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## THE MAKING OF NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

*We won't repair the world (...)  
until we've removed from  
school textbooks the grains  
of untruth and hatred*

Tadeusz Nowakowski,  
*The Camp of All Saints* (1990)

### **The Problem**

The question contained in the title of this paper, a question essentially referring to the scope of a person's freedom within his own group relationships and his authentic opportunity to choose his own identity, is at least as old as the concept of national awareness itself. Both these matters – at least in Europe – date back to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and are closely linked to one another. This is because national awareness – “selected history and the group of symbols connected with it” (Deutch 1953: 389) – is not borne of simple primary extrapolation of ethnic awareness, arising spontaneously, but – on the contrary – it is a thing which must be created by intellectuals and institutions. It is not enough, for this purpose – to bring about the emergence of a separate nation. The very nature of this process was finely expressed by Massimo d'Azeglio in his famous declaration in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century: “Abbiamo fatto l'Italia, adesso dobbiamo fare Italiani” (Latham 1970). Similar thoughts are expressed by phrases such as “transformation of the peasants into the French” or, in Polish, “nationalising the peasant”.

However, when conscious steps are taken towards creating feelings of group relationships, which do not stem from the everyday experience of individuals – in this case awareness of being a nation – manipulations creep in: we see the muffling of certain constitute aspects of tradition, the stimulating of memories about other aspects, and even the constructing of ideological visions which stand in

stark contrast to the facts. In order to ensure that a similar awareness integrates a group of many, it is first necessary to stimulate the group with awareness. It is necessary to evoke the kind of frame of mind, in which individuals will start perceiving themselves in national categories. The state, intellectuals and journalists bring pressure to bear, as a result of which we “become aware”, we discover in ourselves – as the Romantics claim – our nationality or, in keeping with Enlightenment concepts, we become the hostages of stereotype imaginations, standardised opinions, views and beliefs imposed on us by school, symbolic culture and, often, professions of faith. We rarely verify the above, though the conviction about the need to constantly reflect on the significance of awareness – “re-educating the human kind” (Kennedy 1992) has a long history. This phenomenon springs to life at times of great civilizational turning points (group millennium fears, the fall of empires and the decline of global *Weltanschauung*) when it is not enough to simply “believe in the faith” which hitherto seemed to be obvious “in itself”, and when the anxious question “why?” arises. And what more – without freeing oneself from a considerable part of hitherto axioms – internal order of individuals and groups of people, as well as any reasonable system of relationships between these groupings, is not possible. Furthermore, what in national awareness and feeling of identity is external in relation to the individual and at the same time imposed? And what stems from choice and self-reflection? What, to use a term taken from structural linguistics, is of an invariant character, and what might and ought to be reviewed or changed, amongst others, as a result of individual reflection?

### **The Theoretical Perspective**

Two intellectual traditions seem to be crucial in solving the above dilemma. The first, syntonically with Kantian understanding of self-determination, expounds the subjectivity of the human individual. It claims that only disposition, “identical in all people”, is truly sovereign. It is this disposition, not experience, which is universal and – at the same time – necessary. The principles, which guide people (particularly in scientific cognisance and moral knowledge), are not in relation to them external. We ourselves are responsible for them. For this reason “our identity and dignity stem from our human nature, from our rationality and not from the culture to which we belong” (Gellner 1991: 158). The division of humanity into nations “is secondary and does not result in any way from natural causes” (Želazny 1992: 7). The second tradition (multi-threaded, in a sense also Hegelian), on the contrary, attributes the deciding role to the group and to anthropologically understood culture, in other words, to factors and influences beyond the individual: deprived of universality, spontaneity and rigid structure.

From the outside a steered individual “belongs” to a “kind”, a patrimony (one’s native land, inheritance), he makes use of, and at the same time depends on, institutions and political organisations, he exchanges symbols in the communication system binding in the group.

National awareness and identity, in the contemporary sense of the word, is linked to a larger degree to the second of the two above-mentioned traditions. The conviction concerning the need for constant inspection of attached meanings and the manner in which they are handed down from one generation to the next, concerns the first tradition.

I agree with Ernest Barker (1933: 219) that “national identity is a creation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century”, and that its emergence is connected with not only ideological changes in Europe brought about by the French Revolution, but also with consolidation of Capitalist formation. Theoretical concepts (such as those of Hegel, Fichte and Mazzini) carried weight, as well as practical measures (e.g. Cavour, Garibaldi, Palacky and Masaryk). All of this, however, does not mean that national awareness was formulated in a historical vacuum. On the contrary, as a rule it is “super-structured” to previously existing forms of ethnic awareness i.e. “simplified and not overly articulated feelings of spontaneity (...) existing within social mentality” (Wiatr 1973: 390). However – as this fact was proven so convincingly by Emmerich K. Francis (1976) and Benedykt Zientara (1985) – not every ethnic awareness had the same chance and not everywhere was developed national awareness preceded by ethnic awareness. This certainly was not so in the case of 46 Western-European language minorities analyzed by Erik Allardt (1979), as well as in the United States of America (Kubiak, Kusielewicz, Gromada 1988). There can be no doubt that those culture groups, which were able previously to create a state organisation or take control of the state and force on others the course of integration and centralisation processes according to their own models, had the greatest opportunities.

