

Religion, Trade and Trust in South-East Poland

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Introduction

The village of Krasiczyn is located on the River San about ten kilometres west of Przemyśl, once a Habsburg garrison in the centre of Galicia but since 1945 a medium-sized Polish frontier city: the Ukrainian border is a mere 10 kilometres to the east. Krasiczyn is dominated by its Renaissance castle, in the extensive grounds of which a tastefully modernised outbuilding now serves as a hotel and conference centre. This was the venue for an academic conference in October 1996 on the subject of 'Church Unions in Central and Eastern Europe: Ideals and Realities'.¹ The scholars attending came from many European countries and from Canada and the United States. They included priests of different denominations and their expertise covered many disciplines, notably history, sociology, theology, anthropology and political science. This diverse gathering maintained a very cordial atmosphere, the climax of which was a festive supper on the last evening of the conference, at which the local Roman Catholic priest was an invited guest. Though not primarily a scholar, this priest was interested in the themes of the conference and well known in the public sphere in Przemyśl for his efforts to improve mutual understanding between Poles and Ukrainians. He agreed with a visiting Greek Catholic priest (born in this area but for 40 years resident in Rome) that they should mark this unusual conference by celebrating mass together on the following morning, a Sunday. The local priest joked that together they would improvise a new, hybrid form of service, a fusion of the Latin (Roman) and Greek (Byzantine) rites.

The rest of us turned up eagerly in the church the following morning. Everything about the building and its decoration epitomised Polish Latin styles. The service stuck closely to the modern Latin rite, although the visiting priest preached most of his sermon in Ukrainian. Both he and his Roman Catholic cocelebrant emphasised the need for Poles and Ukrainians to understand each other better. Not only were they one before God but, pointed out the local priest in his welcoming remarks, following the demise of socialism the two countries were increasingly dependent on each other economically. Without the new opportunities for cross-border commerce many families in and around Przemyśl would face unemployment and severe hardship. All this, said the priest, needed to be placed in historical context, and the Church Unions which were the theme of our conference deserved to be seen as pioneering efforts to promote understanding and rapprochement. In 1996 Catholics were celebrating the 350th anniversary of the Union of Mukachevo and the 400th anniversary of the Union of Brest, which had brought many millions of Orthodox Christians into communion with Rome. As a few old men coughed and children

shuffled in their pews, the priest pinpointed another reason why his congregation should take special pride in the Union of Brest: it had after all been accomplished on Polish soil, *na polskiej ziemi*.

It seemed to me that, with this phrase, this Roman Catholic priest was invoking forces of greater power than contemporary economic relationships or timeless ecumenical ideals. When he uttered these words he was speaking directly as a Pole to his fellow Poles and the message was simple: you should take pride in the Union of Brest because it is part of your national history, your national identity. He was implying an essentialist link perpetuated through time between a people, conceived in exclusive, ethnic terms, and that people's territory. Brest, like Przemyśl, is today a frontier city. Even the less educated villagers in that Krasiczyn congregation would probably be aware that most of the lands affected by the Union of 1596 fall outside the boundaries of the modern state. I do not believe that this priest was trying consciously to appeal to nationalist sentiments of historical injustices that run very deep among many Poles. On the contrary, this priest is well known to be critical of the chauvinist elements that do exist within the Polish Roman Catholic Church. He would probably have conceded, if he had been asked this question in the conference room, for example, that to speak of 'Polish soil' at all in the sixteenth century is to project back a conception of the national community that is hardly appropriate to the premodern variant of multiculturalism that was the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the state power during the period of the Unions. He would probably have acknowledged that the sixteenth-century ancestors of the contemporary villagers of Krasiczyn could hardly have possessed any sense of national consciousness. Perhaps he would have explained his choice of phrase as a deliberate reminder that at the end of the sixteenth century 'Poland' included people of different religious cultures, and thereby as a legitimate way of encouraging his congregation to be more tolerant of difference at the end of the twentieth. I cannot be sure of all the interpretations that were made in the church at Krasiczyn on that cold Sunday morning; but I tend to think that the ambiguities and incongruities may have been lost on the audience, and that the phrase *na polskiej ziemi* was rhetorically effective because it appealed to a simple scheme of values that has become deeply engrained, based upon the nation understood not as a collectivity of citizens but as an ethnically closed community.

Social Homogenisation before 1989

The main purpose of this article is to explore some of the ways in which new activities and identities have taken shape in the border city of Przemyśl since the collapse of communism in 1989. To understand these it is necessary to have some grasp of historical changes over a much longer period, but there is no space here for a detailed account.² The entire period from the sixteenth century to the twentieth is best seen in terms of ever stronger pressures toward social homogenisation. The creation of the Uniate or Greek Catholic Church followed the principle *cuius regio eius religio*, but the zealots of the Counter-Reformation did not require the converted Orthodox to adopt the practical religion of the dominant Roman Catholic Church. They were content to insist that the Greek Catholics adopted the same theology, and to leave practical religion alone. What actually happened over the following centuries was that the practical religion came under increasing pressures to adopt western norms, for example in church architecture, in the status and celibate character of the priesthood, and even in some details of ritual. The Greek Catholics eventually acquired the characteristics of a distinctive hybrid between East and West, and rather than

reducing cultural diversity they accentuated it. This intermediate position created problems for them when, in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, social homogenisation forces took on new and virulent forms. Both the Polish and the Ukrainian nationalist movements were deeply entwined with religion, particularly in their early phases. The Roman Catholic Church is seen by many Poles as critical to the very survival of their national identity during the long period of partition when the country was divided between Russia, Prussia and Austria.³ In the Ukrainian case the Greek Catholic clergy of Habsburg Eastern Galicia were in a critical early period the principal intellectual stratum available to propagate the national cause.⁴ Even before the collapse of Habsburg power the two denominations of Catholicism were so closely tied to the two national movements that irregular combinations came under pressure: for example, it became increasingly difficult to declare oneself to be a Greek Catholic and a Pole.

