Abstract

The fall of communism in the 1990s, started a complex process of development of the market economy, political democracy and national sovereignty in the area of the Kresy. Polish community maintaining inter-generation heritage in the Kresy, expressed in the language, symbols and traditions of Polish families, focused around the church at the same time creating schools and a number of Polish organizations and associations. Young people of Polish origin began arriving to the country to study. The largest obstacle for them in integration with the Polish society is poor command of the language, therefore peers treat them as the so-called "Russians". All immigrants from the Kresy holding the Polish Card are similarly called. Meanwhile, a private sense of national identity is dictated to the representatives of this group by declaring the Polish national identity. They chose it consciously as the "better" one, still in the country of birth, increasing their status in the post-soviet reality of ethnically mixed families. When coming to Poland, they carry elements of Polish national culture canon preserved in the Kresy that they identify with. In the process of social integration immigrants from the Kresy attempt to become incorporated into the basic part of the Polish society, aiming at obtaining a rightful status of a Pole. As representatives of the Polish national group they keep the ties with the country of birth, by communicating with the use of signs and symbols common for Poland and the Kresy. Immigrants from the Kresy is a group having influence on strengthening the countrymen, concentrated around Polish associations and organizations in Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine or Moldova. They form a network of transnational interrelations in the region of central eastern Europe, directly affecting the formation of new ties and new elites throughout the whole region.
geographical and socio-ethnologic sense. This means recognition of their variability in space, namely instability of territory, which this quality is attributed to, as well as variability of cultural and ethnic system as a result of cultural and civilization diffusion. (ibidem: 230)

Examples of such processes taking place in the Kresy of the former Polish Republic were mass deportations, organized by Stalin before World War II, during occupation as well as after its termination. They caused banishing hundreds of thousands of people from homelands inhabited for generations. The war itself also required movement of huge armies and thousands of civil employees constituting its base. Later, in turn, hundreds of thousands of people escaped their past habitats because of fear of occupation terror. The end of World War II was accompanied not only by many thousands of people returning home, but also a new stage of displacements forced by political decisions. As early as in 1944, as a consequence of settlement of the course of eastern border of Poland, decisions were made referring to the fate of Polish, Ukrainian, Belorussian, Lithuanian and Jewish population inhabiting both sides of the new border. Agreements made by the Polish Committee of National Liberation and the governments of: Belorussian SSR, Ukrainian SSR and Lithuanian SSR contained similar settlements. All three agreements regulated both the issues of relocation of the population to Poland and from Poland to relevant Soviet republics. Up to 1 July 1945, in the area of the present Lithuania 383135 people willing to leave for Poland were recorded, 197 156 people left, which constitutes 45% of the people willing to relocate. In the case of Vilnius 80% of those willing left, but from the Vilnius province only 31.3% of people declaring the desire to move to Poland left, and from Kaunas Lithuania only 8.3% of the recorded came to Poland within its new boundaries. On the other hand, by 1 November 1945, 772564 people i.e. 75% of the number of persons declaring the desire to relocate to Poland (854809 people) moved from Ukraine. By 1945, 348000 people were relocated to Poland from Belarus which constituted 68% of those registered to leave. The greatest percentage was displaced from the region of Grodno and Volkovysk, the smallest in the region of Navahrudak 20.6%, Vileyka 13.4%, Hlybokaye 9.8%. The greatest percentage number of Poles as compared to the number of inhabitants stayed in the area of today's Lithuania, ca. 195 000 people, in particular in the area of the Vilnius province, Kaunas Lithuania and in the area of today's Belarus where remained ca. 32% of the number of those originally declaring leaving for Poland (i.e. ca. 100 000). The relatively smallest percentage of people declaring leaving for Poland in 1946 stayed in Ukraine, i.e.25% (i.e.ca 82 000 people). Currently, roughly 1 million Poles live in the countries outside the eastern frontier of Poland. Among them, ca. 235 000 live in Lithuania, in Belarus (from 295 000 according to official data to 400 000 according to approximate data), in Ukraine 144 000 (Wołkonowski,2011: 77-78), in Latvia ca 60 000 in Moldova ca. 5 000 Poles, mainly near Bălți and in Kishinev. (Gjebinska,2010: 24) in Estonia now live ca 2 000. Poles. (Wołkonowski,2011: 78). Polish communities in the East constitute the most poorly educated minority groups (in Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia and Estonia, Moldova) (Wyszyński,2011: 121). This results from particular restrictions, terror and persecution towards Polish minority, which created elites before the war in these areas. These were often noble families. The communist propaganda was aimed at sovietisation of population, rubbing out any signs of Polishness. Depolonization was backed by erasing names of villages and towns as well as streets, monuments etc. Prejudice towards Poles was present, along with aversion and phobias which forced people to conceal their origin. (Stroński,2011: 143)