Residual senses of ethnic awareness, coming to light as a result of routine participation in group activity (binding models of satisfying needs, institutions, the language of day to day communication, similar historical experiences within the framework of a strictly defined habitat, the pressure of norms and religious organisations, customs, habits and symbolical culture) are, in turn, purposefully standardised and – frequently – rationalised, whilst valued through radically polarised emotions. Ethnic awarenesses become national awareness. In turn, it is through national awareness that individuals and primary groups (including regional ones) are linked into secondary groups (including nation states), and become acquainted with those aspects of political organisation, culture and ideology, which do not stem from their direct existential experience. To these, amongst others, belong – often regarded as the *differentia specifica* of national awareness – “state feeling” (the need for “one’s own political roof and political attendance”, Gellner 1991: 62) and “clearly articulated national ideologies” (Wiatr 1973: 390).

Feelings of national identity are often treated as the aspiration of the human individual to control his own life and to self-determination (“... to realise his or her right to self-determination”, Dov Ronen 1979: 52). This same need, says Ronen, is – in certain circumstances – satiated through a deep experience of class and/or race identity, as well as religious identification and a feeling of identity with a minority. In each of these cases individuals and small groups perceive themselves against the

backdrop of larger groups of reference. This takes place because "it is impossible to provide a coherent account of the self in isolation from some wider social group" (Mayall 1990: 48).

If one accepts this point of view it is impossible not to notice that a certain problem arises when considering feelings of national identity. Even though it is possible in the contemporary world not to perceive oneself in categories of class, race or religion (at least in many countries) – as well as in terms of a minority – it is still regarded as abnormal not to hold one's clearly delineated nationality (often equated with belonging to a state). A person without a nation is a person without a shadow: "A person without his own nation abuses commonly accepted categories and exposes himself to public opinion" (Gellner 1991: 15). Furthermore, this nationality and the feeling of identity attached to it is not something which is liberally chosen (as an individual act of free will), but determined by one's birth into a given cultural community and the accompanying processes of socialisation. This takes place particularly in those circles of culture, which regard a nation not as a political community in terms of history – a community made up of free citizens – but rather perceive themselves through race and anthropology: specific race potential, blood links, endogenous inheritance and exceptional duty to retain one's identity. Nations perceived in this way are not groups based on free-will, which anyone can penetrate on the strength of choice. It is also far from easy – as millions of emigrants have already painfully experienced – to turn down one's membership of a given national community. One may acquire – through choice – citizenship, but not nationality.

But there are other complications. As appears to be the case so far, national awareness and a feeling of national identity are not only cultural categories but also political ones, often described in terms of security, or even state existence itself. They are part of politics, as they imply a differentiation between what is one's own and what is alien, friends and foes. Politics determine, as claimed by not only Carl Schmitt (1927), what is friend and enemy, but also (Herbert Marcuse) animosity (see Ryszka 1975: 148).

Stereotypes of the enemy in national awareness most often are not of a concrete historical nature. They are general and in this form they are inherited – together with linguistic phrases, folk stories and works of superior culture. Franciszek Ryszka (1975: 148), commenting C. Schmitt, has this to say: "an enemy is someone who is different, an alien. In its particularly intense form an enemy is a source of existential conflict, which cannot be subordinated to any general norm or solved through arbitration on the part of an independent third party (...). It is not important where the animosity comes from or what its source is. What is important, however, is the actual presence of the enemy, that he exists, even though tomorrow he may be a friend". Feelings of animosity, much the same as war, according to the maxim ascribed to C. Atlee (1941-1945), "are born in the minds of men". But not only in the sense of passionate fear of uncertainty, the unknown or violence, but also under the influence of state, ideological and religious indoctrination. And sin-

ce this is the case that means that the above is the result of conscious action, which can and ought to be rectified.

National awareness, understood as something created subjectively, as well as being a purposefully formed conviction of human groupings on being a nation (the will to be a nation, "a nation as great solidarity" – Ernest Renan 1882; human groupings became nations because "they became aware of their nationality" – Barker 1933: 219), expressed in terms of wanting to possess one's own state (one nation in one state – amongst others, Giuseppe Mazzini and his principle on nationality; also Gellner's principle referring to the congruence of state and culture, claiming that "a state becomes identified with a certain culture, with a certain style of communication, which prevails within its frontiers and which cannot cope without a compact educational system," 1991: 58 and 167) is in effect a syndrome of cognitive and emotional elements, which mutually condition themselves.