Homogenisation forces reached their climax in the 1940s, when millions of Poles and Ukrainians experienced deportations and 'ethnic cleansing'. In addition to the devastation wreaked by Nazi and Soviet armies the irregular armies of Poles and Ukrainians fought each other (or for the most part, each other's civilians) with rare brutality. Stalin determined that the new frontier between the USSR and Poland should follow the so-called Curzon Line, leaving Przemyśl just inside Poland. He also decided to suppress the Greek Catholic Church, a policy that was soon followed in Poland, Slovakia and Romania (though not, curiously, in Hungary). Greek Catholics were denounced by the Orthodox, to whom most of their property was transferred, as nationalists and instruments of western imperialism. In Poland much of their property, including the Greek Catholic cathedral in Przemyśl, was made over to the Roman Catholic Church, which now embraced the overwhelming majority of the new state's population.

There is some irony in the fact that, as a result of the new borders and the ethnic cleansing of the 1940s, the People's Republic of Poland, with its socialist, internationalistic ideology, became (in sharp contrast to its predecessors 'on Polish soil') one of the most ethnically homogenous 'nation-states' in Europe. Unlike the situation in other socialist states which had large 'national minorities', ethno-national tensions were conspicuous by their absence during the four and a half decades of the People's Republic. The government recognised minorities and supported certain forms of cultural expression that it was able to control, such as the Ukrainian Socio-Cultural Association it established in 1956. The policy was successful, at least insofar as minorities ceased to pose anything like the political problem they had posed in Poland before the Second World War.⁵

Of course, the official claim that 98.7 per cent of the People's Republic's citizens were ethnic Poles,⁶ virtually all of them Roman Catholics, disguised a reality that was still in many regions more complicated. I stumbled upon some recalcitrant realities during fieldwork between 1979 and 1981 in the Carpathian village of Wisłok Wielki, close to the Slovak border.⁷ Identity issues were not the main focus of this research, but I was obliged to consider them when a number of villagers told me about their experience of deportation in the 1940s. Only much later had they been allowed to return to their natal village, where they were heavily outnumbered by new Polish settlers. I found little evidence of ethnic tension between neighbours. However, my first landlord in the village was an exception. He had been brought up in Warsaw, and even after living for many years in this section of the mountains he had a very strong prejudice against Ukrainians. He insisted that you could never trust them, and regularly made an issue of a person's Ukrainian background, even when it was

downplayed by the individual concerned. If a state official at the local or county level made a decision of which he disapproved, my landlord would attribute this to his Ukrainian parentage (on the female side if the surname seemed to contradict this hypothesis, though a change of name might also be alleged). I later found that academic researchers had confirmed that many Poles held extremely negative images of Ukrainians.⁸

Gradually I discovered more about the history of this corner of Poland and its people. This section of the Carpathians was intensively studied before the socialist period by Polish ethnographers, notably Roman Reinfuss.⁹ They classified the majority of the inhabitants (all save a few enclaves of Poles and Jews) as belonging to the Lemko 'ethnographic group'. The people so designated did not use this term themselves, preferring instead the generic term *Rusnak*, accompanied by a statement of affiliation to a local community or cluster of villages. Clearly this was a region of Central Europe in which a modern national consciousness was not yet fully developed, at least in the 1930s, when most of the ethnographic research was carried out. This picture was modified by the events of the 1940s, in which the Lemkos were branded as collaborators with Ukrainian terrorists. When they were finally deported from their homeland in 1947 they generally found themselves resettled, in towns and village 'regained' from Germany, among Poles who held strong prejudices against them as Ukrainians. The Lemkos were officially classified as belonging to the Ukrainian minority by the socialist authorities, and some were taught literary Ukrainian at special minority schools. Despite all this, I found during fieldwork that not all of those who had returned to the mountains were fully committed to a Ukrainian identity. The label was generally accepted in Wisłok Wielki and Komańcza, the larger village nearby, but I met others in more western districts of the mountains who preferred to style themselves as Lemkos and said they did not feel themselves to be Ukrainian. I had the impression that most descendants of the *Rusnak* population used both Ukrainian and Lemko when asked to explain their minority status, but they did not all reconcile the terms in the same way. Many of those who had been resettled in communities where they were outnumbered by ethnic Poles had followed the path of assimilation.¹⁰

