idei prawosławia w Galicji*, Lublin 2007, pp. 205-234.

²⁰ It should be noticed that credibility of the officially presented data provoked questions and doubts from the very beginning, especially after the 1931 census. Nevertheless, the picture of ethnic relationships had been changing, being dependent from on the adopted criteria (religion or mother tongue). See: G. Hryciuk, *Przemiany narodowościowe i ludnościowe w Galicji Wschodniej i na Wołyniu w latach 1931-1948*, Toruń 2005, pp. 73-101.

Ukrainians were perceived by the Polish authorities as a group developing separatist aspirations, threatening Poland's national security.²¹ This issue was crucial for politicians: it was commonly realized, not only among the Polish right-wing nationalist circles, that separation of the Eastern Borderlands from Poland might put into question the newly regained independence of the country, especially considering the international politics.²² Defining the ambiguous term 'Kresy' – being still among the most important elements of the Polish historical narrative – is not an easy task. General definition refers to the stretch of land along the southeastern borders of Poland, but its accurate geographical range was determined differently at specific historic moments. In the Second Polish Republic, 'Kresy' – capitalized – meant territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania (including Vilnius) and eastern Galicia (including Lviv).²³ Eleonora Mietlicz, in turn, accepts a wide definition of 'Kresy' of the Second Polish Republic: lands belonging to Poland in the interwar period, "situated east of the area with dense Polish settlement, mostly inhabited by national minorities (Belarusians, Ukrainians, Jews) which after World War II were not incorporated into Poland."²⁴

²¹ M. Papierzyńska-Turek, *Uwarunkowania i skutki polityczne masowego burzenia cerkwi prawosławnych u schyłku II Rzeczypospolitej*, [in:] *Akcja burzenia cerkwi prawosławnych na Chełmszczyźnie i południowym Podlasiu w 1938 roku – uwarunkowania, przebieg, konsekwencje*, ed. G. Kuprianowicz, Chełm 2009, p. 33.

²² Among others Joachim Bartoszewicz, connected with a national-democratic faction, used to write a lot about the problems of minorities. See: J. Bartoszewicz, *Znaczenie polityczne Kresów Wschodnich dla Polski*, Warszawa 1924; Idem, *Zagadnienia polityki polskiej*, Warszawa 1929. The question of minorities in the interwar Poland is quite well researched. See: *Polska – Polacy – Mniejszości narodowe. Polska myśl polityczna XIX i XX wieku*, ed. W. Wrześniński, Wrocław 1992; *Spółczesność białoruskie, litewskie i polskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1919-1941*, eds M. Giżejewska, T. Strzembosz, Warszawa 1995; Białokur, *Białorusini w myśli politycznej Joachima Bartoszewicza*, „Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne” 2005, no. 23, pp. 119-131; *Kresy Wschodnie II Rzeczypospolitej: przekształcenia struktury narodowościowej 1931-1948*, ed. S. Ciesielski, Wrocław 2006.

²³ See: Bartoszewicz, *Kresy* [in:] Idem, *Podręczny Słownik Polityczny do użytku posłów, urzędników państwowych, członków ciał samorządowych i wyborców*, Warszawa [no date], pp. 408-410; *Ilustrowana encyklopedia Trzaski, Everta i Michalskiego*, vol. 2, Warszawa [1927], col. 1127; S. Ciesielski, *Kresy Wschodnie – dynamika przemian narodowościowych*, [in:] *Kresy Wschodnie II Rzeczypospolitej...*, pp. 7-12.

²⁴ E. Mietlicz, *Geografia polityczna Kresów Wschodnich w latach 1922-1930*, „Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska” 1999 (6), p. 178. It is worth to refer to the text of Władysław Serczyk who discussed the history of territory of *Kresy* and explained conflicts as well as complex relationships. W. Serczyk, *Ojczyzny upartych niepogód. Stawanie się kresowego labiryntu*, [in:] *Losy cerkwi w Polsce po 1944 roku*, eds. A. Marek, B. Tondos, J. Tur, K. Tur-Marciszuk, Rzeszów 1997, pp. 21-40.