These, in my opinion, are as follows: 1) *recognition of a given territory* (held presently or in the past, defined as patrimony, domicile, habitat, as well as "land of one's forefathers", "heritage" and "the promised land") *as the spatial confines of one's own community*, in which the community has the right to "feel at home", 2) *ethnic myth* (in the genealogical sense, professing descent from one common ancestor, and in the race sense, "where a named ancestor is replaced by a crowd of unnamed ancestors", Ossowski 1966: 118) *expanding the feeling of community* – on the basis of belief in one's common decent – beyond the group of true kinship (see Weber's concept of ethnic groups, 1956), 3) *conviction of common cultural heritage* (including, amongst others, language and often "one's own" religion, customs and practices) *and common historical experience*, 4) *perceiving certain psycho-physical traits as peculiar to oneself and one's community* (stereotype opinions of one's own group and alien groups, statements on national character; Kubiak 1994), 5) *state feelings* (a desire to have one's own state, protection of one's sovereignty, retention and development of one's culture) and 6) *positive feelings about belonging to a given national-state community*, together with assessment of other communities ("we" and "they", "ours" and "theirs"), as well as, frequently, a conviction of one's nation's specific historical mission (Pan-Slavistic and Pan-Germanic ideologies, different versions of Messianism, but also doctrines such as America's *manifest destiny*), justifying comportment towards others.

None of these traits is invariable, as pointed out by theoretical analyses (S. Ossowski, E.K. Francis), and empirical research (e.g. W. Markiewicz 1960, J. Rokicki 1992, T. Paleczny 1992). Furthermore, there are no good reasons to presume that basic functions of national awareness (particularly of an integrating and motivational nature) can be fulfilled exclusively when meanings contained in awareness are simplified, and even more so when they are falsified.

## First Measures

It was at a relatively early stage that people perceived the possibility of rectifying the process of standardising social imagination where it manifested itself most commonly: the school and school textbooks. It was a lot later that it was noted in symbolical culture, particularly in literature and film, not to mention TV. From the beginning measures aimed in this direction were connected with attempts at releasing international relations from the effects of stereotype opinions, generated by ethnocentrism, engendering animosity, and accepting violence as one of the recognised forms of national policy.

The first to indicate the need to rectify school textbooks were national (the New York Peace Society – in existence since 1815, the English Peace Society – founded in 1816 and, five years later, the French Société de la Morale Chrétienne) and international (following the conferences of London [1843], Brussels [1848], Paris [1849] and after the emergence of the League of Peace and Freedom in Geneva in 1867) pacifist organisations. The world determined through aggression and war was to be replaced by an international order of perpetual peace, not necessarily understood in keeping with the programme of Immanuel Kant *Zum ewigen Frieden* (Żelazny 1992). The road towards the desired state of affairs ought to commence – in keeping with the Anglo-Saxon tradition of liberalism and the moral premise of a part of Protestant belief – with rectification of the human mind. Internal order of the individual was to lead to the freeing of interpersonal and international relations from the use of physical force.

It is notable that the 19<sup>th</sup> century quest of pacifist movements coincided in time with the spreading of education and the broadening of school duties, imposed by the state on the legal guardians of children and adolescents. Both these processes, however, were asymmetric in nature. States, by controlling the learning process, or even by imposing a monopoly on learning, were consciously erecting barriers between nations. Pacifist movements – on the contrary – expounded universal values. The local national and state perspective, and the universal one found themselves in clear conflict. Initially the state was the winner.

Obligatory learning – starting at a given age and for a specific number of years with specific scope – was first introduced in Prussia (1825). Similar regulations were soon to follow in Austro-Hungary (1869), Japan (1872) and Great Britain (1876). In the United States, as a result of its federal character, obligatory schooling was introduced progressively between 1856 and 1918. In Poland, despite the fact that the Public Education Chamber had made attempts as early as 1808, obligatory schooling was introduced only after the regaining of independence (in 1919, ratified by an Act of Parliament in 1932).

The family is bound to submit its child to the “education machine”. A teacher becomes a state agent, penetrating, at least theoretically “down to the humblest inhabitant of the least of its villages” (Hobsbawm 1991: 81). At the same time the developed educational structure becomes so expensive that only the state can

maintain it. The state becomes its main inspector. As Gellner claims: "Even in countries where fragments of the education machine are in private hands or managed by religious unions, the state controls product quality of this presently most important industry – the manufacture of useful creatures, capable of living in society" (Gellner 1991: 51). The spreading by the school system of patterns of culture and personality models, of the "national" language and of a system of values, not only confirm and spread the social order, but also become an "indispensable mechanism", "life-giving blood" and the "minimum climate in which members of society may breathe, continue and produce" (Gellner 1991: 51). The school system, however, not only disseminates the culture of writing, the reception of which requires training. It also acts as its co-author, since "some minor, local, differentiated tradition of illiterate persons" (Gellner 1991: 51) is not enough for a collection of local and regional communities to feel it is a supra-regional community, a national community, able to act in accordance with the interests of a centralised nation-state. Schools not only spread information which can be checked (through logic and the empirical approach). They also popularise myths, which protect them by this virtue from rational criticism. And this leads us very close to the situation where the light-hearted calling into question of myths is equated to "sacrilege", "arrogance", the "trampling of tradition" and "high treason".

After the First World War – something which was not deprived of its influences and effects – contemplation of the contents of school textbooks led to gradual institutionalisation. Now the problem of textbooks was in the hands of international organisations: the League of Nations and its International Committee on Scientific Cooperation (since 1928) and the Special Committee on Moral Disarmament (since 1932). Furthermore, there were international research associations (e.g. of historians), groups of intellectuals in a variety of countries (The Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation in Poland) and denominational organisations.