When people talked about their identities they almost always emphasised their religious affiliation. Wisłok Wielki, like the great majority of villages in the Lemko region, had become Greek Catholic following the Union of Brest and remained so until the final deportations in 1947. However, significant rivalry with the Orthodox Church began in the late Habsburg period as a result of outside influences both from Russia and from the already huge North American diaspora. Ecclesiastical competition intensified in parallel with national minority issues in the interwar decades, when the diocesan organisation of the Greek Catholic Church was restructured by the Polish state in an effort to stem the propagation of Ukrainian nationalist ideals. After the suppression of the Greek Catholics, many of their buildings were destroyed. Some, such as that which is now the only remaining church in Wisłok Wielki, were given to the Roman Catholic Church to cater for the needs of new Polish settlers. Half a century later it continues to do so: the interior decoration has been changed a little and a new cemetery has been opened up, but the most distinctive 'eastern' features of the building, its iconostasis and its triple cupolas, have been retained. Other churches, such as the famous wooden church in nearby Komańcza, were transferred to the Orthodox Church. This created dilemmas for the Greek Catholics of that village who (almost uniquely) managed to avoid the deportations, and also for returnees later on. Some of them were pleased to be able to attend Orthodox services

when these were introduced in their traditional building in the 1960s, since these were of course much closer in rite to a Greek Catholic service than was the Latin rite practised in Komańcza's Roman Catholic church. However, the majority of Lemko-Ukrainians preferred to attend Roman Catholic services in an alien building than to transfer to a Church which was widely perceived to be an agent of the communist state. Greek Catholic services were later held in the small church of the Roman Catholics, and the non-Poles in Wisłok Wielki preferred to make a bus journey to attend these rather than to attend Catholic mass in another rite in their own village.

Recently I have become aware of other patterns elsewhere in this region, which make the close links between ethno-national and religious affiliation even more explicit. In the village of Kalników, located close to Przemyśl, to the north-east of the Lemko zone, large numbers of Greek Catholics were registered as Roman Catholics in the 1940s, in order to avoid deportation. By the time Kraków sociologist Grzegorz Babiński interviewed them about their identities in 1995, he found that they had come to consider themselves to be Poles. A few had 'reconverted' to the Greek Catholic Church, in which case they would also change their national identity, from Polish back to Ukrainian. However, the 'majority of those who were forced to convert in 1947 have chosen to stay in the Roman Catholic Church and keep Polish identity'.¹¹

Despite the good relations that existed at local level in a few villages such as Komańcza, where Greek Catholics, though officially banned, were able to use the facilities of the Roman Catholics, there were also significant tensions in socialist Poland between the two Catholic denominations. In the early 1980s, in the first exciting period of *Solidarity*, several Lemko-Ukrainians told me of their worries that Roman Catholic bishops were anxious to assimilate Greek Catholics to their own rite whenever possible. The bishop of Przemyśl, Ignacy Tokarczuk, was thought to set a particularly aggressive example. Poland's most senior Greek Catholic at this time was vicar-general Stefan Dziubina. When I interviewed him in Przemyśl in 1982, he seemed more concerned about the obstructions his Church faced from the Roman Catholic bishop living just up the road than he was about the socialist state which had just imposed a 'state of war' to suppress the *Solidarity* movement.

I visited Przemyśl on numerous occasions during these years, initially to seek information about Wisłok Wielki in the state archives (which at this period were housed in a church building confiscated from the Greek Catholics). The old city centre, little changed since Habsburg days, felt like a ghost town in the winter. While the signs on the buildings and the language of the local press conformed to general socialist norms, the numbers of people attending mass and the visibility of clergy and nuns betrayed a different social reality.¹² The former Greek Catholic cathedral occupied the most prominent site on the hillside. It was in the custody of the Roman Catholic Carmelites, for whom it had been built in the early seventeenth century by the lord of Krasiczyn. It had been confiscated from them by the Emperor Joseph II after the first partition of Poland and later given to the Greek Catholics, who then abandoned plans for a new building on another site. After its reallocation at the beginning of the socialist period parts of the former monastic complex were converted into a factory, which now looked very dilapidated. But both inside and outside, the main building bore unmistakable marks of its Greek Catholic past, notably in its massive iron bells with their clearly visible Cyrillic inscriptions, and in the tower and cupola which had been added in the nineteenth century. The few Greek Catholics in the city in the 1980s had no access to this church, but were allowed to conduct services in another Roman Catholic building lower down the hillside, the so-

called Garrison Church. Although some members of the minority community were unhappy about what they perceived to be a monumental injustice, it was not possible to articulate either religious or secular controversies in the public sphere. At least to an occasional visitor such as myself, Przemyśl seemed to be a sleepy Habsburg city in need of some investment, and hardly a potential flashpoint for ethnic conflict. People did not talk about past hatreds, and if the subject came up they were dismissed as aberrations that belonged firmly to the past. The local branch of the Ukrainian Socio-Cultural Association functioned quietly for its members, and other people left it alone. The Ukrainian, Greek Catholic minority had no obvious impact on local politics, in the media, or in education. Although the border was so close there was very little movement across it, either of people or of goods.

I have no doubt now that these were rather superficial impressions. Most of the inhabitants of socialist Przemyśl must have had a deep sense of being Polish, of belonging to the Polish ethnic nation. They had acquired this in various ways, not only inside their families but from the pulpit and also through the state education system. A strong sense of Polishness was fostered by the state in a variety of other ways, notably the support given to cultural productions which demonised wartime enemies. These were directed primarily against Germans, for there were obvious limitations on the representations of Russians. But there was little to prevent socialist powerholders from vilifying the Ukrainian ‘terrorists’ who had perpetrated atrocities in the Carpathians between 1945 and 1947, and writers and film directors took full advantage of these opportunities.¹³ More generally, the socialists maintained the basic national myths that represented the Polish nation as the victim of rapacious neighbours, as the unjustly suffering victim of history.¹⁴ Although the secular authorities could not extend the logic to include the main neighbour to the east, the Roman Catholic Church was more than ready to fill this lacuna. Many Poles saw the Church’s activities under socialism as a repository of a national essence that could not otherwise be expressed, in just the same way as the Church claimed to have functioned when modern Polish nationalism was taking shape in the nineteenth century. The election of Karol Wojtyła as pope in 1978 and his first return to Poland in 1979 were occasions for massive patriotic celebrations, thought by many commentators to have played a key causal role in the emergence of *Solidarity* just one year later.

