

Summary of a doctoral dissertation titled “The Millennium of the Polish State as an attempt at a laical interpretation of Polish history” written under the supervision of Dr hab. Sabina Bober, prof. KUL

The doctoral dissertation focuses on the depiction and analysis of politicized historical narration that accompanied the celebration of the Millennium of the Polish State over the years 1960-1966. Issues connected with promoting and popularizing the laical conception of the Polish State's history played a significant role in organizing all initiatives aimed at the ecclesiastical celebration of the Millennium of Baptism of Poland. Propagation of the vision of Polish history compliant with Polish United Workers Party's assumptions was a particular kind of “weapon” aimed at historical narration accompanied by the ecclesiastical jubilee. Depiction of the Polish State's history assisting governmental undertakings was a compilation of strands typical for Władysław Gomułka's reigning period. Dominant strands focused on exaggerating all “revolutionary” traditions of the Polish nation and exposing nationalist pride in the patriotic achievements of Poles in the past. Peculiar to Władysław Gomułka's time, anti-German narration played an important role as well. That kind of vision of Polish history was considered through the prism of unceasing fights against German intrusion and opposing to the imperialistic policy of the Teutonic Order, Prussia and the Third Reich. The vision of Polish history compatible with the Polish United Workers Party's leadership guidelines was deprived of ecclesiastical “elements.” The peculiar prime mover of processes which accompanied several stages of forming Polish statehood was the groups compatible with communist historical narration (e.g. workers, revolutionists). Clergy was portrayed as a regressive force which held up the “progress.” This kind of historical narration made up the ideological core of the celebration of the Millennium of the Polish State. This issue was highly visible during the governmental jubilee's main endeavour. It was also based on the press articles dedicated to the above topic.

The doctoral thesis is divided into five chapters. First of them concentrates on ideological and organizational aspects of the celebration of the Millennium of the Polish State. The activity of the Preparatory Committee of the Celebration of the Millennium of the Polish State was an important question among issues connected with preparations to celebrate the governmental jubilee. Committee controlled all activities attached to organizing governmental celebrations over the years 1958-1960.

The activity of the Committee was fructified with a wide-reaching six-year (1960-1966) programme of the celebration of the Millennium of the Polish State. Official authorities' attitude towards ecclesiastical initiatives and all attempts to counteract them were very important questions from a point of understanding the state campaign's ideological tone. The above issues are completed by governmental attempts to reconcile state celebrations with ecclesiastical ceremonies. The subject of the ideological tone of the celebration of the Millennium of the Polish State also involves a discussion about the Letter of Reconciliation of the Polish Bishops to the German Bishops and a swipe at cardinal Stefan Wyszyński.

The second chapter focuses on the main points of the Millennium of the Polish State campaign over the years 1960-1965. Through the multistranded and broad character of the governmental campaign, author of the present doctoral dissertation had chosen representative examples from a wide programme of state undertakings, e.g. issue of building Poland's Millennium Memorial Schools. Depiction of the real process of the above action was supplied by analysis of its strictly ideological character and questions connected with coppices of Poland (action also organized on the occasion of the Millennium of the Polish State). This part of the work includes an analysis of historical conceptions which accompanied the most crucial points of the state campaign. The author also gives details on the 550th anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald (1960), the 100th anniversary of the January Uprising (1963-1964), the 600th anniversary of the foundation of Jagiellonian University (1963-1964) and the 20th anniversary of establishing Polish People's Republic.

The third chapter is dedicated to public holidays in the final year (1966) of the Millennium of Polish State's campaign. Given the "historical" character of governmental jubilee, this kind of pursuit earned a special setting. Dominant propaganda canon (which exposed issues such as the disruptive importance of communist ideology in Poland's postwar development and the important role of Polish alliance with the Soviet Union and other socialistic countries) was enriched by questions alluding to "progressive" historical traditions of the Polish nation. In 1966, significant "historical" setting diversified the celebration of Labour Day, Feast of Folk (Święto Ludowe), National Day of the Rebirth of Poland (Święto Odrodzenia) and Dozhinki (Święto Plonów, harvest festival).

Chapter four continues on issues of official governmental undertakings in a culminant year of the Millennium of the Polish State's campaign. This part of the doctoral thesis contains an analysis of all historical anniversaries which were earned in 1966 special "millenary" character. A wide spectrum of the above matter resulted in a division into three different thematic groups. The first of them concentrates on historical episodes that documented Polish traditions of fights against German possessiveness, e.g. celebrations of the 45th anniversary of the Third Silesian Uprising, the 500th anniversary of the signing of the Second Peace of Toruń, the 994th anniversary of Battle of Cedynia and 21st anniversary of the end of World War II. The second group focuses on jubilees about

communist and revolutionary characters, for example, celebrations of the 100th anniversary of Julian Marchlewski's birthday, the 49th anniversary of the October Revolution and the 30th anniversary of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. The chapter ends with an analysis of a group of selectively fitted patriotic anniversaries which were included in the "progressive" vision of Polish history, e.g. 200th anniversary of the foundation of the School of Chivalry, the 175th anniversary of the signing of the Constitution of 3rd May, 120th anniversary of Henryk Sienkiewicz's birthday and 50th anniversary of the death of the above-mentioned writer.

The fifth chapter closes the doctoral dissertation. Issues included in this part of the work concerned exposing "progressive" historical traditions during cultural and educational events. Their tone was counted to accent the most important conquests of Polish culture over the course of the past "Millennium." State jubilee formed a kind of tribute to the heritage of Polish culture and education. Analysis of this issue is based on discussing a group of events which proved the Polish character of Western and Northern Territories and describing deepened characteristic of the Congress of Polish Culture.

The source base created to the needs of the doctoral dissertation includes press and archival materials (also published in book form). The author used materials gathered in the Archive of Modern Records and the State Archive in Lublin. Widely understood press sources made the peculiar core of the source base. A list of press titles compared and contrasted in present work included titles such as "Trybuna Ludu," "Sztandar Młodych," "Życie Warszawy," "Kierunki," "Trybuna Robotnicza," "Nowiny Rzeszowskie," "Przekrój," "Nowa Kultura," "Wojsko Ludowe" and "Głos Nauczycielski."

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