

Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis

Studia Sociologica IV (2012), vol. 1, p. 93–105

Renata Holda

Jagiellonian University, Poland

Galicia. Borderland, History and Myth

Abstract

The subject of my article is contemporary dimension of the Galician myth, which presents this country as a place for the harmonious existence of the nations: Poles, Ukrainians and Jews. During the period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, popularization of the ideology of Sarmatianism resulted in the cultural polonization of elites (noble stratum). The Jews preserved their separateness, which was guaranteed institutionally. The social and political changes caused that nationalistic conflicts had intensified under the Austrian rule, in this Polish-Ukrainian antagonism. The crisis of Jewish identity, which was connected with modernising and assimilatory tendencies, also appeared in this time. Paradoxically, Galician myth ignores these facts and emphasizes multiculturalism and pluralism of this country, not nationalistic tensions.

Key words: Galicia, Borderland, political myth

Introduction

The broadly understood problem area of Galicia has in recent years gained in popularity. This interest has been of note from at least the 1960s, finding its expression initially in literature extolling the loss of the “land of one’s childhood years”, only to subsequently transform itself, post 1989, into a phenomenon within the general cultural vein. We personally have witnessed not so much the creation of Galicia as the strengthening of the myth of Galicia, in which the multiculturalism of this historical land is exhibited and created as a place for the harmonious existence of nations living at one in peace. These idealised views are accompanied by the conviction about the uniqueness of Galician culture, harmoniously combining within itself universal elements deriving themselves from Viennese imperial patronage while locally represented by the indigenous element of Poles, Ukrainians and Jews.

The subject of my article is this contemporary dimension of the Galician myth. A myth I understand – in accordance with the proposal advanced by Leszek Kołakowski – as passing of objectively genuine intellectual constructions present in the life of a man, once fulfilling an organisational, interpretational function and bestowing therein a sense to reality (Kołakowski 2003, pp. 8–11). In this understanding the myth of Galicia does not correspond to history but recalls a certain version of it. Galicia may be viewed as a historical problem, within categories of social integration

or disintegration. Any tale about it carries within it varied meanings, the source of which is the present. It is therefore difficult to treat it solely as a nostalgic and casual tale of the good old days.

Borderland

The understanding of the concept "Borderland" does not limit itself to a geographically understood territory of physically demarcated political boundary. These are not merely "border" places spatially distanced from the centre in a topographical sense, but also culturally perceived expanses – symbolically located "between" various groups (Babiński 1997, p. 42–43). Borderlands may be defined as a jointly divisional expanse, that is a place of meeting, collision or the crossing of two cultures or greater number of national, ethnic or minority groups. It is therefore a place for intensive multicultural contacts, one which may take on various forms of interaction: from cooperation and assimilation through opposition and confrontation (Sadowski 1997, p. 42).

The presence within a limited and affectively designated territory of societies differing in themselves and perceiving their own specificity, out of which each and every is "at home" and in his own way "utilises" the territory incorporating it into cultural practices, favours observations and self-determination, as well as generating a situation of exchange and the contact undertaking of choices (Kantor 1996, p. 30). The joint existence of cultures results in their rivalry, which may take on the form of direct and heated confrontation (ethnic conflict) or may be of a non-violent form relating to a symbolic sphere. Competitiveness in this case encompasses values and various lifestyles as well as the relation to one's place of abode as treated emotionally. The notion of such a place as the "cradle", "bastion", "eternal domicile" is at times linked with an imperative inciting its defence and salvation.

The possibility of cultural choices characteristic for adjacent areas, for those observers appearing as a privilege, may be the cause of frustration brought about by discomforting state of affairs for the individual "that of being a resident" and consequently the absence of an unambiguous sense of belonging and roots. The self-characterisations of border people defined by the term "local/borderman" may be treated as an expression of this dilemma and as an attempt to resolve the perplexities of identity. This becomes especially significant in a situation where a national identification follows the tracks of cultural identification. Nationalism, by principle cultivating differences, excludes being "midway" and demands unequivocal declarations.

Historical eastern Galicia was an example of a borderland thus understood, demarcated not through the existence of a political border but through the proximity of cultures being at the same time different ethnic groups. Amongst these the most numerous were Poles, Ruthenians and Jews – groups whose presence on this territory appeared eternal and lasting.