Thus the socialist climate, though not conducive to overt political expressions of nationalism, nourished a national consciousness in many, sometimes subtle, ways. Some of these resemble the factors pointed out recently by Katherine Verdery for the apparently very different case of Romania.¹⁵ In Poland, as in Romania, the historiographical and general cultural constructions of national identity began well before socialism. However, socialism encouraged such constructions because it was itself an essentialising and totalising ideology, one which allowed no space for a public sphere, for forms of civic rights and the rule of law, which might have provided viable ways to counteract strong nationalisms. Moreover, Verdery points out that certain organisational features of socialism, notably the inefficiency of the centrally planned economy, its poor integration into international trade and consequent consumer shortages, all helped to increase the likelihood that people would make use of ethnic ties in their efforts to gain access to resources – and that they would ‘scape-goat’ other groups when their efforts were unsuccessful. These arguments fit the Polish case almost as well as the Romanian.

Polish Civil Society after 1989

Poland elected a noncommunist government in 1989 several months before the dramatic changes that engulfed the rest of Eastern Europe later that year and in 1990. This is important, because in the Polish case (in contrast to the Romanian) I do not think 1989 can be seen as the moment of dramatic transformation, overturning everything that had gone before. Some changes had begun much earlier. For example, in the course of the 1980s the contested issues concerning Lemko identity effectively escaped from the controls of the government-sponsored Socio-Cultural Association. The *Watra* festivals, held annually in the Lemko section of the Carpathians from 1985, brought people together from all parts of the country to celebrate their folk culture and assert their own control over the identity debates.

Nevertheless political, economic and social climates were obviously radically transformed in 1989–90. By the end of 1990 Lech Wałęsa had been elected president of the new republic, while at local level the candidates of the Citizens' Committees, generally organised by *Solidarity* activists, swept away the old communist councillors. Under the 'Balcerowicz plan', influenced by the Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs and usually summed up in the phrase 'shock therapy', the country embarked upon a rapid programme of marketisation and privatisation. The Catholic Church claimed its share of the credit for toppling the *ancien régime*, and sought promptly to claim its reward in the form of new policies of religious education and abortion law reform. With new legal systems, new patterns of foreign relations, many new political parties and new mass media, it seemed that changes were intruding into virtually every area of social life.

It is interesting to examine the evolution of Polish sociologists' own commentaries on this social transformation. The discipline flourished for most of the socialist period, and outstanding scholars produced original work that was influential in forming understandings not only of the Polish People's Republic, but of socialism generically. I am thinking of authors such as Włodzimierz Wesołowski, particularly his work on stratification; and Stefan Nowak, whose diagnoses of moral dissonance, and a 'vacuum' in the space between family life and the state where no healthy civil society was able to emerge, were very influential in the last decade of socialism. My impression is that the discipline continues to flourish. Nowak is dead, but many others, among whom Jadwiga Staniszkis is probably the best known to English readers, have addressed the central issues of what sort of society is emerging in place of socialism. I am in no position to generalise about all this new literature, but I am fascinated to observe that Wesołowski has turned his attention to new forms of 'spiritual community' rooted in religion and nationalism.¹⁶ I have also found the work of Kraków-based Piotr Sztompka of some interest. Like Wesołowski and Staniszkis, he publishes regularly in western countries, and like them, he seeks to combine innovative work in social theory with an active interest in empirical social changes taking place in Poland.

In 1991 Sztompka published an account of the transformation founded on the idea of 'social becoming'.¹⁷ Polish 'society' had made a glorious, unprecedented revolution, and new horizons of 'agency' had opened up to its individual members. Arguably, this was a rather romantic account of what had actually happened. It was not supported with empirical analysis, or even with any sustained discussion of changing Polish subjectivities during these years. No sooner had this book appeared than Sztompka began to correct this emphasis, arguing that the East was not 'competent' to develop a healthy democracy, and pointing in a series of articles to the

uncertainties of the transition and the 'traps' of postcommunist society. A recent article¹⁸ highlights a pervasive 'culture of mistrust' and suggests some general ways in which this 'syndrome' must be changed. The theoretical section of this article does not address nationalism, but Sztompka does include a brief discussion of 'ghettoisation' as a functional alternative to trust. In the empirical section he begins by noting that Poles have a strong national identity, but he offers no discussion of any minority groups within Poland or of Polish attitudes towards them. However, he does cite survey data which indicate that Poles place higher valuations on foreign-made goods than on local products 'of comparable quality'.¹⁹ This is seen as illustrating the 'externalisation of trust'. Later in the article it is stated that strong externalised trust applies only to the West, and that there is 'traditional external distrust towards Russia and other eastern neighbours'.²⁰