The question of independence from the Russian Orthodox Church of the Orthodox church in Poland (being the second biggest religious confession) quickly became an important issue for maintaining the newly demarcated borders of the state in the east. From the very beginning, Polish authorities made considerable efforts to have the status of autocephaly granted. Orthodox bishops in Poland did not share the same view and were largely dependent on the decisions of Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow, who acted in favour of the unity of the Russian Orthodox Church and still hoped for the restoration of the tsarist empire. Arduous negotiations and significant diplomatic efforts finally led to approving autocephaly of the Orthodox Church in Poland by the Ecumenical Patriarch in 1925. This, however, had not been granted by the mother Church – that is, the one in Moscow – which officially accepted the status of the Polish autocephaly only in 1948 (without such approval, autocephaly was not canonically valid). Nevertheless, Polish authorities considered the autocephaly problem being solved in 1925. The Orthodox bishops in Poland had to officially accept this form of Church's independency too, although they did it gradually and reluctantly.²⁵

This complex situation of the newly-emerging geopolitical order entailed the natural attitude of seeing the Orthodox Church as a relic of the tsarist regime, being associated with the period of partitions of Poland by Russia, Austria and Prussia. Undoubtedly, the dynamic expansion of the Orthodox facilities in lands, forming the central voivodeships of the Second Polish Republic, escalated after the collapse of January Uprising against Russia (1863-1864) and had a political background, because the Orthodox church was strongly supported by the tsarist state that liquidated the Uniate Church. A large number of the Eastern Orthodox churches had also been erected in late nineteenth century for the needs of increasing number of Russian soldiers, police officers and civil servants who governed the Polish territories. All of them were Eastern Orthodox, therefore the demand for new places of worship occurred.

Hence, perceived as the symbol of the bygone Russian reign, Eastern Orthodox church buildings aroused reluctance in the Polish society after regaining independence. Such attitude was not ungrounded. Piotr Paszkiewicz notices that the number of Eastern Orthodox churches erected after the collapse of January Uprising increased disproportionately to the actual need, very often overwhelming the existing buildings with

²⁵ M. Papierzyńska-Turek, *Między tradycją a rzeczywistością. Państwo wobec prawosławia 1918-1939*, Warszawa 1989, p. 130.

the magnitude of the new shrines and temples. For example, building Orthodox churches especially in Warsaw definitely had a political background. The Orthodox church of Saint Mary Magdalene in Praga district (since 1921 a metropolitan council of the Orthodox Church) was built from 1867 to 1869 according to the design by Nikolai Sychev and was the first Eastern Orthodox church in Warsaw representing 'Russian-Revival' style.²⁶ General Yevgeny Petrovich Roznov (1807-1875), the head of the Building Committee, emphatically expressed builders' and Russian authorities' intentions with a statement that can be perceived as applicable to other similar investments in major Polish cities: "this just consecrated temple ... would best testify to the next generations the insistent [desire] to strengthen the Russian name and Russian nationality [in this country]."²⁷ Another example, the Staszic Palace, a classicist work by Antonio Corazzi (1792-1877), the former seat of the Warsaw Society of Friends of Sciences, became the home to an Eastern Orthodox church of Saint Tatiana of Rome. The church was created in the palace after its reconstruction in the 'Russian Revival' style between 1892-1893²⁸ on the initiative of Aleksandr Apuchtin (1822-1903), famous russificator of the educational system in the Polish provinces. The 'Moscow-Orthodox' (term coined by Brykowski²⁹) or the 'Russian-Byzantine' style (this term was used by Paszkiewicz³⁰) prevailed in designs of the mass-built Orthodox churches erected at that time.

Memory of the anti-Polish activities of the Russian occupant inspired radical opinions also among Polish architects. In his brochure entitled *O pomnikach i cerkwiach prawosławnych (About Orthodox Monuments and Churches)* published by the Association of Polish Cities, architect Mikołaj Tołwiński (1854-1924) postulated to restore as soon as possible numerous Catholic churches formerly adapted by Russians to serve as Orthodox temples. In specific cases Tołwiński accepted also demolition of outstanding Orthodox cathedrals as "symbols of

²⁶ P. Paszkiewicz, *Pod berłem Romanowów. Sztuka rosyjska w Warszawie 1815-1915*, Warszawa 1991, pp. 82-92.

²⁷ (D. W.), *Poświęcenie cerkwi na Pradze dn. 29 VI 1869 r.*, „Tygodnik Mód i Nowości” 1869, no. 29, qtd after: Paszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

²⁸ Paszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 95-103. The original classicist form of the building was restored by Marian Lalewicz between 1924-1926. M. Lalewicz, *Pałac Staszica w Warszawie. Zarys historii budowy, przebudowy i odbudowy*, Warszawa 1932, pp. 34-58.