There Where the Sarmatians Lived

Galician Ruś was incorporated into Poland by Casimir III the Great in the mid fourteenth century, and made into the Ruthenian voivodeship (province). From at least that time this territory was a place for knightly and lower gentry settlement, while following the period of incursions and the Polish-Cossack wars, which resulted in the depopulation of the country, equally peasant settlement. During the period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth this borderland region, lying at the edge of the state boundaries, was treated as a zone of diminishing political influences and an area of contact with the Muslim world, represented by the Turks and Tatars who were associated with threat. The presence of this well-perceived civilizational border gave rise to the creation of the Polish myth of “*antemurale christianitatis*”. This was to impact heavily during the period of Polish Sarmatianism (17th–18th century), creating a sense of pride, the basis of which was a false, as it was to turn out, sense of European indispensability.

Sarmatianism connected itself with the legendary tribes that had once inhabited the borderlands of Poland and Ruś and which had successfully fought off the incursions of Rome. Initially this was a political concept which transformed itself into an unusually attractive cultural movement. The idea of belonging to a noble nation – the Sarmatian, supposed privileges, “golden freedom” and the equality of all those creating it regardless of ethnic, linguistic or religious differences. “The «Union of the Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania» [as Andrzej Walicki has noted] appeared in this way to be a natural unity of the Sarmatians, a legally binding manifestation of a joint identity amongst the Polish nobility and the Lithuanian-Ruthenian boyars” (2009, p. 21).

The ideology of Sarmatianism, initially connected with the needs of political integration, that had been adopted and recognised as their own by the elites scattered over the expanse of the Commonwealth with time assimilated noble customs resulting in the cultural convergence of this social stratum. The Polonization or westernization of Ruś has been assessed by some researchers as an example of expansionism “a thrust to the East” (Ševcenko 1996, p. 45) and considered as a process similar to that of colonial domination (Hann 1998, p. 846). It follows, however, to emphasize that it was not connected with a process of forced adoption of Polish as a language or Catholicism as a religion but that the assimilation was voluntary in nature. There is no doubt, however, that as a result of the political state of affairs Polish culture was to enjoy for several centuries a privileged position while Polish as a language was widely adopted as the language of learning and politics. According to Andrzej Walicki such a situation was decisive in meaning that in no way could the Commonwealth of Two Nations be referred to as a multicultural state, since such a concept assumes the absence of domination and relations being subjected to the limitation of a given state (Wielicki 2009, p. 369). Nonetheless this same author elsewhere emphasizes that this situation favoured the separation of the culture of Ruś from that of Russia and as a consequence formulated a Ruthenian cultural identity, which in the future was to enable the construction of a modern nation and the Ukrainian state (Walicki 2009, p. 23).

The proposal to jointly create a “Samartian Republic” affected exclusively the gentry nobility. The lower social strata, living at the time in isolated settlements were not the subject of any action or agitation whatsoever and could as a result preserve at least in an “etherized state” their ethnic identity. Amongst the peasants who had transferred themselves from the central lands to the area of the south-east of the Commonwealth, there was equally the possibility of the opposite process – in relation to Polonization – of Ruthenisation. With time this resulted in a situation whereby the cultural and religious differences corresponded with the socio-economic differences. Poles – the gentry and owners of dominions, were contrasted with the peasantry in serfdom – the Ruthenians. This stratification was equally strengthened by religious diversity.

A change in the dominating relations to those of more egalitarian nature and subsequently symmetrical ones occurred from the mid nineteenth century. Already during the period of Galicia the state–class relations were superseded by national relations, while the hitherto Ruthenian population started to adopt Ukrainian identity (Babiński 1997, p. 66).

Galicia as a Project

The Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria (Volodymyr-Volhynia) appeared on maps following the 1st Partition of Poland. The name Galicia referring to the transitory medieval episode of Hungarian rule by King Bela IV over Halych and Volhynia, was the idea of the Austrian administration, through which they sought a legitimization for their annexation of the Polish lands, officially called “repossession”.