Classical liberal theories of civil society expect social trust to be generated through the 'natural' proliferation of 'free' economic actions. Although Sztompka comments extensively about attitudes to new forms of market economy, where he finds that the general climate of cynicism and mistrust continues to impede progress, he does not address these issues concretely. In particular, he does not mention the forms of petty marketing that have enabled millions of Poles to survive the dislocation that 'shock therapy' has brought after 1989. Much of this activity involves contact with foreigners and movement across the country's borders, which is now much easier than before, in all directions. Poles have travelled westwards in large numbers to work, just as they did in the nineteenth century when Max Weber addressed the problems of rural Prussia. They now work not only as agricultural labourers (though this activity remains significant, even as far away as Britain), but also in low-paid industrial and service occupations wherever detection is difficult, for most of the work they undertake is illegal. Many women have entered domestic service, for example in Italy, and a lot of publicity has followed those who have entered the sex trade in Germany and Holland. On a more mundane level, and therefore less likely to attract media publicity, it is estimated that the 'suitcase trade' across the border with Germany brought in as much as 10 per cent of Poland's Gross Domestic Product in 1995.²¹ These flows raise the question of how new economic forms may impact upon interethnic relations and changing constructions of 'Polishness'. However, the theme of interethnic trust in postcommunist conditions is not addressed by Sztompka, either internally or in relation to the unprecedented levels of petty trading across state borders.

Although the value of the economic flows is no doubt much greater along the western border, Poland's eastern borders too have suddenly become porous. The forms of trade with Ukrainians differ radically from the patterns with Germany but, as the village priest in Krasieczyn pointed out, the markets on the Polish side have become of great economic significance to local people. People in Przemyśl claim that it has the country's second largest Russian *bazar* after that of the capital. It has spread beyond the established *targ* to colonise a sports stadium next door (from its cut of the market taxes the club has become rich enough to sign up foreign basketball stars, who perform well in the national league). Traders arrive mostly by train and bus from adjacent parts of Ukraine, though some come from much further afield. The summer months are the most crowded, when whole families make the trip, often sleeping on their buses or in their old Ladas to save a little money. The main aim of most visitors in the first years after 1989, when travel restrictions were eased, was to sell anything they could and take some hard currency home with them. Though Poland was undergoing severe economic dislocation in those years, conditions

almost everywhere in the former USSR were desperate in comparison. Poland by that time had a convertible currency. Increasingly, local traders in Przemyśl began to see opportunities for profitable exports to the east, and new business partnerships were formed with Ukrainians. However the numbers of Poles moving eastwards to trade has remained small in comparison to the numbers of Ukrainians entering Poland for this purpose.

Attitudes to this new commerce vary considerably. Apart from those who nowadays make their main living from the market places, many consumers have been grateful for the opportunity to gain access to cheap ex-socialist merchandise. (This does not prevent them from speaking contemptuously of its quality.) Of course some shopkeepers have protested that they have lost custom as a result of the new inflow of goods. Some people have criticised the authorities for tolerating those who offer their own labour for sale, mainly for very low rates of pay in agriculture and the building industry, when many Poles themselves are out of work. Some are critical of the physical dirt that these temporary migrants invariably leave behind them, not just at the market but at the train and bus stations, the municipal camping site and the street corners where some of them sell illegally. Some are more critical of moral dirt, of which there are several varieties. For example, it is alleged that some of the visitors extend their informal economic activities to include prostitution, though there seems to be no evidence for this. And some see a moral peril in the very fact that the streets of Przemyśl are now once again full of people speaking Ukrainian.

Malignant Nationalism

In addition to the opening of new economic opportunities, the change of system opened up a public sphere of local politics in Przemyśl that had not existed previously. Many of the groups that now emerged had an explicitly nationalist character. The most active was formed to rebuild a monument to the military heroes who had fought for Polish independence in 1918–19, when the city was briefly occupied by Ukrainian forces. This monument had been destroyed during the Second World War under the Nazi occupation. After it had been speedily rebuilt, the society did not dissolve itself but found other causes to champion. In collaboration with other small groups, most of them veterans' organisations with largely overlapping membership, they sought to build up a strong tide of anti-Ukrainian sentiment in local public opinion. The *cause célèbre* of the early 1990s was the affair of the Greek Catholic cathedral.

On the Ukrainian side there were also expectations that the change of system would bring them greater freedoms. The Greek Catholics assumed that they would now be able to regain their property, and at the end of 1990 their cardinal in Rome requested the return of their cathedral church from the Roman Catholic Carmelites. They were initially encouraged, when the pope indicated through his nuncio in Warsaw (an ethnic Pole) that this should indeed happen, and that he would himself celebrate the Greek Catholics' reemergence in Przemyśl during his visit to Poland in the summer of 1991. However, John Paul II had not reckoned with the strength of local nationalist opinion.²²

According to the account of the nationalists' leader, the news of the proposed handover of the Carmelites' church prompted a 'spontaneous' reaction in the local society. Groupings that had already organised for other purposes drafted letters of protest to everyone from the pope downwards. They picketed both Archbishop (as he now was) Tokarczuk in Przemyśl and the headquarters of the Polish episcopate in

Warsaw. The episcopate recommended that the Greek Catholics should have use of their old cathedral church for a five-year period, until they were in a position to construct a completely new building. But this compromise was unacceptable to the nationalists. They insisted that this building had originally been a Roman Catholic foundation, established by the lord of Krasiczyn in 1630. It was therefore morally right that it should remain with the Carmelites: the fact that it had reverted to them in 1946 only thanks to communist intervention was not relevant, since this had merely redressed the earlier injustice of its confiscation from the Carmelites by Emperor Joseph II in 1781. The nationalists enlisted the support of the heirs of the lords of Krasiczyn, who said that it would be a betrayal of the intentions of the original benefactors if this church were to be taken away from the Carmelites. The protesters relied most heavily on the rhetoric of nationalism. The church belonged not simply to the Carmelite Order but to the whole Polish nation. The plan to transfer it to the Greek Catholics and to make it the centre of a new Greek Catholic diocese covering the whole of Poland would undermine the Polish identity of Przemyśl and insult the vast majority of its inhabitants. That the Roman Catholic hierarchy should even propose such a transfer showed that they were completely out of touch with their own people and that they were lacking in Polish patriotism. Some of the posters they used alluded ironically to the new ethos of market economy. 'For what price has the papal nuncio sold off a Polish church?'