The League of Nations international convention on "moral disarmament" (*Désarmement moral*) prepared on Polish initiative in 1934 states in articles 1 and 2 that "school textbooks ought to be prepared in the spirit of respect for nations, underlining their mutual dependence, which is indispensable in the light of international cooperation" (Simonides 1980: 160). The Congress of Historians (Oslo 1928) considered the Report on nationalism in school textbooks. Similar subject areas were discussed at congresses held in the Hague and Basle. The Sub-committee on Foreign Textbook Research (part of the Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation in Poland) carried out, in 1933, empirical analyses on 200 history and geography textbooks from 25 countries belonging to the League of Nations (a more detailed account is offered by Gellas 1965 and 1975).

Furthermore, in the inter-war period it was noted (amongst others by Nathan Söderblom, the Primate of Sweden, and 1930 Nobel Peace Prize winner) that for similar reasons as in the case of school textbooks, it is necessary to subject ideas disseminated by the catechism (Haberman 1972) to close scrutiny.

Dating back to the late 1920s and early 1930s one also notes the first attempts to employ the reassessment of school textbooks for summary political purposes. This undoubtedly was the case when the Polish government submitted a memorandum to the League of Nations on 23 August 1931, as well as a paper containing the results of analyses carried out by the Sub-committee on Foreign Textbook Research, which was given to the Germans in 1933. Striving to create a system of international security, capable of halting action on the part of mass media and educational institutions standing in breach of ideas encompassed by the League of Nations, Poland not only had in mind the common interests of the international community, but also – frankly speaking – took steps to protect itself from anti-Polish propaganda spread by the Germany of that time.

After the Second World War the contents of school textbooks once again came under the magnifying glass of international organisations, governments, intellectual circles and social movements. There were many reasons for this. (1) Immediately after the war, much the same as in the case of the previous one, there was a strong readiness to counter everything concerning matters already known from past experience, which fostered feelings of animosity and favoured micro- and macro-structural aggression. In this spirit the basic documents of the UNO and its specialist agencies, in particular UNESCO, were drawn up. The founding act of this organisation states, amongst others, that since “war is born in the mind of man”, then it should be “overcome in the mind of man”. (2) In this period practical requirements were clearly stated. The victorious powers included the reassessment of textbooks in their de-Nazification programme. Having defeated the German armies in battle, the Allies also wished to eliminate Fascism from the German educational system. Demolishing the institutions of the totalitarian state was not enough to give birth to a democratic Germany. It was necessary to defeat the educational system favouring the emergence of authoritarian characters, legitimising this type of state. (3) Not long after, a self-contained stimulus increasing interest in textbooks was the growing war of ideologies between Western society and the Soviet answer to solving social conflicts through state socialism. The Cold War brought about deeply polarised images of the enemy, as well as – particularly in peace movements – sharp opposition (including intellectual!) to “barricade” mentality. (4) The left which took over the countries which found themselves in the post-war period under Soviet ideological and military domination, treated the break in the transfer of culture as an integral part of its own social liberation programme. And at the same time it regarded it as a necessary condition in the forging of a new brotherhood, the “community of socialist states”. (5) After the political changes brought about by the Autumn of Nations of 1989, in this part of Europe (though not in each of these countries to the same degree) textbooks were once again reassessed. This time the purpose was de-communisation, the vanquishing of ideological influences brought about by Marxism and Leninism and the elimination of educational models generated by this ideology – models such as *homo sovieticus*, defined by Alexandr Zinovyev (1984; see also Tischner 1992). The so-called “white stains” were now a problem area. (6) The need for fundamental changes in school textbo-



oks was proclaimed by a variety of church denominations in Central and Eastern Europe which saw change as an important factor in the religious revival of "post-communist societies". (7) The stipulation to reassess the contents of textbooks was included at a relatively early stage in bi-lateral meetings and agreements, which were later signed. In some cases preparatory work was carried out by non-government organisations (e.g. UNESCO national committees). This was the case of Franco-German negotiations held in the 1950s and Polish-German meetings of the 1970s. In many cases textbook clauses (referring to the need to overcome prejudices and stereotypical opinions in school textbooks) were included in the bi-lateral treaties (e.g. the Polish-West German treaty of 1970). (8) The ever-stronger socio-political integration of Western Europe generated its own need for this kind of reassessment. Changes in textbook contents, in this case, were looked upon as not only as an instrument of integration but also as an indicator of integration. A common history, free of all manner of chauvinist stereotypes, teaching multi-dimensional understanding of the process of history and encouraging the removal of the causes of conflict, was to become an important ingredient at the base of a common Europe. And finally (9) - the reassessment of textbooks and, in this case, of catechisms as well (and of other texts with similar functions) brought about ecumenical tendencies within Christianity – first of all amongst faiths constituting the World Council of Churches, then between Catholicism, Protestantism and the Orthodox Church, and finally between all monotheistic religions. These tendencies mainly concentrated on the search for a new paradigm in the theology of dialogue (D'Arcy May 1988:573) and in re-interpreting texts, which might uphold mutual prejudices, including anti-Semitism (Reinhartz 1988: 524).