Each of us is born in a place where they experience the world for the first time. This place determines our identity, makes it possible to answer the question of where we came from, who we are. In this way our primary identity is created, an affiliation, as Stanisław Ossowski wrote, to private homeland. Identity is connected with the place, in such a case a question arises: what is a place? It always belongs to someone, and access to it is limited, either symbolically or physically. The place is, as Yi Tuan says – a humanized space. A place is defined by people creating a group referred to as local community. For many centuries people did not consider their identity. It was obvious, related to place, the name of which often served as a surname, they did not go beyond the place, generally not further than to the nearest town. However, for centuries there were cases that entire families, villages and even communities left their family territories migrating into foreign places. Władysław Kopaliński defines migrations as ”taking over new areas” derived from Latin "migratio" - to wander (Kopaliński,2000: 327). Migrations may have
change connected with the so-called plastic global culture, influences also conservative Polish communities in cultural heritage brought from the east. The process of culture inheritance is based on it programmes aiming at international cooperation etc. are made possible. Rooting results from preserved tradition. Educational activities are conducted among children and teenagers, education in Poland is enabled (especially colleges) organization of newspapers and magazines are published, educational and sentimental tourism is developed. Educational activities passing traditions. It is done in various ways e.g.: different Associations and Organizations are created, publications, close to those who stayed (e.g. in Ukraine) and to those who were forced to leave family territories after World War II. Middle and young generation of descendants of pre-war inhabitants of the Polish Kresy, now declare citizen identity of the country in which they were born, i.e. Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Belorussian. At the same time they often feel the tradition of Polish roots. Many things differ among the inhabitants of today's Kresy located within six independent countries but they also have many things in common. A common binder is history, the so-called local language (thus, the possibility to communicate in spite of state boundaries) and above all, blood ties, preserved in spite of numerous relocations and later migrations to the west i.e. to Poland. For generations, cultural heritage of the Kresy will still affect the process of developing local communities in social ecosystems they came upon, that are close to those who stayed (e.g. in Ukraine) and to those who were forced to leave family territories after World War II. Older generation, for fear that when it is not present the so-called "Kresy" ties will tear, strive for inter-generation passing traditions. It is done in various ways e.g.: different Associations and Organizations are created, publications, newspapers and magazines are published, educational and sentimental tourism is developed. Educational activities are conducted among children and teenagers, education in Poland is enabled (especially colleges) organization of holidays for children and the youth from the Kresy region, family reunions, creation of various trans-border programmes aiming at international cooperation etc. are made possible. Rooting results from preserved tradition. The process of culture inheritance is based on it. (Dobrowolski, 1966: 14), For this reason, the memory of the Polish cultural heritage brought from the east, the Kresy, and preserved in post-war Poland was so important. Cultural change connected with the so-called plastic global culture, influences also conservative Polish communities in the Kresy, strong as a result of family ties and safe space which they live in. However, passing family traditions in the awareness of these communities is so strong that representatives of medium and older generations heroically choose to tear descendants from each other and their homeland, to provide them with worthy life and social advance. This is proven by empty villages in Belarus, where currently only old people live, awaiting death. Many young people left to study in Poland and could not return because they would not get a passport once again. The situation seems to be the best in Lithuania. There is no problem with visiting the house or coming back. After the introduction of Karta Polaka (the Polish Card - a document confirming Polish nationality or origin) the situation improved a bit. It is difficult to be surprised that it is hard for young people, Poles from the Kresy (particularly from Ukraine) to settle in Poland, since after traumatic circumstances of sending them from home to the Homeland for a better life, they have a very limited chance to receive Polish citizenship and frequently, in particular at universities, they are considered "Russians". As Walenty Wojnilo (Wojnilo, 2011: 178) writes: "if for a young person from Suwałki town work or career in Warsaw is a natural advance on the line province – centre, then for a young person from Vilnius it is no longer migration, but emigration". The Polish state by granting scholarships to young Poles from the east, conducts voluntary or compulsory nature, deportations as well as expelling, relocations and resettlements may constitute them. Also indirect migrations may take place, which are illusorily voluntary, while in fact gradually controlled by the authorities. (Strzelańczyk, 2006: 24). Most Poles in Lithuania and Belarus have been still inhabiting the affiliated areas of impoverished gentry for centuries. However, their houses and farms after the war became the ownership of kolkhozy (big farms set up by Soviets working as cooperatives). In turn, a considerable part of Poles in Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia and Moldova left the village (especially young people) and moved to the city (because of school or work). Based on research conducted for several years by means of interviews as well as observation in the area of the Kresy, I draw a conclusion that "the place" preserved until today, namely orbis interior of Poles in Lithuania and