The nationalists were accused of being an anti-Polish group, even of being KGB agents, by their own cardinals and bishops, but these accusations served only to strengthen their resolve. They formed a 'Committee for the Defence of the Polish Church of the Carmelites', and several individuals embarked on hunger strikes. When news leaked out at the end of March 1991 that a date had been set in April for the handover of the building, a group of nationalists occupied it and the adjacent monastic buildings, imprisoning the monks within. With the papal visit looming an extraordinary propaganda battle was waged in the city, attracting a good deal of national publicity. Local Ukrainians on the whole maintained a very low profile, but some Roman Catholic priests used strong language in calling on the nationalists to desist. They threatened sanctions against those who supported them: a refusal to grant absolution from sins, even a refusal to conduct burials, according to nationalist accounts. The village priest at Krasiczyn called for the occupiers of the church either to be brought to trial as terrorists, or to be sent to hospital for psychiatric tests. But the occupying forces were also able to mobilise public opinion effectively. They decorated the church with Polish flags (substituting a black flag on the day on which the Greek Catholic bishop had been due to enter). Their committee was well organised and had plenty of access to the media. It included four city councillors and half a dozen *Solidarity* activists. Of its 33 members, 14 had a higher degree (mostly engineers and economists). It is difficult to estimate how many other citizens played an active role in these events, but the total probably did not exceed a few hundred. However, several thousand signatures were gathered for some of the open letters drafted by the committee, which consistently presented its case in the populist style of *Solidarity*. The issue was once again a simple one of conflict between Society (*Spoleczeństwo*) and the Authorities (*Władza*), 'us' against 'them', with 'them' now including the Roman Catholic hierarchy that had been in the forefront of the anti-communist struggles (though the activists never dared directly to challenge the authority of the pope himself). The nationalists made plentiful references to Polish national sovereignty, and to the evils of Ukrainian terrorism in the 1940s and earlier.

Passions were high on both sides, but the ability of the Roman Catholic national-

ists to mobilise their supporters both in and around the church eventually carried the day. Shortly before his visit the pope was obliged to change his mind, and the rather less grand building known as the Garrison Church, formerly the property of the Jesuits, located nearby but lower down the hillside, was offered to the Greek Catholics as a consolation. Even this move was condemned by the nationalists, whose leader later commented that it showed

disrespect for the right of the Polish nation to the preservation of its property, transferring this valuable monument into foreign hands without the agreement of the Poles, and in secret before the nation; disrespect for the faithful, who provide the material support for all sacred buildings, but who have not been asked for their opinion in this matter; disrespect for the Polish Army, liquidating the Garrison Church whose upkeep it had sustained, and despite the fact that army funds had paid for most of the repair and modernisation work on this church.

The same author went on to argue that Ukrainians in Poland were claiming rights that were not being granted to Poles in Ukraine, particularly in L'viv. He asserted that

The rights of a national minority (Ukrainians) in Poland cannot be realised against the interests of the Poles. Minority discrimination ought to be replaced by all citizens being treated normally, and not by the creation of a caste of 'holy cows' out of the representatives of the national minority.²³

The Carmelite church has remained in the news since these dramatic events in 1991. Its interior has been extensively altered, with the addition of numerous plaques and monuments to Polish military heroism through the ages. The most dramatic events have concerned changes to the exterior, and particularly the distinctive central dome or cupola which was added after the building came to serve the Greek Catholics in the nineteenth century. The nationalist groupings proposed that this should be removed. Since the entire central zone of the city is under a conservation order, this required the approval of the county conservation officer, a Pole. Initially this approval was given, and work began on removing the crown of the dome. The officer then had second thoughts and retracted his authorisation, to the anger of the local nationalists. They began to campaign in the local press for his dismissal, on the grounds that he was spending the greater part of his budget on the preservation of Ukrainian religious monuments throughout the county, whilst ignoring its Polish heritage. After direct appeals to the ministry in Warsaw, this officer was dismissed. His successor procrastinated for as long as possible: the Greek Catholics wanted the integrity of the building to be restored through the rebuilding of the crown, while the Polish nationalists wanted the entire central dome to be pulled down. Eventually, in 1996, the latter prevailed, though the official justification given was that demolition had become essential for technical, safety reasons. Probably few people really believed this explanation, and the nationalist groupings were able to celebrate another victory.²⁴

In the meantime they have fought other battles. In the disputes over property they have not respected the principles they themselves invoked in the case of the Carmelites' church. Regardless of original ownership, they have insisted that the Greek Catholics' claims be considered only when they have a demonstrable need for the property in question. Given their small contemporary numbers, it is often difficult to justify property restitution in terms of need. Even when the nationalists have lost, as they did in their efforts to prevent the organisation of a Ukrainian Cultural Festival

in Przemyśl in 1995, and again in 1997, their activities have served to heighten ethnic tensions in the city. These festivals eventually proceeded in a very strained atmosphere, marked by arson attacks against the local Ukrainian Club and a high security presence. In 1996 the nationalist groupings campaigned *against* the organisation of an equivalent celebration of Polish culture in the city of L'viv, capital of western Ukraine and only a few hours away from Przemyśl by train or bus. Lwów, as the city is known to Poles, has historically played a very important role in their national culture. But by protesting against any celebration of Polishness in a city that is nowadays definitely Ukrainian, the nationalists in Przemyśl wished to remove possible grounds for justifying further celebrations of Ukrainian culture in their own city.