As it appears from the above review, the stipulation to reassess textbooks does not always have to signify general interest prevailing over the private needs of specific social movements and organisations. This does not concern points three, four and six, since inspired changes do not require the elimination of simplifications and falsity, but only serve the purpose of replacing the indoctrinating code. The vision of the world appropriate for the losing ideologies is replaced, generally speaking, by an equally one-sided victorious ideology, capitalizing its triumph by taking control of the process of learning. The fact of manipulation itself does not undergo change. The only thing that changes is the manipulator. For this reason I exclude this type of reassessment of textbooks from further analysis. I shall concentrate above all on those attempts at changing textbook contents, which were aimed at turning them into textbooks helping to understand the complexity of the process of history and, at the same time, of forging an understanding between nations.

### **The School Textbook**

Focus on school textbooks by no means signifies depreciation of other factors conditioning the essence and function of national awareness, in particular symbolical culture, language, religion, institutions (including the family and neighbours) and

the importance of individual auto-reflection. Of course, national awareness is ultimately the function of many causes mutually conditioning themselves. In this context the school textbook plays an exceptional role. From a common-sense point of view it is a systematised collection of factual information (pertaining to people, events and processes), a number of methodological directives and bibliographical indications, which prepare the pupil for independent analysis and interpretation of a chosen fragment of reality. In essence it is something more: an important tool of ideological and political indoctrination. It not only teaches how to interpret, it not only informs about objective (if such a thing exists) criteria of assessment, but also spreads binding evaluations. It not only demonstrates personal models (of "ours" and "theirs"), but at the same time "prompts", which of these models ought to be chosen. Furthermore, these formulae for interpretation, these assessments and imposed personal models are – and not only in the case of the so-called catechismal model – duplicated over and over again, with a pupil's school marks depending on the degree to which he has retained them. They are handed over to recipients whose personalities, in consideration of their age, are easily moulded. This handing down is enveloped by an aura of spreading the truth, which is generated by the school itself. On this basis the teaching of history, aesthetics, literature and socio-political norms becomes (or at least this is the intention!) as obvious as the axioms of mathematics, the laws of physics, chemical compounds or the principles of biology. What more, textbooks refer to information, images and emotions of a pre- (e.g. folk tales and songs, tales handed down by family members) and an extra-school nature (the press, radio, TV, current opinion). Some of the above is retained, the rest is repulsed by the memory. It is worth noting that for many people school textbooks were and remain the only books read in entirety. Furthermore, they were the only books available at home.

I believe that textbooks on history, the national literature, civic education and religion do not preach cognitive and emotional distance towards their contents. They do not offer preparation towards accepting the truth, they do not inform about the alternatives, but rather portray a polarised image of history and culture. They tend to prepare towards participation, as Stanisław Ossowski said, in the myth of our ancestors, in the heroism of our "fathers and grandfathers". The explication is simplification. A half-truth, providing it helps to "fortify one's heart" and maintain a tradition, is readily justified. "Ours" is more important than "theirs". Truth is replaced by a stereotype, with clear, unequivocal images, emotionally intact and reflecting earlier impressions and judgements, being easier to remember. This is followed by what is only too well known to psychologists – wishful thinking.

Franciszek Ryszka (1994: 1) is correct when he states that "the thicker the contours, the easier they are to retain in one's memory and imagination. Imagination, in turn, stimulates our feelings" – both friendly and unfriendly. "The latter, however, seems to prevail, particularly in those cases where the stereotype has political functions". Furthermore – and this is borne out by international comparative research completed in 1995 on memories of the Second World War in six Central and East European countries – people most quickly forget facts and histori-

cal figures of a given period, but most often retain in their memories globalise – emotionally as well – images of events, particularly if for a protracted period of time they are intensively popularised (see research results of the Social Opinion Research Institute IMAS International 1995 and Holzer 1995: 19). A similar thing happens when we have a general stereotype of the enemy, a conviction, for example, that Germans are criminals, “all Germans, their entire nation”, “Germans in general”, or on the same basis, “Russians in general”.

This problem, however, is far wider and cannot be exhausted by simply asking the question how (and why) should nations perceive themselves. This problem also includes textbook-based standardised impressions about social roles e.g. of men and women and how they should prepare themselves for these roles, of groups and of social categories. Accurate perceptions on the standardisation of impressions on social roles are to be found in the 1995 non-government Report on the standing of women in Poland. The Report states, amongst others, that in Polish schools textbooks still prevail which support the idea of the “patriarchal image of the family and the world”. “Women in these textbooks are portrayed mainly as mothers and housewives”. “The textbook mum most often does not work professionally, she has no friends or acquaintances, she has no interests, and practically does not function outside the home”. “The figure of the father is sketched far more attractively, ‘festively’ (illustrations depict him wearing a tie). He talks about interesting events, he knows a lot about technology, he reads a lot, he meets friends, has hobbies, he is the initiator of many family attractions” (Report 1995: 54, 55). The second problem, referring to the stereotyping of social categories, in recent times has been well-illustrated by e.g. American discussions, inspired by the National Centre on the Teaching of History, which consider the so-called “national history standards of the United States”. These discussions propose limiting the showing of white men and changing the time dedicated in portraying specific figures, events and processes, in order to talk about the history of the States from the perspective of the disadvantaged minorities: the Indians, Afro-Americans and women.

