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NATIONAL AND REGIONAL IDENTITY AS FACTORS OF SOCIETAL ACTIVISM THE LEGACY OF MARTA LIGUDA-PAWLETOWA (1885–1974)

The past-it is today, only anything further.

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Abstract

The author's intention is to substantiate the thesis involvement in local and regional activities, identification with the values of the region (tradition, culture, language/dialect) strengthens patriotism, attachment not only to the small homeland, but also the country of origin. This thesis is supported by the biography of an activist and publisher, Marta Liguda-Pawletowa, who pursued ambitious social goals through her emotional bond with Silesia, by book-publishing and distribution of Polish literature in the region.

Keywords: Marta Liguda-Pawletowa, activism, culture, identity

The article presents the biography of Marta Liguda-Pawletowa, primarily a publisher and distributor of Polish books and magazines in the 1920s in Opole, Silesia. An activist and advocate of the Polish identity of Opole region, who with her life and work confirms the thesis that being rooted in one's small homeland, love for the region in which one lives and creates, and whose history and culture one identifies with, finds expression in patriotism, manifested in hard work for the region and concern for the common good of fellow citizens.

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LOCAL AND REGIONAL IDENTITY AS A CRITERION FOR PATRIOTIC ATTITUDES

Patriotism is strongly linked to the concept of regionalism. According to Stanisław Ossowski there are two types of patriotism: the first one relates to the so-called private homeland and manifests itself by an individual's attitude to the environment in which he or she has spent part, or most, of their life; the second one is based on an individual's conviction of being part of a community sharing the same or similar values, norms, beliefs, territory and history. Thus, the second type of patriotism, in its ideological sense, refers to the land and heritage of the nation/community to which the individual claims to belong.

In fact, the two types of patriotism – de facto identities – overlap if their subject is a culturally homogeneous community living on one territory. As a result of the intersecting of the identities, the private homeland (or in other words the small homeland) becomes as important as the ideological fatherland. In this process, emotions are activated, reflected in attitudes that affirm or contest the immediate environment. The fact that the private homeland can represent the ideological one is transferred to emotions: 'The warm, personal affective relationship that connects us with the private homeland is transferred to the ideological homeland' (Ossowski 1967, 220). Thus, an affirmative attitude, manifested in local patriotism, influences the individual's social/collective perception of the environment, making the inhabited territory a small homeland in which a common and individual identity develops.

The phenomenon of identity, which has for centuries occupied our reflection on its essence, has become one of the core subjects within humanities and social sciences. In cultural studies, this concept is closely linked to reflections on the human being, shaped by both nature and culture. This notion was developed by Erik Erikson, as a continuation of post-Freudian thought, in the 1950s. Identity reflects our belief of who we are – individually and collectively. Neither identity is given to us once and for all; it is dynamic, evolving, constantly changing. The process of its formation takes place depending on the conditions of the environment and the individual himself, who – as *homo faber* (creative being) – has the power over its formation. As Ludwik Kozłub notes, referring also to other authors:

(...) the individual identifies either with particular persons (above all with so-called significant persons), groups, social categories, roles or organisations, or

with certain contents that are elements of a certain tradition, culture, history, the past, elements of some heritage, as well as with contents contained in certain political or social programmes. An individual's identifications determine his or her location in the world, in the social space, his or her rootedness – defined as the result of socialisation, imitation, adaptation or internalisation. (Kozołub 1998, 36)

As we see, human identity can encompass a wide range of issues, related to ethnic, racial, national, religious, linguistic, sexual etc. (self-)identifications. All of these types of identity are intertwined and are inseparable from the spheres of culture and nature (e.g. ageing, disability), Identity, in addition to its social nature, also has an individual, psychological realm/attribute. It is not only the result of interactions with other individuals, but also a result of the individual's exclusively developed identification matrices.

With the above in mind, we may argue that identity is a situational trait, a product of personal interactions, referring to meanings and symbols that, in a specific context, may be of fundamental importance for the individual him/herself and the community (Karlowski 1996, 85). Identity formation is closely linked to the formation of personality. Derived from the subjective understanding of the human being, his/her self-knowledge and awareness of the Self, in the perspective of cultural anthropology and sociology identity refers to the category of *social actor* – individual and collective one. According to Zygmunt Bauman, identity and the process of personality formation make one of the most universal human needs (1993, 8). It is:

(...) a sign – a project, a sign – a declaration, a sign made in advance in order to grasp and contain the sense of our being in the world; a sense which, until that final moment that concludes all search, seeks itself in dialogue with a world as noch nicht geworden and devoid of telos. (Bauman 2004, 30)