²⁹ R. Brykowski, *Drewniana architektura cerkiewna na koronnych ziemiach Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 1995, p. 120.

³⁰ Paszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

rape and violence.”³¹ As an architect, he admired artistic value of the great Alexander Nevsky³² Cathedral in the Saxon Square in Warsaw, designed by Leon Benois and built between 1894-1912. He called this monumental edifice as “one of the most beautiful buildings in Europe.”³³ However, he pointed out that architectural composition and functional setting of this church made it impossible to convert it into a Catholic temple or a museum devoted to the Polish martyrdom, which was one of the proposals discussed by the group promoting the idea of preserving the former cathedral in its place. Finally, Tołwiński supported demolition of the building. He also developed the concept of creating special approval committees giving opinions and taking inventories of monuments for the local authorities.³⁴ Tołwiński’s statements not only reveal his competencies as an architect, but primarily his attitude as a Polish citizen who – guided by “religious tolerance motifs” – suggested preserving Orthodox churches indispensable to Orthodox believers. However, he pursued the pulling down of buildings created as a demonstration of the occupant’s power, treating such activity not as “an act of political or religious hatred but as ... a civil duty.”³⁵ Following years showed, however, that recovery of the former Orthodox church property considerably exceeded architect’s postulates.

With the general consent of the Polish public opinion, the former Orthodox cathedrals erected on the main squares of numerous cities, clearly emphasizing the occupant’s political domination, disappeared from the architectural landscape through 1920s and 1930s. Apart from the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Warsaw, other Orthodox churches such as the Orthodox cathedral of the Ascension in Kielce (built between 1868-1870), the Cathedral of Elevation of the Holy Cross on Litewski

³¹ M. Tołwiński, *O pomnikach i cerkwiach prawosławnych*, Warszawa 1919, p. 6.

³² It should be noticed that since eighteenth century, Aleksander Nevsky has been and still is one of the most revered Russian national saints. In nineteenth century as much as three tzars borne his name. Undoubtedly, it influenced the fact that up to the beginning of the twentieth century, hundreds of St. Aleksander Nevsky Orthodox churches had been built as a manifestation of religious expansion within and outside the Russian Empire. See: P. Klimow, *Ikonoğrafia Aleksandra Newskiego w religijnym malarstwie rosyjskim XIX i początku XX wieku. O związkach kultu, kultury i polityki w sztuce rosyjskiej*, [in:] *Nacjonalizm w sztuce i historii sztuki 1789-1950*, eds. D. Konstantynów, R. Pasieczny, P. Paszkiewicz, Warszawa 1998, pp. 117-119.

³³ Tołwiński, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

³⁴ For also this issue, see Piotr Zubowski’s essay in this volume.

³⁵ Tołwiński, *op. cit.*, p. 6.



(Lithuanian) Square in Lublin (built from 1870 to 1876) or of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul Cathedral in Kalisz (erected between 1875-1877) were demolished. Many were rebuilt and converted into Roman Catholic, mainly garrison churches, to recall examples from Siedlce, Radom and Lublin. The idea of ‘clearing off’ new garrison churches from what was called to be “the Russian deformations” was evoked in the summary of the exhibition held in November 1933 in Warsaw, celebrating the fifteenth year of the construction campaign led by the military.³⁶ Elements typical for Orthodox churches, such as characteristic cupolas and embellishments, were removed in two different ways: by introducing forms related to the style perceived as the ‘Polish Baroque,’ for example in Puławy (the former Orthodox church of the Holy Trinity, now the church of Our Lady of the Rosary) and in Suwałki (the former Orthodox church of Alexander Nevsky, now the church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul) or through modernization of the buildings structure and simplification of architectural details, for example in the case of the garrison churches in Siedlce (the former Orthodox church of the Holy Spirit, now of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) and in Lublin (the former Orthodox regimental church of Our Lady of Georgia, now of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception).

The Orthodox church of Alexander Nevsky in Suwałki [World War I postcard, edition by Bugarmee, courtesy of Aleksander Sosna]

³⁶ A. Król, *Piętnastolecie budownictwa wojskowego*, „Architektura i Budownictwo” 1933, no. 10-12, p. 296.