But why is it so difficult, despite the rationality of the argumentation, to alter the present state of affairs? This is for at least three reasons. First of all, the problem is connected with resistance on the part of the state. I shall illustrate this by giving the example of Ienaga Saburo’s thirty-year battle with the Ministry of Education. I shall explain the second reason, based on ideological and political premises, by analysing the dispute on the image of national culture and the canon of school textbooks in the Poland of today. The third reason is connected with the specific character of the historical process.

As far as state resistance is concerned, generally speaking, obligatory school textbooks correspond with an equally binding (not only formally!) vision of reasons of State and national pride: a state should not admit guilt and a nation should not apologise to anyone. But most often this is necessary. As Tadahide Hirokawa (1995: 12-13) recently stated, the history textbook of Ienaga Saburo was not approved and allowed at school, because it gave an objective account of,

amongst others, the massacre in Nankin and of “Japanese aggression in Asia”. Instead of the phrase “Japanese aggression in Asia” the Ministry of Education would have preferred “the entry of the Japanese army”. Ienaga Saburo says that “Immediately after occupying Nankin the Japanese army murdered many Chinese soldiers and civilians”. The Ministry would have preferred the following: “In the general confusion, which took place after the occupation of Nankin by the Japanese army, many Chinese soldiers and civilians died”. Other fragments of Saburo’s textbook, including those referring to experiments with bacteriological weapons carried out in Harbin by the Japanese 731 detachment, in the opinion of the Ministry, ought to be removed altogether. According to the Japanese social movement “Save from Oblivion”, which supports the reassessment of history textbooks, the past should not be justified but attempts should be made to comprehend it. Memory of the war crime committed Hiroshima and Nagasaki cannot replace memory of Japanese crimes in occupied countries. And vice versa.

Ideological and political assumptions, conspicuous in the programmes of the majority of today’s right-wing parties in Poland, also manifest a drive towards changes in the contents of textbooks (providing that change can facilitate a return to the *status quo ante bellum*), as well as retaining their present form (if assessment “under European pressure” were to lead to a reassessment of that which “survived the pressure of Communism”). The desired state, something which transpires, amongst others, from the May 1995 issue of the national-radical monthly “Szczerebiec”, is determined by values: the Altar, the Absolute, Truth, Tradition, Order, the Family, the Fatherland, the Nation, Possession and Race (“Polityka” 1995 no. 21: 14). The above is threatened, according to supporters of this orientation not only by “post-Communist legacy”, but also by the “pressure of Western mass culture”. Bad culture ousts good culture, and violence, pornography and blasphemy prevail over values”. Mirosław Pęczak (1995: 17), having reviewed the columns of “Gazeta Polska”, “Ład”, “Najwyższy Czas” and “Arka”, comes to the conclusion that the cultural programme of Poland’s right wing contains, above all, the following slogans: “more of Poland”, “save the family”, “parents are more important than the child, and men are more important than women”, “return to strict moral values”, “fundamental truths”, “homeliness”. Fulfilment of the right wing’s vision of culture is impeded by “gnosticism”, ecological pantheism, universalism, multi-culturality”, “liberalism in culture”, “pluralism of falsity on TV and radio” and attempts at shifting to Poland American “political correctness”, supported by “uprooted intellectuals”. The latter of these are more concerned with fostering “sexual minorities than bringing up their own children; they do not believe in God and they care nothing for the family”. For this reason it is necessary to engage in “group action reminiscent of the Jesuits of the 16<sup>th</sup> century” and to attain state power in order to use it for the purpose of effecting “spiritual aims”. “Healthy and patriotic censorship” may turn out to be indispensable. Under its influence there might appear “some kind of school reading-list canon, maybe without works of Żeromski, but with Hubert Rostworowski. With Herbert; but Miłosz might have

some problems (...) Wherever you look – many references to the past, including the period of at least fifty years ago” (Pęczak 1995: 17).

The last of the three mentioned problem areas refers to specifics, or rather: the conflictive nature of the historical process and the dependence of human perception of the world on historical experiences, group interests and the system of values. “Polish military triumphs,” as Janusz Tazbir wrote in 1992, “shall always figure in history textbooks of the defeated states as calamities”. This is undoubtedly true but only under certain circumstances of history being perceived in a peculiar manner: history as revenge according to binding models reaching up to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century amongst Corsican and Sicilian peasants, or peculiar to certain contemporary Mafia groupings. This state of affairs must constantly breed animosity. But today’s Scandinavian nations are free of mutual animosity, though their past was not free of armed conflict. The important thing here is not the past itself, but the way in which we rationalise it.

Anna Wolff-Powęska, in her article written in 1995, comments Polish-German relations after World War Two. She points out the rather obvious fact that the worst recipe for the past is one-sided interpretation. This was so in the case of forced resettlement, when the “vociferous rhetoric of resettlement organisations” in the German Federal Republic was accompanied by “an omission to disclose the full truth” by the Poland of that time “in fear of placing one’s own martyrology in a relative context”. But, as is known today, the situation could well have been different. The establishment of recommendation no. 22 of the UNESCO Polish People’s Republic/German Federal Republic Committee on School Textbooks (refers to Potsdam documents employing the “transfer of people” expression) which would permit avoiding the division into “victors” and “vanquished”, because “it was the truth that really mattered” (Markiewicz 1986: 11) turned out to be a viable solution. The necessary truth of “forgive, but not forget” was attained.