The concept of *individual identity*, implies another important construct – community and *national identity*. It should be stressed, however, that the understanding of these constructs, although close to each other, differ across perspectives present in social sciences and humanities; *national identity* occurs alongside such constructs as national/community identification, national/community bond or sense of national/community identity

(Kosowska-Rataj 1998, 28). *National identity* can also be understood as an element of the structure of the Self, becoming a subjective sign of national consciousness. *Subjectivity* in this case is regarded as an integral value of the construct of *national belonging* constructed around close, familiar, “tamed” elements which offer the possibility of comparison with the Other (another person). The Self, formed around internalised values and norms, allow for the preservation of individual distinctiveness, but also group affiliation (Fiske & Pavelchak 1993, 113).

Antonina Kłoskowska, the concept of national identity relates with the emotional assimilation of culture – so called valence. According to the sociologist, national identity consists not only of phenomena related to the canonical elements of culture, but also of collective knowledge (which finds its form in, among other, rituals, modes of interaction, stereotypes). Kłoskowska sees a nation as a broad and complex *community of communication*; imagined and realised through culture. However, attributing an individual to only one national culture may – especially in times of migration – may prove problematic (Kłoskowska 2005, 103–112).

National identity finds its fullest expression in the ideas of the nation, reflected in the perception of the homeland as the highest value. This thought was developed and practised by the spiritual guardian of the Polish anti-communist opposition, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński:

We are aware of the true historical continuity that exists between the past, through the present, towards the future. We are full of respect for our scholars, historians, architects, researchers of the Nation’s historical past and preservationists who have taken up every surviving relic with reverence and sought its proper location. All this testifies to the fact that our Nation, still remarkably young, has not grown old in its ten-century journey. A wise Nation today leans with reverence on its past. All the more because it does not need to be ashamed of it, even though we know that just as much can be improved in human life, so much could have been done better in the life of the Nation. But we thank God for such a past, we respect it, we do not want to break with it, on the contrary, we see in it a living link with the present. Our contemporary rights, demands and hopes are closely linked to the historical past of the Millennium Nation. It is in this sense of noble love and reverence for the past that we stand here today (...) looking serenely and confidently back through the centuries to a future that we desire to be different, better, full of peace and justice. (Wyszyński 1989, 45)

IDENTITY OF THE OPOLE REGION

The problem of national identity is particularly important in relation to the Opole Region, due to the region's multicultural and turbulent past. The Opole Region, compared to other areas of Poland, is specific in geographical, historical, economic and demographic terms. Opole Silesia (another name for Opole Region) is a borderland, with a rich history, and a multicultural heritage rarely found in other regions. It was ruled by the Piasts, Czech, Austrian and Prussian kings. After World War II, the inhabitants of the present-day Opole Region, together with the rest of Silesia, found themselves within the borders of the Polish state. At that time, a nationality verification procedure was applied to them, under which they had to prove their Polishness or their connection to Polish culture.

The reunification of the old Piast lands (Opole) with Poland took place in February 1945. Destroyed by warfare, the Opole Region required major and costly investments. It was thought that reconstruction would take a very long time. However, in a short period of time, Polish authorities were established, a verification and inventory operation was carried out, part of the population coming from the Polish eastern territories seized by the USSR was resettled, an administrative division was made, villages and towns were gradually rebuilt, restoring Polish identity.

The defeat of Nazi Germany, the consequences of the war, prompted a (self-)revision of the Silesian identity of the inhabitants. Many of them realised that, although before the war they had not been "German" enough to be recognised as such, after 1945 their cultural differences, reflected in the dialect carrying traces of the German language, undermined the validity of their recognition as Poles and made the then communist authorities treat the Ślązaks (Silesians) as an "uncertain element."

Today's nationally and ethnically mixed population of the region determines its cultural distinctiveness on the map of Poland. The inhabitants define themselves as Poles, Silesians and Germans. The society of Opole Silesia (Śląsk Opolski) forms a culturally diverse community, which is the result of centuries of migration, integration and also disintegration, economic, political and cultural transformations. This makes the contemporary Silesians a group of both literal and symbolic borderland. The fact was stressed by Emil Szramek when he wrote about the "cornered" character of Silesia. In his view, the region is home to "a people abandoned as if on an island, but nevertheless so fused with the heart of the neighbouring

nations" (1934, 7). The post-war Opole Region was perceived in a similar way by researchers including the aforementioned Stanisław Ossowski and Antonina Kłoskowska, as well as Zofia Staszczak, Maria Śmiełowska, Teresa Sółdra-Gwiżdż and Irena Bukowska-Floreńska.