Emperor Joseph II in visiting the new acquired province in 1773 clearly felt its alienness. He wrote to his brother: “Here I am among the Sarmatians” (Wolff 2004, p. 820). He was not expressing approval by saying so. Sarmatianism, in the eyes of Polish nobility, combined something particular, unique and superior, whereas for the observers from Western Europe it appeared as a barbaric mix of oriental influences. Galicia was for the new ruler a backward place and even a wild one, representing astonishing social relations, demanding instant intervention and the introduction of new rules of governance. It was a country in which “[...] there is the confusion like no other: cabals, intrigues, anarchy, finally even an absurdity of principles” (Wolff 2004, p. 821).

The first period of Habsburg rule over Galicia was characterised by activity undertaken in the spirit of enlightened absolutism, which was motivated by the need “to raise up” to western standards the barbarian legacy of the Sarmatians. Efforts were undertaken to eliminate the system of gentry privileges and the traditions of this social group, weakening their position significantly in the process. Social and agrarian reforms clearly improved the situation of the peasants and ensured them legal protection which resulted in the appearance of naive monarchism – the belief in the existence of a good emperor, the friend and champion of the peasants (Hołda 2008, p. 45).

The specific nature of Galicia was decided on not only by the legacy of the gentry Commonwealth, but also by the fact that it entered into the composition of the

Austrian Empire, an organism undertaking a unifying activity as well as introducing – through the means of school and administration – a common public culture. With time this led to the crystallisation of national consciousness, the basis for which was ethnicity. Galicia was also a peripheral province situated a long way from Vienna, without doubt the political and cultural centre of the Empire. Its economic backwardness, which became really noted in the second half of the 19th century, is exemplified by the famous phrase about the poverty of this land being the effect of both its isolation from contemporary markets and trade routes, its situation within the framework of a state organism into which it was incorporated, as well as the consequence – following the frantic Josephine reforms – of the direct absence of interest in its development on the part of the central authorities, who were busy concentrating on those provinces considered to be hereditary.

Originally the civilising of Galicia was supposed to depend on, first and foremost, controlling the anarchy and the implementation of monarchistic discipline. The subsequent stage was to be the construction of a loyal nation in their relations to the ruling dynasty. This required the adoption of active policies in relation to the nationalities inhabiting this country. The two most populous groups were Poles and Ukrainians representing over 40% of Galicia's population. A noticeable and important minority was that of the Jews (10%).

Polish and Ukrainian Galicia

The national question was one of the most serious problems with which the Austrian administration had to grapple. The situation in Galicia was representative of this though by far not the only example.

The Poles on personal and social level were experiencing the loss of their own state and were also striving for its restoration within its hitherto dimensions. With the same they came into conflict with the Ruthenians, who had discovered their subjectivity and were increasingly actively articulating their nationalist aspirations. Ukrainian consciousness created itself in opposition to Polishness, though this phenomenon was not accompanied by a clearer social and occupational emancipation (Babiński 1997, p. 67). Until the mid 19th century the Polish gentry was prone to dismiss appearances of Ukrainian national activity, explaining its manifestations by general cultural trends – the widespread interest at the time in life and folklore of “our people”. The turning point in mutual relations were the Revolutions of 1848. In 1848 the first Ukrainian organisation of political character was created. The Chief Ruthenian Council (Holowna Ruska Rada) affirmed the existence of Ukrainian nation and also approached the Austrian authorities with a request for the protection and division of Galicia into an eastern part – a Ukrainian one, as well as a western (Polish) part. The governor Franz Stadion, showing support for the Council, was considered by Poles to be the “inventor” of the Ukrainian nation (Hołda 2008, p. 46). The postulate for organisation of an independent province with separate administration and form of self-government was to become the fundamental and constantly revived demand addressed towards Vienna. Within the new situation Vienna had to be an arbitrator in the long-standing conflict, which now started to

be perceived within political and national categories. The Austrian government, always directing itself by the maxim "Divide et impera" and considering first and foremost the interests of the Empire, made use of the maxim, seeing in it an opportunity to repress the Polish *irredenta*. Earlier it had already displayed a degree of favouritism towards the Greek-Catholic Church, which within the current situation had risen to the role of being "national", in opposition to the "Polish" Catholic Church. The support of this religion was considered to be exceptionally significant for the development of Ukrainian national movement and was treated as a counterweight for Polish nationalism and separatist aspirations (Hann 1998, p. 847). The "Ukrainian Idea", displaying features of mild Panslavism, appealing to folk language and people presented as equal players in history, was to formulate an increasingly more concrete national programme: "Together with a redefinition of history and the inclusion within it of the ordinary people the fact that Galicia belonged to the Polish Crown or that the Ukrainian elites accepted Polish civilization had stopped having a decisive significance" (Snyder 2009, p. 145).