Conclusion

In contrast to positive, benign forms of national sentiment, such as the pleasure and pride almost all Poles take in their pope, the activities of these groupings in Przemyśl must surely be seen as the malignant form of nationalism. The postcommunist experience of this city bears comparison with the extremism of Ulster as an example of how the most virulent expressions of territorial sentiment tend to be found at the borders of the state. The data also support narrower theories about the role of ex-communist elites in the propagation of national sentiment in recent years: Zólkiewicz, the most notorious nationalist leader, whose comments I have quoted above, is widely assumed to have been a party member in the past, along with many of his fellow activists.

When my Polish friends in the city update me during each visit, they always point out that these nationalists are a very small minority of the total Polish population. Their leaders do not run for election as councillors because they would not stand a chance of being elected. And yet, it seems to me that their influence on local politics is far-reaching. They have created a climate of opinion in which the majority of Poles now seem inclined to view any expression of Ukrainian identity as a threat and an affront. The majority condemn the acts of arsonists and of the unemployed youths who daub old walls with anti-Ukrainian graffiti. But this majority also looks unfavourably on proposals to restore property to the Ukrainians, on the grounds that their reduced numbers no longer warrant major public buildings in the centre of the city. Although a separate Ukrainian school has now been established, people seem unsympathetic to educational initiatives that would teach local Polish schoolchildren about the multiethnic traditions of their region. The physical transformation of the most prominent building on the city's skyline symbolises the success of the nationalists' campaigns to date. The question is whether such patterns are highly localised and exceptional, or whether they reveal a potential that others could realise on a wider scale across the country. Survey data suggest that Polish attitudes to Ukrainians have remained highly negative, suggesting that, while the particular circumstances of Przemyśl are undoubtedly unique, we are dealing here with a deeper problem of cultural recognition and prejudice.²⁵

In the face of these tendencies, it is worth returning to the new forms of trade and to ask if they have the potential to contribute to interethnic trust and more tolerance of cultural difference. In one of the few monographs published on socialist Eastern Europe by western anthropologists, the American William Lockwood documented the social integration that was achieved in the course of interaction on the market-places of Bosnia in the 1970s.²⁶ Muslims, Serbs and Croats came together for economic purposes and offered their goods to the members of other groups at the

same prices at which they would sell to members of their own. But Lockwood argued that this was a limited, 'functional' integration only: the economic interaction did not break down perceptions of group difference and did not lead to increased inter-marriage. The integration that has been achieved through the rather different sorts of marketplace that have proliferated along Poland's eastern border in the 1990s seems to be similarly limited. Some of the responsibility for this may lie with Polish nationalists. For the time being at least the city of Przemyśl remains heavily dependent on this cross-border trade, and the nationalists do not oppose this. However, intensive interaction on the *bazar*, though it may create some new relationships of trust between individuals, is by no means inconsistent with the persistence of derogatory stereotypes about groups.²⁷ Nationalist leaders appeal to these negative sentiments when mobilising groups for action. Underpinning these appeals is the continuing power of the discourse of nationalism: as we saw at the beginning of this paper, even well-intentioned priests desirous of promoting dialogue feel compelled to phrase their own appeals in nationalist terms.

Finally, it should be noted that current patterns of petty trading are likely to change drastically in the near future when Poland becomes a full member of the European Union. Poland is likely to come under pressure to police the border of the new 'Fortress Europe' with great care. Some of the people who currently make their living through petty trade, and in future their children, may turn instead to make their living as border guards. Polish nationalists would feel comfortable with such a role, reviving as it would the glorious old myths of the *Antemurale* – Poland as the bulwark of European civilisation, defined once more as congruent with the boundary of Latin Christianity. But this is unlikely to raise the trust quantum in this part of Central Europe.

Notes and References

- ¹ The conference, and the research on which this article is based, were supported by a grant from the Economic and Social Research Council (R 236071, 'The Politics of Religious Identity: the Greek Catholics of Central Europe', 1995–97). The present text was drafted in November 1996 (minor revisions in March 1998). I am grateful to Dr Stanisław Stępień, director of the South East Scientific Institute in Przemyśl, for his cooperation in this research programme (but I alone am responsible for any errors in this article). For invaluable initial guidance I also thank Fr Serge Keleher and Dr Grace Davie. Keith Sword and Stanisław Wiater were generous with information and comments; this article is dedicated to their memories.
- ² For brief background, see Christopher Hann, 'Ethnic cleansing in Eastern Europe: Poles and Ukrainians beside the Curzon Line', *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1996, pp. 389–406. For a good modern introduction to the Greek Catholics and their recent history in this region see Serge Keleher, *Passion and Resurrection: the Greek Catholic Church in Soviet Ukraine 1939–1989* (Stauropogion, L'viv, 1993). For more detail on Przemyśl itself see various volumes of *Rocznik Przemyski* and the series *Polska–Ukraina, 1000 lat sąsiedstwa*, also published in Przemyśl. (The papers from the above-mentioned Krasiczyn Conference will be published as volume 4 of this series.)
- ³ G. Castellan, *Dieu garde la Pologne: histoire du Catholicisme polonais 1795–1980* (Robert Lafont, Paris, 1981).
- ⁴ J.-P. Himka, *Galician Villagers and the Ukrainian National Movement in the Nineteenth Century* (Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, Edmonton, 1988).
- ⁵ The major exception to this statement is the salience of the Jewish issue, particularly in the events of 1968, despite the tiny size of that group after the Holocaust.