In the works of these authors, we find postulations about the need to take into account the so-called humanistic factor, located, among other, in social activities of the individuals and their life stories. This approach is offered in this paper.

BIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW AND SOCIAL ACTIVITY OF MARTA LIGUDA-PAWLETOWA

The threat to national existence, experienced by Poles for centuries and depicted in Polish history, made it necessary to make efforts to preserve the "faith of the fathers." There have always been individuals who fully devoted their time and engagement to saving Polishness (tradition, culture, language, religion, heritage etc). Many such attitudes can be found in the history of Silesia, Juliusz Ligoń, Józef Lompa, Karol Miarka or Norbert Bonczyk being prominent exemplifications. Their ranks can also include those who expressed their patriotism and attachment to the region with their daily, tireless work in the fields of broadly understood education. Such a figure is Marta Liguda-Pawletowa, the first Polish journalist in the Opole Region, publisher and bookseller, active in the 1920s in Opole.

Marta Krziwikówna (her maiden name) was born on 29 March 1885 in Januszkowice in the Kozielsk district as the daughter of a farmer Michał Krziwik, a well-known Polish activist. She spent her early childhood in Opole Silesia and later in Gębice in the Poznań region. There she received her education, attending a German primary school where the teachers came mainly from Westphalia, where Polish traditions were strongly alien due to the migrants. In the Gębice school it was possible to learn Polish, admittedly only twice a week, but this allowed the children to get to know their mother tongue also outside the home (Wolna 1973, 20).

In 1898, Marta Krziwikówna and her family moved to Krasowa in Opole Silesia, where she finished primary school. In Opole she was educated at a trade school located at Moltkestrasse (today Tadeusza Kościuszki Street). After graduating with honours from the school, she was taken on by the editor-in-chief of "Gazeta Opolska", a journalist and social activist – Bronisław

Koraszewski (1864–1924). She was given a position in the dispatch department, and later in the editorial office, which at that time covered the entire production of the newspaper, including the editing of texts, translations from German into Polish, and proofreading. The circulation of ‘Gazeta Opolska’ was relatively large and the staff was small: the editor Koraszewski and his wife, a dozen co-workers and printers (Wolna 1973, 23). Her employment at ‘Gazeta Opolska’ meant that Marta Krziwikówna was then the only female editor in Silesia (Wolna 1973, 23).

In 1912, Marta married Karol Liguda, the first certified Polish master printer in Silesia, who came from Winow. Karol was the son of Wojciech Liguda, called “Old Wojciaszek”, a well-known guide of Polish pilgrimages, among others to St. Anne’s Mountain, Bard Śląski, Jasna Góra and Piekary Śląskie. Karol Liguda was educated and introduced to the arcana of the art of printing by a very reputable printer Erdmann Raabe Oppeln, who owned a printing house and shop in Opole. Erdmann’s workshop was for many years synonymous with excellent printing quality in the city (interview). The owner took care of the modern equipment of the printing house and kept abreast of technical and technological innovations. It was in this printing house that, among other things, the photographs of Max Glauer from Opole, who photographed Hitler and Hindenburg, were reproduced. Books and prints produced by Raabe were recognisable by the symbol of the standing raven. This printing signet became the hallmark of the factory, which was taken over after the owner’s death by his son Gustav, followed by Herbert Raabe. Family traditions were continued while the plant was continuously modernised. An example of this was the use of electricity instead of gas in the production process, which made it possible to significantly increase the printing run (Janowski 2012, 9).

Karol Liguda’s good contacts with the Raabe family allowed Marta to establish a Polish bookshop in Opole in 1912, located on Oderstrasse (currently Bronisława Koraszewskiego Street, vis-à-vis St. Jacek’s Bookshop). The venture required, especially at the beginning, a great deal of commitment from the owner, who soon had to face the challenges of fate – already on her own. Less than three years after her marriage, Martha was widowed. Charles died tragically in 1915, near Lorette, on the Franco-German front, axing the then two-year-old Bolko and a not much older daughter, Bronisława (Wolna 1973, 24). Bringing up and supporting children and running a bookshop at the same time was a serious, above all psychological, burden for the young widow.

In the bookshop, Marta sold mainly Polish books, among them prayer books. In the interwar period, the works of Gustaw Morcinek – a writer connected with Silesia, author of the widely read *Wyrąbany chodnik* – were very popular. There was also no shortage of Polish magazines. Among the numerous clientele was Jan Kasprowicz (interview). The fate of the Silesian population, who were brutally denied their right to Polishness, moved Kasprowicz with patriotic compassion. The poet spent his free moments at the *Gasthaus zur Arendy*, in today's Czarnowąsy. A frequent visitor to Liguda's bookshop was Knosała, a farmer well-known in the area and a supplier of Polish newspapers, who used to say: "As a Pole I was born, as a Pole I will die."