Belarus gives also the possibility to preserve a stronger sense of the Polish group and national identity. The situation is often slightly different in Ukraine or Moldova. Deprivation of the place related to family roots weakens the sense of group or national identity, particularly if the entity already has a multiethnic provenance and is looking for his/her own identity. From general calculations it seems that only after World War II roughly 1.5 million people were expelled from the family ground and were transferred to a completely different social ecosystem, having different habitat in the form of physiographic, historical and cultural conditions. Relocations from the Kresy did not mean total isolation of families from their roots. Frequently close family: brothers, parents, sisters, remained in the East. Today we speak of double identity of persons who, 60 years ago, stayed outside the eastern frontier, and their children and grandchildren. The most important factors are language and religion. Until recently the syndrome of a Pole-Catholic clearly specified the national identity. This was the case in Lithuania, especially Kaunas, and it is the case until today in the Šalčininkai region. It may be also present in Belarus in the area of Grodno, Pinsk and Stolin and in Ukraine, for instance, in the area of Zhytomyr, Zhytomyr, Liov, Ivanovo-Frankivsk or Ternopil. Frequently also the Polish language was preserved among older generations. Young people understand Polish but do not speak it very well. Middle and young generation of descendants of pre-war inhabitants of the Polish Kresy, now declare citizen identity of the country in which they were born, i.e. Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Belorussian. At the same time they often feel the tradition of Polish roots. Many things differ among the inhabitants of today's Kresy located within six independent countries but they also have many things in common. 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a not entirely consistent policy, it co-finance simultaneously the scholarship system of Poles in the countries of birth. In this way the Poles in the Kresy countries no longer sustain Polishness because they do not need to study at the Polish universities and use the Polish language. Poland should provide help to young graduates in staying in Poland and also conduct an organized policy of supporting and facilitating return to the east so that they could, in the countries of birth, support Polish education and culture, as well as develop economic cooperation between Poland and the country they came from, creating intellectual elites. Currently there are more and more examples of organizations employing graduates of Polish universities in the east. What matters is their knowledge of domestic conditions and the language but also education appreciated in the east. Now in Ukraine operates a Polish-Ukrainian Chamber of Industry and Commerce, in Ivano-Frankiws, an International Association of Polish Entrepreneurs in Ukraine, many partner cities also signed agreements on economic and cultural cooperation. For instance, Bielsko Biała with Berdyansk. Students from the east determined by difficulties in Poland that from the beginning of the 1990s have accumulated before them, decided to create their own organization with the help of friends from the University of Warsaw. In 1999 a Student Inter-University Organization of the Kresy people was established (Studenccka Międzyuczelniana Organizacja Kresowiaków) - young Polish intelligentsia from the former USSR in search for their place in Poland. The stronger the sense of affiliation to one's own group (minority) and at the same time identification of individual identity (connecting and balancing the "roots"), the stronger the entity, more creative and more resistant to adversities. It is easier to be in a difficult post-soviet reality. An example constitute the so-called "Russian Poles", the children of families that partly can prove Polish roots. Currently a quite common activity in this environment is sending children to Poland by Polish associations and organizations in particular in Ukraine as well as Belarus and Moldova, so that they get education. For this purpose sometimes even changes in national identification take place, for example from Ukrainian to Polish to ensure better future for the descendants and their social advance. The fall of communism in the 1990s, started a complex process of development of the market economy, political democracy and national sovereignty in the area of the Kresy. Polish community maintaining heritage in the Kresy, expressed in the language, symbols and traditions of Polish families, focused around the church, at the same time creating schools and a number of Polish organizations and associations. Young people of Polish origin began arriving to the country to study. The largest obstacle for them in integration with the Polish society is poor command of the language, therefore peers treat them as the so-called "Russians". All the immigrants from the Kresy are also called this way. Meanwhile, a private sense of national identity is dictated to the representatives of this group declaring the Polish national identity. They chose it consciously as the "better" one, still in the country of birth, increasing their status in the post-soviet reality of ethnically mixed families. When coming to Poland, they carry elements of Polish national culture canon preserved in the Kresy and one they identify with. In the process of social integration immigrants from the Kresy attempt to become incorporated into the basic part of the Polish society, aiming at obtaining a rightful status of a Pole. As representatives of the Polish national group they keep the ties with the country of birth, by communicating with the use of signs and symbols common for Poland and the Kresy. Immigrants from the Kresy is a group having influence on strengthening countrymen concentrated around Polish associations and organizations in Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine or Moldova.

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