- ⁶ J. J. Wiatr, 'Polish society', in *Poland: a Handbook* (Interpress, Warsaw, 1977), pp. 126–45, here p. 137.
- ⁷ Christopher Hann, *A Village without Solidarity: Polish Peasants in Years of Crisis* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1985).
- ⁸ Z. Chlewiński, 'Dystans społeczny wobec wyznawców innych religii oraz innych narodowości', *Przegląd Socjologiczny*, vol. 32, no. 1, 1980, pp. 157–79.
- ⁹ R. Reinfuss, 'Łemkowie jako grupa etnograficzna', *Prace i Materiały Etnograficzne* (PTL, Lublin), vol. 7, 1948, pp. 77–210.
- ¹⁰ A. Kwilecki, *Łemkowie: zagadnienie migracji i asymilacji* (PWN, Warsaw, 1974).
- ¹¹ G. Babiński, *Pogranicze Polsko-Ukraińskie: etniczność, zróżnicowanie religijne, tożsamość* (Nomos, Kraków, 1997), p. 276.
- ¹² Local people assert that levels of religious practice have long been higher in this region than anywhere else in Poland; the dynamism of the Roman Catholic Church under socialism, as demonstrated for example in the building of new churches in former Ukrainian villages, was a source of pride for most inhabitants of Przemyśl. The sector has retained its prominence in the postsocialist years. In total, including seminary students, I estimate that about 500 people (out of a total population of just under 70,000) make their living as bishops, priests, monks or nuns. Taking into account other direct and indirect employment effects, the ecclesiastical sector rivals the bazaar in its importance to the contemporary economy.
- ¹³ P. Potichnyj (ed.), *Poland and Ukraine: Past and Present* (Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, Edmonton, 1980).
- ¹⁴ N. Davies, 'Poland's national mythologies', in G. Schöpflin and G. Hosking (eds), *Myths and Nationhood* (Hurst, London, 1997).
- ¹⁵ K. Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996).
- ¹⁶ For example, W. Wesołowski, 'The nature of social ties and the future of postcommunist society: Poland after Solidarity', in J. A. Hall (ed.), *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995), pp. 110–35.
- ¹⁷ P. Sztompka, *Society in Action: the Theory of Social Becoming* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991).
- ¹⁸ P. Sztompka, 'Trust and emerging democracy: lessons from Poland', *International Sociology*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1996, pp. 37–62.
- ¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 49.
- ²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 53.
- ²¹ This estimate is given by the Instytut Badań nad Gospodarką Rynkową, cited in K. Grzegorzka, 'Na zakupy do Polski', *Rzeczpospolita*, 22–23 April 1995.
- ²² The account which follows is based mainly on conversations in Przemyśl during annual field trips between 1994 and 1998 and also on the following texts: Stanisław Zólkiewicz (leader of the main nationalist grouping), 'Obrona Przemyskiego Karmelu', *Pogranicze*, eight instalments between 22 October and 10 December 1991; Anna Strońska, 'Lachy i rezuny', *Kultura* (Instytut Literacki, Paris), September 1996, pp. 25–37; Jagieńka Wilczak, 'Spór w rozbiórcie', *Polityka*, no. 49, 7 December 1996, pp. 30–31.
- ²³ S. Zólkiewicz, *Pogranicze*, 10 December 1991.
- ²⁴ Confrontation has continued on a reduced scale in 1997–98 as the Greek Catholics have sought permission to make alterations to the Garrison Church in order to make it more suitable to their rite. Polish nationalist groups have effectively conceded the right of the new owners to transform the interior of the building. However in early 1998 they were organising opposition to proposals affecting the exterior, which they saw once again as prejudicial to the Polish character of their city.
- ²⁵ For recent evidence see *Stosunek naszego społeczeństwa do innych nacji: komunikat z badań* (Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej, Warsaw, November 1997). For further discussion see Christopher Hann, 'Postsocialist nationalism: rediscovering the past in southeast Poland', *Slavic Review*, vol. 57, no. 4, pp. 840–63.

- ²⁶ W. Lockwood, *European Moslems: Economy and Ethnicity in Western Bosnia* (Academic Press, New York, 1975).
- ²⁷ Research by the Rzeszów sociologist Jerzy Jestal, of which I was unaware until a further field trip in 1997, confirms the importance of the materialist stereotype of the 'dirty trader' in Polish images of Ukrainians in the city of Przemyśl. Jestal has also found that negative stereotyping is especially prevalent among young people in the city. See Jerzy Jestal, 'Stereotyp Ukraińca w świadomości młodzieży Polski południowo-wschodniej', *Fraza*, vol. 4, nos. 5–6, 1995, pp. 89–97.