We come across similar problems when dealing with many historical figures and dates. Take as an example Władysław Jagiełło, a Lithuanian and the king of Poland, who becomes the victor at the Battle of Grunwald. He is a symbolical figure in the Polish pantheon, but at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Lithuania branded him a “collaborator and traitor”. It is easy to find other examples in Polish-German, Polish-Russian and Polish-Ukrainian relations of figures who are perceived in radically different ways. But even here – once we treat history as the “teacher of sense and not of principles” (Edmund Burke), once the textbook ceases to be a legacy of animosity and embarks on the road of understanding the circumstances which brought about hatred – will it be possible to find generally acceptable solutions.

Now it is time to mention the Mannheim motif. There is no doubt that this historical fact may be interpreted differently by Poles, Americans, Germans, Russians or the French. Apart from obvious deviations from the norm this does not occur through anyone’s ill-will. People simply express “what they see, what they feel, what they comprehend”, which is the result of their different culture and different location on the political and economic map of the world. It is these elements which endow one’s experiences with specific meaning. The same, globally spe-

aking, events are e.g. in the historiography of different nations dated in different ways, as for example the Second World War. For China it started in September 1931 with the Japanese aggression on Manchuria, for Czechoslovakia in September 1938 (the Munich Agreement, giving the Third Reich the right to occupy and annex large territories of the Czechoslovak Republic), for Poland in 1939, for the USSR in June 1941, for the USA in December 1941 following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. If, however, "the fate of the world depends on the race between the process of education and catastrophe" (Kennedy 1992), then this difficulty must also be overcome in the same manner as in the Mannheim recipe for overcoming the destructive influence of ideology through self-knowledge.

For this and other reasons it is still easier to write a common textbook than to introduce it into the school systems of a given group of countries. An example of this may be the three-volumed *European Inheritance* (1955) edited by E. Barker, G. Clark and P. Vaucher, which came into being as a "Comprehensive and independent history for pupils and students throughout the continent". Work on this textbook, inspired by nine states in the anti-Hitler coalition, was started in London in 1943. The results of this work were published twelve years later. But the textbook was not introduced into schools in the 1950s or at any time later. Will the same fate meet the 1992 (380-page long) common history textbook of the 12 European Community countries?

A common vision of history can still hurt the pride of many nations, formed on the basis of old models. It is still easier to engage in polemics on history's great figures (Charlemagne, Copernicus), which symbolise in themselves the greatness of specific nations. One may keep disagreeing that the French Charlemagne is, at the same time, Karl der Grosse, and that Copernicus is the "common heritage of Poles, Germans and Europeans" (Helmut Kohl in a speech given in the Bundestag on 1 June 1995). It is simpler to maintain stereotype views e.g. of "the Kacap" and "the Polack" (Yerofyeyev 1995) and auto-stereotype opinions e.g. of the Slovaks being more talented and better educated "than the European average, which surrounds them. Those who think otherwise are the enemy" (Strasser 1995), than to admit that no nation can boast being the depository of specific genetic predispositions and that no nation has an exceptional mission in the history of humanity.

### **The Desired Status**

Władysław Markiewicz (1986: 130 is undoubtedly right when he says that "The authentic and permanent reconstruction of awareness and mutual attitudes of nations to one another, particularly those which have experienced mutual age-long animosity or even hatred, certainly cannot be attained over one generation". This status cannot be reached exclusively by means of scientific historiography, which "to a far lesser degree influences historical imagination than literary fiction, painting and music", or without taking into account the educational ambience of the family home. However, the beginnings of the required changes are actually linked

to historiography and – as may be positively verified – by the findings of the Franco-German textbook committee (in existence since 1950) or, twenty years later, the Polish-German Joint Textbook Committee. Maybe it is also necessary to start from historiography because it is simpler to come to a common agreement on how to perceive the historical process than to limit the negative socialising effects of ethnocentrism, manifest in so many areas of symbolical culture.

An analytical review of works published by international institutes (primarily the George Eckert International Textbook Research Institute [MIBP], founded on UNESCO initiative in Brunswick in 1951), domestic institutes (e.g. The School Programmes Institute of the Ministry of Education and Upbringing or the Western Institute in Poznań), specialist magazines (e.g.: “Kwartalnik Historyczny”, “Wiadomości Historyczne”, “Dzieje Najnowsze”, “Westermanns Pädagogische Beiträge”, “International Journal of Political Education” and the “Journal of Peace Research”), compact works (those published in recent years, in particular works of Anna Wolff-Powęska [1993], Friedbert Pflueger, Winfried Lipscher and Jerzy Holzer [1994]) and published thoughts of members of joint textbook committees (e.g. Karl-Ernest Jeismann, former director of the MIBP in Brunswick [1994]) allows one to draw a number of general conclusions concerning preliminary conditions of “comprehension textbooks” (the term was coined by Jan M. Piskorski [1992]).