A view of Krakowskie Przedmieście in Lublin with the Orthodox cathedral of the Elevation of the Holy Cross on Litewski (Lithuanian) Square [postcard from ca. 1910, courtesy of The Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN w Lublinie]

But, in most cases the former Orthodox churches were demolished as part of the so-called ‘recovery’ action, carried out in several phases by the authorities. During the first phase (between 1918-1929), most of the spontaneously seized buildings, including the above-mentioned examples, were converted into Roman Catholic churches, especially those which originally had served Uniate or Catholic populations. Many other buildings, originally designed as Orthodox temples, were demolished. The second phase lasted from 1929 to 1934 and was characterized by mass claims to the former Orthodox properties, issued by the Catholic church. This was perceived by Ukrainians and Belarusians as discrimination of their minority groups. It is important to stress, that such a large number of petitions from Catholic leaders resulted from their insecurity about the lapse of property rights – according to law, such lawsuits had to be undertaken within ten years since Poland had established its control over the eastern territories.³⁷

³⁷ Papierzyńska-Turek, *Między tradycją a rzeczywistością...*, p. 344.

The legal status of the Orthodox Church in Poland, long unsettled in the interwar period, was conducive to the aforesaid activity. Despite the fact that the first regulations describing legal and constitutional issues in this field were included already in *Tymczasowe przepisy o stosunku rządu do Kościoła prawosławnego w Polsce* (*Temporary Regulations regarding the Government's Approach to the Orthodox Church in Poland*) in 1922, these failed to clearly set out property-related issues and were intended to be only a prelude for the future enforcement. This economic aspect seems to be underestimated in the research on this field. As Andrzej Chojnowski proposed, it played a substantial role in the relationship between the Polish authorities and the Orthodox Church,³⁸ considering huge amount of property that once was in its former possession. Significant part of it had been previously confiscated from the Roman Catholic Church by the occupants. However, the problem became even more complex as the Roman Catholic Church also had demanded a recovery of the property that had belonged to the Uniate Church before the partitions, but the legal successor should have been the Uniate Church also functioning in the Polish Second Republic.³⁹ One of such 'temporary provisions,' which, against its name, remained valid until enforcement of the decree signed by president Ignacy Mościcki on 18th November 1938, proved especially favourable to the Polish authorities. It defined that "...goods of the Orthodox Church, not excluding property obtained by the Orthodox Church from the Catholic Church, are state-owned, unless Orthodox or Catholic party is able to prove otherwise."⁴⁰



The Orthodox cathedral of the Elevation of the Holy Cross on Litewski (Lithuanian) Square. [photo taken before 1923, courtesy of The Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN w Lublinie]

³⁸ This question was analyzed by Andrzej Chojnowski in his paper *Spór o majątek cerkiewny w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, [in:] *Losy cerkwi w Polsce...*, pp. 43-59. See: W. Bendza, *Regulacja kościelnych spraw majątkowych na przykładzie Kościoła prawosławnego w Polsce*, [no place] 2009, pp. 19-49.

³⁹ Papierzyńska-Turek, *Między tradycją a rzeczywistością...*, p. 345.

⁴⁰ Archiwum Akt Nowych, Ministerstwo Wyznań Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego, Memoriał Departamentu Wyznań z dn. 27 V 1925, cat. no. 332, after: Chojnowski, *op. cit.*, p. 46.



The Orthodox garrison church of the Holy Spirit in Siedlce [postcard before 1910, edition and photo by A. Gancwol in Siedlce, courtesy of Aleksander Sosna]

The third and the last phase of the recovery action was the most dramatic and mainly involved demolition of churches, carried out on the initiative and by military forces of the Coordination Committee in the II Corps District Command in Lublin. In 1938 demolition became a systematic action in Chełm and South Podlasie (Podlachia) areas. This absolutely illegitimate procedure was based on a false premise: there had been a lot of Orthodox churches built on the mentioned territories during the partition period, which at that time were no longer necessary and deteriorating due to a decreasing number of Orthodox believers. In fact, Polish authorities were afraid of the increasingly active Ukrainian national movement, supported by many members of the Orthodox priesthood. Hence, authoritarian government attempted to force the people to convert to Catholicism by mass demolition of Orthodox churches. This, however, produced a contrary effect. Not only

did the number of Ukrainian nationalist centers not decrease, but they became more internally consolidated and mobilized in the face of threat to their Church.⁴¹ Within just two months, from mid-May to mid-July of 1938, one hundred and twenty-seven buildings were demolished (ninety-one churches, ten chapels and twenty-six houses of worship). Consequently, the architectural landscape of the region changed irretrievably and numerous historic buildings, often with precious furnishings, disappeared.⁴² This action happened even during the final works on the special agreement – *Układ między Stolicą Apostolską i Rzeczpospolitą Polską...* (*Agreement Between the Holy See and the Polish*

⁴¹ Papierzyńska-Turek, *Między tradycją a rzeczywistością...*, pp. 374-375.

