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Introduction

Poles and Czechs have been neighbours for centuries. We both speak Western Slavic languages and share similar Slavic origins. Moreover, history often condemned us to a common fate, such as the submission of Bohemia, Moravia, and also a part of Silesia, to the Habsburg Monarchy. The both nation states have much in common as well as differ in many respects. They underwent modernization, nationalization, experienced the period of socialism, and finally found themselves in a whirlwind of globalization and a new social reality.

Common membership in the Communist Bloc, and then the systemic transformation, maintained the analogous fates of the both nations, which are imprinted on the consciousness of their societies. At the same time, historical differences also occurred, such as between the accomplishments of Jan Hus and the Counter-Reformation in Poland. The result is different approaches of Poles and Czechs to religion.

The period of systemic transformation, opening to the outside world and the processes of globalization have caused an influx of new trends, styles and the Western values. It concerns the inhabitants of the both countries, especially the younger generation. The period in question allowed them to explore their identity, particularly in terms of ethnicity and religion. Such processes occurred in both the Polish and the Czech communities.

Socio-economic transformation in the last two decades accounts for a major change in lifestyle. For sociologists, a social change is a major challenge which gives the opportunity to monitor many aspects of society. What is particularly interesting is observing changes in border areas.

The aim of this publication is to present the changes in public awareness on both sides of the border (in Silesia and Moravia), as the similarities and differences are more apparent there. These changes relate primarily to the younger generation, but also to the generation of “real socialism”, and they are reflected not only in economic terms but also in social dimensions, e.g. in family and religion, as well as in ethnic and environmental awareness. Until now, econo-

mists have written many books on social and cultural issues, but there are no books by sociologists. The monograph will therefore contribute to the description and analysis of changes in awareness of the Polish-Czech borderlands. It will be pointed out how the economic changes that occurred during the systemic transformation are reflected in the social changes and how this affects the consciousness and behaviour of residents of the borderlands.

This book comprises the articles written by the researchers of the Institute of Sociology, University of Silesia in Katowice and the researchers of the Department of Sociology, Palacký University in Olomouc. The book is divided into two parts showing the changes in the awareness of people living on either side of the Polish-Czech border.

The Polish part of the collection opens with a text by Andrzej Górny: “From church religiousness to spirituality. The transformation of religion in the early 21st century”. The author’s analysis of the results of studies on religiosity represents a unique application of significant transformations in the prevailing attitudes to religion which have occurred and still occur in modern societies. Traditional churches are no longer monopolistic institutions in determining what is religious. There is a peculiar accent shift – from institutions to individuals. More and more people define their spirituality individually. The paper is an attempt to reflect on the directions of a general and specific transformation of attitudes towards religion possible to identify in the contemporary society of Silesia.

Urszula Swadźba in her paper “Ethnic identification as a part of the Silesians’ identity” addresses the problem of changes of ethnic identifications of Silesians. First, a theoretical context of the considerations is presented, along with the concept of identity and national (ethnic) identity. Then, based on the work of historical and sociological developments, the sources of formation of ethnic peculiarity among Silesians are presented. Finally, on the basis of her own research carried out in three selected Silesian communities, the author shows the current shape of identification and the link with Silesian affiliation. In the conclusions, the dynamic nature of this phenomenon is indicated. In a unified society there is a rebirth of Silesian identity and ethnic identity.

Adam Bartoszek in an article “Ethno-regional diversity in Upper Silesia vs the historical memory of school children” attempts to answer the main research question: What factors shape the identity of the young generation of Silesians and what their sense of cultural rootedness is? This question is linked to the idea of changes in the socio-cultural habitus among the inhabitants of the Upper Silesia. The problem is presented on the basis of the theory of cultural capital and is designed to recognize changes in the formation of ethnic habitus of Silesians. Conclusions are drawn on the basis of research conducted on the generation of school-attending children and youth that inherits its identity from their parents, and subsequently modifies it during the interaction with a peer group.