The aspirations and course of action taken by the leaders of the Ukrainian movement were formulated on the basis of models elaborated by Polish independence activists. Within the conditions of Galicia they had appeared effective, as following the settlement of 1867 Poles had gained autonomy and participation within the governance of the country. Polish and Ukrainian nationalism competed with each other within Galicia, as well as represented the polarisation of national interests. For the owners of the borderland estates the Polish-Ukrainian conflict had an additional economic and emotional context – it was linked with not only the defence of the fatherland but equally of patrimony.

A separate problem the existence of which I would like to signal is the question about what degree of involvement in nationalistic activity was taken by the "common people" – being after all the subject of activity on both Polish and Ukrainian side. From both parts of Galicia came notes indicating that the process of "nation creating" was still at the beginning of the 20th century far from satisfactory in its results: "The majority of the common people here have no conceptualisation as to their nationality, considering themselves merely as «Christians» or «Catholics». [...] They do not understand any of the times of the Polish past, they are unable to understand how previously the king of Poland could have ruled over them when they have their own emperor in Vienna" (Świętek 1904, p. 94).

These relations, of which many may be cited, suggest an absence or only a marginal interest in the national question on the part of the majority of those residing in the countryside, who assumed that nationality question was rather a matter for the intelligentsia. In this field interesting is the observation of Erich Hobsbawm, who claims that the modern national consciousness of those originating from within the common people of the Habsburg Empire crystallized finally in a situation of war and then only around 1918, although at this time it was clearly linked to social questions (Hobsbawm 2010, p. 137–139).

The lack of national consciousness of affiliation, or at least not treating it as unusually significant, allows one to explain why within the territories of eastern Galicia the elements of Polish and Ukrainian culture assimilated. With this consciousness

of differences (first and foremost religious) between the societies there occurred cultural exchange, which was favoured by the fact that the same professional activities were carried out (agriculture) as well as the linguistic similarities. The lack of distance meant that relatively often there occurred mixed marriages (Polish-Ukrainian). The Austrian administrative practice in such families required defining of religious affiliation as well as nationality of the children (Roman Catholic – Poles, Greek Catholic – Ruthenians) in analogical way to declaration by parents of the child's sex. One may therefore accept that despite the increasingly intensive political conflicts within countryside areas the borderland and identification was not of a political (national) character but was first and foremost cultural and religious. The nationalistic divisions were to take on greater significance together with the politicisation brought about by the growth in popularity of nationalist concepts.

The end of the First World War brought with it the end of historical Galicia as well as the first attempts to create Ukrainian state. This occurred contrary to the defined interests of the newly formed Polish state and resulted in an open conflict the basis for which was a territorial dispute. The political changes did not eliminate Polish-Ukrainian borderland. As a result of the Treaty of Riga that regulated the eastern border of the 2nd Polish Republic, on the Polish side was to remain an area of former eastern Galicia, that is the territory on which the most intense Ukrainian identity had been shaped.

The Jews of Galicia

Nineteenth-century Galicia was one of the greatest concentrations of Jews in Europe. This had been favoured by the policies conducted by the former Commonwealth, which guaranteed the autonomy of Jewish denominational communities and even legislated for a Jewish diet which was their highest national form of representation (Banasiewicz-Ostrowska 2007, p. 94–95). The solutions adopted sanctioned for Jewish autonomy but equally petrified its cultural and social distinction. The imperial rights bestowed shortly after the First Partition of Poland recognized Jews as equal in law with other citizens of the Austrian Empire and removed the possibilities for discrimination. On the other hand, however, the same legislators eliminated the autonomy of Jewish communities and introduced regulations prohibiting or at least making it difficult to conduct a traditional way of life. To such regulations belonged, for example, compulsory military service, higher taxes – including a burdensome tax paid on candles used for Sabbath as well as restriction in marriages and an accompanying payment (Haumann 2000, p. 105–106). The constitution adopted in 1867 was to conclusively regulate the legal situation of Jews, recognizing them as a religious community but not as a national group.