⁴² These tragic events were presented in detail in above-mentioned book: *Akcja burzenia cerkwi prawosławnych...* See also: Papierzyńska-Turek, *Między tradycją a rzeczywistością...*, p. 358-377.

Republic...) – reached after many years of difficult negotiations, signed by the Polish authorities and representatives of both Churches on 20th June of 1938.⁴³

To offer a more complete overview of the situation of the Orthodox architecture in the Second Polish Republic, it is necessary to mention activities aimed at construction of new churches. Although these resulted in only a few completed projects, at least one can stress the evidence of some serious reflection on building the new Orthodox churches. State policy in this respect had, of course, some elements of propaganda intended to emphasize independence of the Polish Orthodox Church from Moscow. The key problem was style, although expectations of the Polish government were not clearly determined in this respect. There was one prerequisite, however: the design could not make any references to ‘Moscow’ churches. Petro Rychkov and Olga Mykhaylyshyn presented the history of a new Orthodox church built in Oryszkowce (Volhynia) as a symbolic “battle for style.”⁴⁴ Ministerial recommendations included a statement that the design should comply with the “local building tradition of the eastern borderlands”⁴⁵ which implied acceptance of the “pre-Moscow” period forms of local architecture. Architectural competition announced in 1927 by the Polish Orthodox Church authorities failed to solve the style-related problems and brought rather poor results.⁴⁶ In the terms of



Garrison church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Siedlce (the former garrison Orthodox church) [postcard from the interwar period, edition and photo by A. Sadowski in Siedlce, courtesy of Aleksander Sosna]

⁴³ *Układ między Stolicą Apostolską i Rzeczpospolitą Polską w sprawie ziem, kościołów i kaplic pounickich, których Kościół Katolicki pozbawiony został przez Rosję, podpisany w Warszawie dnia 20 czerwca 1938 roku*, Dz. U. 1939, no. 35, pos. 222.

⁴⁴ P. Rychkov, O. Mykhaylyshyn, *Konkurs 1928 roku na projekty cerkwi prawosławnych w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej: w poszukiwaniu nowej identyczności architektonicznej*, „Budownictwo i Architektura” 2013 (12), no. 4, pp. 190-191.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 191.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 202.



The Orthodox regimental church of Our Lady of Georgia in Lublin [photograph taken during World War I, courtesy of Aleksander Sosna]

the competition itself, two general shortcomings were emphasized, namely absence of the local, i.e. by implication, non-Moscow, Orthodox building tradition. The second problem characterized many newly-designed facilities in the Second Polish Republic: shortage of well-educated and qualified architects, especially in the Eastern Borderlands. As for style, the only suggestion concerning projects was that they should:

...refer to the most noble old tradition of the Orthodox church building which through its prestige, simplicity and beauty ... could serve as the foundations ... Such pure origins used to belong to the tradition of building Old Russian, Novohrad, Pskov and other Orthodox churches, as well as forms of wooden engineering of churches in Małopolska region.⁴⁷

For the scarcity of archival sources, one cannot tell much about the forty-four projects submitted to the jury of the competition. However, some knowledge about the architectural way of thinking may be obtained from the special catalogue⁴⁸ (where nine designs were reproduced) and an issue of the monthly “Architektura i Budownictwo” from 1928.⁴⁹ Disappointment of the jury, where, among others, famous Polish architects were present (Jarosław Wojciechowski, 1874-1942; Tołwiński; Zdzisław Mączyński, 1878-1961) is evident in the statements of the final report: “the competition failed to bring expected results as it did not reveal any

⁴⁷ *Cerkwie prawosławne. Wyniki konkursu*, Warszawa 1928, qtd after: *Ibidem*, pp. 191-192.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹ *Cerkwie murowane i drewniane*, „Architektura i Budownictwo” 1928, no. 1, pp. 26-31. The issue presented five projects.