Monika Žak in her text “Silesian family – yesterday and today” undertakes the problem of changes that can be observed in Silesian families: yesterday and today. The Silesian family of yesterday was a extended family, bonded together by very strong emotional and economical ties. Tradition and the cultivation of patterns operating in the life of successive generations in a significant order in the daily lives of each of the Silesian family. Today’s Silesian family is often a nuclear family that cultivates the tradition only on occasions of various festivals and cultural events. The author, based on research conducted by other sociologists and her own research, analyses these changes.

Kinga Hoffmann in a paper “Work in young Silesian women’s value-system” stresses the value of work for Silesians. Nevertheless, women are facing a problem of keeping the balance between the work and the private life. The author describes the topic on the basis of her own research conducted in selected Silesian towns. Presented results show work as a specific area of women’s activity. Therefore, the author emphasizes this aspect of changes in the area and its consequences.

The second part of the book contains the articles by Czech scholars/researchers. They relate to issues, similar to their Polish counterparts.

Dušan Lužný in his paper “Religion in Czech Silesia: An attempt to explain Czech irreligiosity” aims to identify the characteristics of religious life in the Czech part of Silesia in comparison to the situation in the entire Czech Republic. Some parts of this region rank among the most religious parts of the otherwise highly secularized Czech society. The question this paper tries to answer (or at least indicate a possible answer to) is: what are the factors which lead to the maintenance and continued religious reproduction. The key concept for answering this research question is the concept of cultural memory.

Jan Váně in “The influence of the Catholic Church in the border regions: Comparing Silesia and Western Bohemia” concentrates on the role the Catholic Church plays in the Czech Republic and on the influence it exercises in this country. The author compares two regions (the Moravia-Silesia Region and West Bohemia) in which the Catholic Church has a very different position and draws a comparison among publicly-accessible socio-demographic data on the targeted regions with the *Acts of Spiritual Administration* data collected in the Czech Catholic Church database. He compares the Pilsen and Ostrava-Opava dioceses, which overlap with the selected regions. Since uninterrupted 1997–2009 data series were available for these regions, it is possible to forecast what position the Church will hold in the compared regions in the future.

Jan Kalenda in a paper “State formation on periphery: Precarious state building in Silesia” deals with the question of origins and consequences of state building on the periphery of the Bohemian lands between 10th and 17th century. The text primarily focuses on the key aspects of state formation activities in the area of Silesia and compares these elements with the character of state-making activi-

ties in the centre of the Czech kingdom. It also asserts that state making in the Silesia has many autonomous aspects that result from different kinds of cultural, political, and economic backgrounds (institutions), as well as from specific relations between the state administrative centre and local state agents.

Daniel Topinka in “Ethno-national paradox: The case of Hlučín area” deals with the autochthonous inhabitants of the Hlučín area district and focuses on changes in the national identity formation among generations of the Hlučín people. During three centuries, the inhabitants of the Hlučín area were exposed to ethno-national paradox. They faced the overlay of national projects that created changeable situations and similar social reality, where the social categories of unlikeness were intensively formed. The ideology of nationalism in the 19th century formed the destiny of local inhabitants. While the ethnic identities enabled a compatibility with Czech nationalism and the affiliation to the substantial Czech tribe, the national identities kept the orientation to German culture and thought during the 20th century. Today, in the period of deconstruction of nationalism, these identities do not play such an important role as they did in the past.

Helena Kubátová in “Changing life situations of Silesians in Hlučín region” points out the uniqueness of the Silesian region of Hlučín and identifies the changing life situations of its inhabitants as perceived by themselves. The text contains basic statistical data concerning the region, a concise outline of its history and an analysis of non-standardized interviews with the region’s native inhabitants. The analysis is based on the changes in four topic areas which form the notion of life situations: the uniqueness of the region and its inhabitants, working life, family life and public life. Most of the changes were caused by general modernization and civilization trends in modern societies. The disruption of generational continuity as a consequence of the post-Second World War trauma is a specific cause limited to Hlučín region. Although the region is losing its uniqueness, it is still worth studying as it cherishes values and lifestyles that have completely vanished elsewhere.

The proposed topics show the possible viewpoints from which we can observe and compare the events in the two societies. The reader has the opportunity to become familiar with different views of sociologists on similar topics and observe the changing shape of both contemporary societies. It may prove important not only for our present, but for our future as well.

Urszula Swadzba, Daniel Topinka