Within the territory of the Habsburg Empire Galicia was place with the highest concentration of Jewish settlements. Of the total Jewish population over 70% lived in the eastern part (Gąssowski 1995, p. 126). However, within its area this population did not densely populate the territory but rather lived in dispersed and self-sufficient societies surrounded by an alien cultural element – Polish and Ukrainian.

A characteristic trait of Galician scenery were *shtetls*, that is poor little Jewish towns creating a closed local community, guaranteeing safety and a sense of stability for its inhabitants. Isolation – spatial and in terms of awareness – was often a conscious and positively evaluated choice made by Jews, who saw this as a condition for preserving religious and cultural identity determining their belonging to their own society (Banasiewicz-Ossowska 2007, p. 55). Legal and organisational difficulties, the social position of Jews and the dislike that surrounded them, the specific status of the stereotypical almost “outsider”, the cultural distinctiveness derived from Judaism organising the religious and social life of the diaspora, resulted in separation and distance in relation to the non-Jewish population, enhanced further by linguistic differences and a range of social limitations: “Both worlds lived therefore their own life and at their own rhythm. Despite the daily meetings, closer contacts, greater intimacy and meetings on a social ground were not allowed with only very few exceptions. In general they did not mutually visit each other in their homes, there were no meetings at places of cult. One may even talk about certain ignorance in relation to the other world” (Banasiewicz-Ossowska 2007, p. 88–89).

The desired and most frequently existing state was neutrality in mutual contacts: a lack of conflict but also lack of friendship as well as other manifestations of closeness. The borders were clearly and bilaterally defined which made cultural exchange and understanding difficult. Economic relations dominated in mutual relationships, these being based on a symbiotic dependence and the necessity for co-operation. Isolation, however, although strict was not total and traces of Jewish influence took root in Polish folk culture – not only in trade and craft but also in rituals.

In the last decades of the 19th century Austro-Hungary and also Galicia within this area, was the arena for a crisis in Jewish identity which on the one hand manifested itself in involvement within the socialist movement and on the other hand with the development of Zionism (Haumann 2000, p. 182). The modernizing tendencies characteristic for this part of Europe brought about changes that in a significant way influenced Jewish communities. The hitherto strongly unifying bonds started to loosen. Their social and spatial mobility increased (Gąsowski 1995, p. 130). Progressive state education and the regulations connected with it brought about the disappearance of the traditional religious schooling system (*cheder*), which in the process of education was able to fulfil only a supplementary role. Secularisation was underway and there clearly appeared assimilatory tendencies, treated equally as one of the ways to escape from the surrounding poverty, which besides colour and a sense of exotic characterised life in the *shtetls* (Haumann 2000, p. 197).

In general social sense the crisis was evident through an intensification of anti-Jewish feelings in Galicia, fanned by rumours about Jewish ritual murders. Their result were pogroms as well as legal processes that were even settled in far off Vienna (Banasiewicz-Ossowska 2007, p. 31).

In the Direction of Myth – “Multicultural” Galicia

Historical Galicia disappeared from the political map in 1918. It was to remain, however, in memory and culture. After years during which attempts had been made to replace the name with a more suitable one, not associated with the partitions, it was to return. Today the term “Galicia” is not cited in reference to a concrete period in history but as a cultural construction which does not say very much about facts from the past but a lot about contemporary interpretations and expectations. There is no doubt that the myth about Galicia occupies an important place in the story of the history of all three characterised nationalities. Being conscious about the differences I would like to emphasize the presence of common subjects concentrated around the idea of a happy life for these nations within the conditions of a cultural borderland.