new creations in the field of Orthodox architecture.”⁵⁰ It is difficult to agree fully with such a severe opinion. For example, the design proposed by Aleksandr Łuszczyński (1878-1943) from Lviv could potentially have become an interesting exemplar for the Orthodox architecture, considering its harmonious proportions. Łuszczyński was awarded second prize in the wooden churches category. He designed a building of a compact body, based on the plan of a Greek cross with a central cupola that would have dominated the smaller four domes at the ends of the cross arms. Hence, the project referred to the traditional, vernacular wooden architecture of Boyko churches.⁵¹ With a dynamic arrangement of faulted roofs and the entire pyramidal composition, the building would have obtained some slenderness and monumentalism too, but remained on paper.



Situation of the Orthodox Church in the Second Polish Republic was very difficult. Absence of legal regulations was conducive to mass recovery actions, leading to demolition, or at best, converting Orthodox into Catholic churches. In central Poland, first years after regaining independence were characterized by many spontaneous reactions of the society towards religious symbols of tsarist Russification – which undoubtedly Orthodox churches were. In eastern voivodeships on the other hand, the recovery transformed into mass demolition and

The Garrison church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in Lublin [photograph taken during World War II by Germans, courtesy of Aleksander Sosna]

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

⁵¹ The Boykos (the ethnic group of Carpathian highlanders) type of church is characterized by three-domed solid with the domes arranged in one line and with the largest section over the central part. See: *Wooden Tserkvas of the Carpathian Region in Poland and Ukraine. Cultural Property of the Republic of Poland and Ukraine for Inclusion in the World Heritage List*, Warsaw – Kiev 2011, passim, <http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/nominations/1424.pdf> (accessed 5th September 2016).

compulsory Polonization of the Orthodox believers, with the most tragic events in 1938. Similar spontaneous reactions of the Catholic inhabitants, as well as planned recovery actions of the authorities, took place not only in Poland, but were a frequent practice across the former western territories of the Russian Empire. Such examples were reported in Latvia or in the Duchy of Finland. In these countries however, no parishes were liquidated or churches demolished.⁵² As aptly noticed by Paszkiewicz, the Polish case can be described as a shortsighted policy. While the ‘re-Moscow-ing’ of Polish cities was ‘emotionally’ justified, the last phase of the recovery action increased the anti-Polish attitudes among the Ukrainian and Belarusian communities inhabiting the Polish state.⁵³ Negation of the ‘Other’s’ identity in the name of reinforcing national self-identity provided weak foundations that collapsed with the outbreak of World War II.

ELŻBIETA BŁOTNICKA-MAZUR

Building National Identity through Negation: Problem of Orthodox Churches in the Second Polish Republic

After the end of World War I, Poland regained its long-awaited independence. For the politics of the newly reborn state, question of material and spiritual reconstruction of the state and rebuilding the sense of national identity among its inhabitants became a priority. National identity may be based on positive as well as on negative social attitudes. This paper examines one aspect of the policy of building Polish identity, implemented by authorities in the Second Polish Republic, as well as results of founding it on the negation of the “Other” – using Emmanuel Lévinas’ term – by focusing on the Orthodox Church and fate of the Orthodox churches in Poland in the interwar period.

Situation of the Orthodox Church in the Second Polish Republic was very difficult. Absence of legal regulations was conducive to mass recovery actions, leading to demolition, or at best, conversion of the former Orthodox temples into Catholic churches. In central regions of Poland, first years after regaining independence were dominated by spontaneous reactions of the society towards religious symbols of the bygone tsarist Russification – which undoubtedly Orthodox churches were. While the ‘re-Moscow-ing’ [*odmoskwianie*] of the major Polish cities was ‘emotionally’ justified, the last phase of the reclamation actions increased the anti-Polish attitudes among the Ukrainian and Belarusian (mostly Orthodox) communities. In consequence it was a shortsighted policy. Negation of the “Other’s” identity in the name of reinforcing national single-ethnic self-identity provided weak foundations for the state, that collapsed with the outbreak of World War II.

⁵² Paszkiewicz, *Spór o cerkwie prawosławne w II Rzeczypospolitej*. „*Odmoskwianie*” czy „*polonizacja*”? [in:] *Nacjonalizm w sztuce...*, p. 231.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 232.