(1) Thorough work on a common textbook requires an “undertaking on the part of the intelligent individual to look for the truth, to be sapped of all prejudices”. This need to embark on a quest and to have a truth link (“internal reasons of State of a learned community”) must be “stronger than the image of the enemy fossilised through afflictions of the past”, there must be a “drive to create a European peace order in the future” which shall outweigh 19<sup>th</sup> century and contemporary nationalism (Jeismann 1994: 114). This is a matter of finding the will and skill to search for the truth in the face of obstacles: we must draw a line between what we have trusted so far, call into question that which we have unreservedly believed in – on the strength of historical patency – and query stereotypes and auto-stereotypes of “collective suggestions, which already beset our childhood and construct the image of our nation against the backdrop of our enemy”. This, at last, is a discursive change of the “symbolical worlds of concepts which our nations inhabit” (Jeismann 1994: 114, 115).

(2) At the outset the indispensable “scientific rationality in a closed circle” ought to, with time, transform into a “public debate on the inherited imaginations of oneself”, only to end with “a melting down of mind and heart barriers, which stand in the way of practical common-sense and consideration in the expression of judgements”. Without public dispute, the quest for a common sense of history may easily become “degraded to the level of textbook diplomacy”, or even “manipulation for political ends and, specifically, of institutions which give money” (Jeismann 1994: 115).

(3) Gradually, by availing ourselves of the knowledge of historians and geographers, the whole of symbolical culture ought to appear before us, in particular the impressions and models diffused by the canon of obligatory school-books. This

canon, according to opinions expressed at the Polonists Convention (May 1995), cannot be a “gigantic supermarket”, nor a collection of texts spreading the notion of “jingoistic martyrdom”, which pushes the young Polish reader into a “strange Polish niche”, or even worse, onto the “brink of nationalism”, with “Polishness” being the enemy of “Europeanism” (Sosnowski 1995). Others ways of preparing pupils to react to literature – that golden medium between revolutionary changes threatening a “loss of memory, identity, and temptation towards anarchy” and a discontinuation in the inter-generation transfer process, and the temptation to remain in the “trenches of the Holy Trinity” – are far from simple. But despite this they are necessary. Analysis of historical transfer ought to be expanded to include literary texts. This is because information and historical assessments constitute an element of the worldview only after they have been processed by literature – literary short-cuts, personal figure-models and iconography.

(4) Those in learning ought to be given the possibility of understanding national idiosyncrasies, “national divergence in perceiving the truth”. They ought to be helped to see the multi-dimensionality of reality, to understand this reality simultaneously from the point of view of many national-state communities, and through the prism of the universal code of human rights. For this reason the components necessary for contemporary civilizational competence are as follows: empathy, compliance with multi-model human fulfilment, dialogue skills, and the blocking of one’s own aggression. No national community has a monopoly on evil or a patent for what is good. Not only the great are responsible for the process of history but also the “fellow travellers” (Mitläufer).

(5) Since we cannot run away from the past we should not forget about it. The past, the complexity of conditions, which led to events, must be understood. We must understand the past, not in order to justify it, but to free ourselves of its burden in the educational system and in politics: we must expand social imagination, be able to foresee tomorrow’s effects and today’s actions. “Collective blame does not exist, but rather joint responsibility for conclusions” drawn on the basis of historical experience. The way in which “responsibility for the past is accepted or rejected by sovereign and democratic states is decided by their political culture and new national identity” (Wolff-Powęska 1995: 7).

(6) Textbooks of agreement ought to prepare one for accepting the truth, for looking at history impartially, and not for squaring it up in a resentful, martyrological, self-vindictive or heroic manner. Falsehood, much the same as wishful thinking, clouds the issue.

(7) Since national awareness is the resultant of many causes and processes which interfere with one another (both planned and natural), it is wrong to presume that the introduction of common textbooks (or just a reassessment of national textbooks in keeping with bi-lateral agreements) shall automatically bring the desired results. For this reason the state of social awareness ought to be systematically and thoroughly monitored, with the results being made generally available.



(8) The political system which most fully permits conflict-free disclosure of differences appears to be consociational democracy (Lijphart 1997), regarded by many as a new form of political and cultural organizing of post-national societies.

Everything that has been stated above does not mean that since it is already known that: 1) national awareness is to a large degree the product of standardisation and that 2) textbooks free of ethnocentrism may serve international understanding and assist in the formation of multi-tiered identities (local-religious, national-state, continental), then by this virtue the problem has finally been solved. Of course, preparations towards a peaceful existence in a united Europe through e.g. a reassessment of school textbook contents and social re-education, is possible. However, this cannot be effected equally well in every situation. Undoubtedly a negative effect would be brought about by anxiety, fear about the future and mass poverty. States of existential threat increase the need for a polarised, simple and conclusive explanation in old ethnocentric categories, rather than the now demanded understanding beyond divisions. For this reason it is worth recalling the wise caution of Karl-Ernst Jeismann (1994: 119): "No pedagogics, no teaching can awaken commitment in the name of understanding between nations if living prospects are deplorable, if schools and education remain on the margin".

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