The Galician myth is described by lexemes such as: yearning, nostalgia, stabilization, tolerance, atmosphere. The name Galicia is, it appears, at times recalled and overused to mark various undertakings – from the names of streets, restaurants and the dishes therein served, through the logotypes of companies and small publishers, to festivals of liqueurs and ambitious international festivals. As “Galician specialties” various products are able to consequently boast of their status: highly smoked cold meats, bread, *pierogi*, preserves, currant cakes and caramel sweets. Many of these are sold in packaging often accompanied with a stylized “oldie worldly” photograph. All of these products are advertised at the same time as being “traditional” and “ecological”.

Sociological research conducted at present along the Polish-Ukrainian borderland shows, however, that among its inhabitants there does not exist a self form of “Galician” identification (Babiński 1997, p. 217). Galicia is not, therefore, – at least within Poland – a reference point for a declaration of ethno-regional identities. At the same time, however, among those living in towns of this bygone land, there are groups of people in general engaged in freelance activities who choose to refer to themselves as Galicians. Galicia for them is not a historical dimension or a geographical one but a mental homeland (Hołda 2010, p. 47). They establish values for it such as conservatism, approval of constitutional monarchy and internal “multiculturalism” understood not as an internal conflict but as the consciousness of belonging to a cultural formation more distant than a politically demarcated place of origin (Martynowicz 2009). This specific cosmopolitanism allows for a positive feeling of being “at home” as equally in Vienna and Lviv as in Cracow and Prague.

The contemporary “intelligentsia’s” and urban dimension of the Galician myth accentuates the values of a world without borders, open and offering many possibilities. Equally, if not more important is the variant directing the recipient’s attention beyond the chiefly Galician or Austrian towns and cities: “The nostalgic Galicia is first and foremost the little settlements with several hundred inhabitants where the dominant role was played by the proverbial: the priest, the doctor and the chemist” (Czyż 2010).

The literary and colloquial narratives creating the Galician myth lead one in the direction of statically presented areas inhabited by people of various faiths and

cultures, of places where “nothing happens”. It is difficult not to resist this impression that “Galicianness” represents borderlandness while at the same time provinciality. It possesses its own positive dimension – it is desirably distant not only from the city but the feverishness of the contemporary modern world. The extolling of such delights of Galicia as beautiful landscape, the existence of vast tracts uncontaminated by civilization, of good people who value simplicity and obvious values, is not consequently unbiased.

Various musical groups have bought into this vision, categorising themselves as folk, Galician or as playing Carpathian music. They equally concentrate upon the past. This is treated as a source of creative inspiration and a reservoir of values deserving reminiscence. They draw from folk music and its instruments and costumes. However, they do not always present folklore in the stage version – artistically arranged and “colourful”. They often consciously draw on the simplest of models, unadorned and at times even ugly, recognising only such as being authentic and unadulterated and consequently of genuine value.

It is interesting that the so-called Carpathian Ruthenians have connected themselves with the vision of “Galicia” as a “cradle” of nationality, and by making recourse to its traditions they are struggling for recognition as the fourth (after Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians) Eastern Slavic nation. Their revival is, however, chiefly of cultural and religious character. It constitutes an opposition to the concept of being Ukrainian yet does not formulate demands for autonomy or the creation of its own state (Michna 2008, p. 122–123).

Today the often repeated thesis about the happy life of nations under Habsburg auspices connects itself to elements of a legend created for its own purpose, accentuating the special role played by this dynasty, chosen to protect the little nations that lay between Germany and Russia. And yet, the central European calling of the Habsburgs – as noted by Claudio Magris – was simply one of necessity and innovation that came relatively late, being forced on them by a series of failures: “Unable to bring to fruition German unity – a role undertaken by Prussia – Habsburg Austria searched for a new mission for itself and a new identity within the multinational empire, this melting pot of peoples and cultures” (1999, p. 24).

The most willingly cited is the last period of Galicia’s existence – the times of autonomy (post 1867). They are presented as time of peace and are evaluated as remaining beyond the history that was happening “somewhere else”, while at the same time they are viewed as a period of vigorous artistic ferment. The most often presented is Galicia’s multiculturalism, constituting a slogan allowing one to combine trips to synagogue and *shtetls* tourist routes with stays at agrotourist accommodation far from the city. Historical monuments, the traces of a bygone world are recalled in a similar way to the landscapes with the intention of evoking the past.

The image created by the Galician myth – that of a peaceful country in which everything moves in harmony with a well-known rhythm, contrasts with the above sketched view of a land constituting the arena for conflicting ambitions, interests and political programmes. The idyllic conception of Galicia – Arcadia, a happy country of simple people and simple values, simultaneously a mosaic of nationalities or a melting pot of cultures is not the only one.

For Jarosław Hrycak the example of Galicia and within it that of Lwów, are the examples of the failure of the idea of multiculturalism. According to him the Galician coexistence of cultures was in principle the joint inhabitation of a common territory by fairly impenetrable enclaves, amongst which there existed only an extremely limited degree of exchange. Galicia was a reality from which nothing developed. Such a situation – in his opinion – is, after all, a common occurrence in Eastern Europe: “History gives us on the whole numerous examples of the reverse processes – of domination and assimilation – which ended only when the former multiethnic territories as a result of border changes or ethnic cleansing, transformed themselves into mono-ethnic nation states” (Hrycak 2009, p. 218).

Galicia was indeed a place inhabited by a multitude of cultures shaped by the historical community of fates. Within this scope it shared the identity of the Eastern Polish Marches, which similarly were the remnants of the former Commonwealth. A legacy of this state was also to remain the situation of borderlandness enabling the flow of cultures and values, the circulation of ideas and models. Galician pluralism was in this sense not dictated by the concept of a defined socio-political conception assuming equality, but it was a situation dictated by circumstances which origins lay both in the previous historical period as in the current priorities of internal Austro-Hungarian policy and politics. The failure of Galician multiculturalism was decided upon by the fact that at the time it was called into being, the word “Poland” had started to undergo a significant limitation, earlier having meant “a Common Matter”. The new understanding started to mean increasingly often “the land of the Poles”, whereby the term represented an ethnic qualification, while by the end of the 19th century it became confused with estate. This process, although viewed in Poland within personal and emotional categories, located itself in the framework of general tendencies for the construction of modern state organisms.

The contemporary idealisation of Galician reality may be interpreted as a yearning for a lost community and for a lost order. As a dream of the world in which everyone has his place and where this arrangement results in not only a sense of stabilization but also safety.

Conclusions

The Galicia which came into being in 1772 was to be a certain project to reach fruition within the spirit of the Enlightenment. The emperor-philosopher wanted that wild post-Sarmatian land to be civilized in accordance with Enlightenment values and standards, ones he considered to be truly rational and proper. The concept of development sketched by him was to lead from backward Poland, through progressive Galicia to European civilization (Wolff 2004). Joseph II dreamed of filling this newly created, abstract and artificial being with content. And so this happened although in a way which did not fit within the intentions of Joseph II. It was not possible to create Galician nation, while the former multilingual people inhabiting this land were finally constructing their own states.

The appearance of the revived myth of Galicia may be connected to those trends observed post-1989 within the areas of Eastern Europe. They manifest themselves

in the cultivation and appreciation of the national values derived from the times prior to communism (Tismaneanu 2000, p. 172). Within the framework of these trends the second half of the twentieth century is disparaged and understood as a break in history or as a false history, “not one’s own” as a result of its imposition from the outside. Recourse to Galicia is the recall of a certain ideal, of a history considered to be European. It abstracts from reality and imposes upon the past the present-day terms and ideas. The paradox is that – as the myth would state – Galicia is perceived as multinational and pluralistic while not nationalistic.

References

- Babiński G. (1997). *Pogranicze polsko-ukraińskie. Etniczność, zróżnicowanie religijne, tożsamość*. Kraków: Nomos.
- Banasiewicz-Ossowska E. (2007). *Miedzy dwoma światami. Żydzi w polskiej kulturze ludowej*. Wrocław: Atut – Wrocławskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe.
- Czyż L.M. (2010). *Galicja i jej aptekarze*, <http://pl.pogranicze.eu> [28.10.2011].
- Gąsowski T. (1995). *Galicja – „żydowski matecznik”*. In J. Chłopecki, H. Madurowicz-Urbańska (eds) *Galicja i jej dziedzictwo*, t. 2: *Społeczeństwo i gospodarka*. Rzeszów: WSP.
- Hann Ch. (1998). *Postsocialist Nationalism: Rediscovering the Past in Southeast Poland*. *Slavic Review*, 57, 4, p. 840–886.
- Heiko H. (2000). *Historia Żydów w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej*. Warszawa: Adamantan.
- Hobsbawm E. (2010). *Narody i nacjonalizm po 1780 roku. Program, mit, rzeczywistość*. Warszawa: Difin.
- Hołda R. (2008). *„Dobry władca”. Studium antropologiczne o Franciszku Józefie I*. Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski.
- Hołda R. (2010). *Czy istnieje tożsamość galicyjska?* In R. Szwed, L. Dyczewski, J. Szulich-Kałuża (eds) *Odmiany tożsamości*. Lublin: KUL.
- Hrycak J. (2000). *Historia Ukrainy 1772–1999. Narodziny nowoczesnego narodu*. Lublin: IEŚW.
- Hrycak J. (2009). *Nowa Ukraina. Nowe interpretacje*. Wrocław: Kolegium Europy Wschodniej.
- Kantor R. (1996). *The borderland as a national cultural area*. In R. Kantor (ed.) *Borderlands. Culture. Identity*. Kraków: Instytut Etnologii UJ.
- Kołąkowski L. (2003). *Obecność mitu*. Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka.
- Magris C. (1999). *Dunaj*. Warszawa: Czytelnik.
- Martynowicz S. (2009). *Kim jest Adam Zieliński*, <http://www.adamzielinski.pl> [14.04.2009].
- Michna E. (2008). *Rola historii w legitymizacji aspiracji narodowych grupy pogranicza kulturowego*. *Państwo i Społeczeństwo*, 8, 2, p. 115–124.
- Sadowski A. (1997). *Pogranicze i tożsamość narodowa mieszkańców pograniczy*. In Z. Jasiński, A. Kozłowska (eds) *Tożsamość narodowa młodzieży na pograniczach*. Opole: Uniwersytet Opolski, p. 41–50.
- Snyder T. (2009). *Rekonstrukcja narodów. Polska, Ukraina, Litwa, Białoruś 1569–1999*. Sejny: Pogranicze.
- Świętek J. (1904). *Borowa. Drobiazgi etnograficzne*. In *Materiały Antropologiczno-Archaeologiczne i Etnograficzne*, t. VII. Kraków: Komisja Antropologiczna AU w Krakowie, s. 87–121.

- Ševčenko I. (1997). *Ukraina między Wschodem a Zachodem*. Warszawa: OBTA.
- Tismaneanu V. (2000). *Wizje zbawienia. Demokracja, nacjonalizm i mit w postkomunistycznej Europie*. Warszawa: MUZA.
- Walicki A. (2009). *Sarmacja. Polska między Wschodem a Zachodem*. In A. Walicki, *Naród, nacjonalizm, patriotyzm*. Kraków: Universitas, p. 3–34.
- Wolff L. (2004). *Inventing Galicia: Messianic Josephinism and the Recasting of Partitioned Poland*. *Slavic Review*, 63, 4, p. 818–840.

Streszczenie

Przedmiotem artykułu jest współczesny wymiar mitu Galicji, który kreuje ją na kraj spokojnego i bezkonfliktowego zamieszkiwania narodów, przede wszystkim Polaków, Ukraińców i Żydów. Na terenie Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów, z której ziem utworzono potem Galicję, popularyzacja sarmatyzmu doprowadziła do polonizacji kulturowej elit. Swą odrębność zachowali jednak Żydzi, którym instytucjonalnie gwarantowano niezależność. Zmiany społeczne i polityka władz sprawiły, że pod panowaniem austriackim zaostrzyły się konflikty narodowościowe, w tym antagonizm polsko-ukraiński. Zaznaczył się także kryzys społeczności żydowskich, wiążący się z nasileniem tendencji modernizacyjnych i asymilacyjnych. Paradoksalnie, mit Galicji ignoruje te fakty, skupiając się na ekspozycji wielokulturowości i pluralizmu, nie zaś napięć narodowościowych.