During the Third Silesian Uprising (3 May – 5 July 1921), the bookshop and printing house were severely devastated. Local activists, including the aforementioned Knosała, organised fundraising to publish a Polish newspaper, seeing this as an important factor in maintaining the Polish identity of the region.

The rebuilt bookshop provided a living for the owner, her children, and the employed staff; it also brought in enough income that shortly after reconstruction, Marta managed to buy one of the bankrupt German bookshops.

Owning two bookshops provided greater commercial opportunities and enriched the publishing offer. In addition to books and magazines, articles relating to the Catholic faith were also on sale, which was no coincidence, as Catholicism in Silesia had been inextricably linked to the concept of Polishness for centuries.

In April 1919, Marta Liguda remarried her husband's friend, Antoni Pawleta, co-founder and editor of "Nowiny Codzienne" and "Katolik Trzyrązowy." Pawleta, was not only a trusted friend of Karol's, but also a close associate. By marrying Marta, he fulfilled Karol's request, who once jokingly stated his wish: "if I die in the war, marry a widow" (interview).

Later, Pawleta became known as an activist and campaigner, lobbying for the Polishness of Upper Silesia. During the plebiscite campaign, he agitated for the region's incorporation into Poland. He did so, among other things, through the press and bulletins he published. He thus became the doyen of Polish journalism in the Opole region.

Apart from two children from Marta's previous marriage, the Pawleta family had six more descendants (Pawleta 1965, 324). The large family, however, did not prevent the parents from continuing their professional

work. Despite the workload, Marta found time to travel to Leipzig for the spring trade fairs. After each trip she would bring back a large chest of books, fairy tales and devotional items. It also happened that, during one such trip, she bought a piano with the children in mind, their education in which music played an important role. Spending time with the family, celebrating holidays such as Christmas or Easter with musical accompaniment, was one of the forms of nurturing and consolidating Polish identity in the Pawleta family (interview).

Marta Liguda-Pawleta's entrepreneurship and commitment to society, was unique in the context of that era. Marta was aware of the need to broaden the cognitive horizons not only of herself, her loved ones, but also of the community in which she lived and, by extension, of society. Driven by this thought, she tried to read a lot, expand her knowledge of the world and always find time for daily reading. The home library contained works by Polish writers in German, such as Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Durch Wüste und Wildnis* (In Desert and Wilderness), *Die Sintflut* (The Deluge), *Die Kreuzritter* (The Knights of the Cross) and many others in the fields of fiction, geography and natural science.

The 1930s, brought some significant changes to the Pawlet family. In 1933, Antoni decided to move the printing works from Opole to Suchy Bór, while four years later he put the plant at the disposal of the Association of Poles in Germany (Woln, 1973, 27). In 1939, a week before the outbreak of war, his son Bolek, a student at the Faculty of Law at the University of Königsberg, was arrested. The Gestapo also took his younger sister Bronisława, a medical student, who managed to regain her freedom after some time. Both young people were members of the Union of Polish Academics in Germany. Bolko died in the Nazi German concentration camp at Dachau, being a victim of medical experiments (interview). A better fate befell Antoni. On 3 September 1939, Pawleta was arrested and sent to Buchenwald concentration camp, from which he returned after liberation of the camp, but ailing, with his health dramatically destroyed.

Marta Liguda-Pawleta recalls the wartime and post-war times as follows:

In 1942, I was displaced from Opole Silesia; our house was taken by the Gestapo. I moved to Wrocław. I had a choice of several places and chose Breslau, which was the closest, in the hope that I would have the support of the people of the former Union of Poles in Germany in Breslau. However, it was not easy to get a flat there at that time. For two months I didn't have a flat and

my furniture stood in furniture carts, for which I had to pay so-called parking fees. Finally, I found the much-needed accommodation where I stayed until the end of the war. My son Bolesław was in prison in Oranienburg for 3 years, he sat in chains for almost a year. They treated him terribly. They stripped him of his clothes for the night so that he could not escape, and he had to sit alone in his cell. He made sweeping brushes. There was a library in the prison which had 8,000 volumes. He flipped through that whole library. He learned Italian. He also knew French, English, Polish and German well. At the end of the war, after serving his sentence and six weeks after my son was released from prison, he was conscripted into the army and sent to the eastern front, where he learned Russian in a relatively short time. From prison, my son wrote me beautiful letters, several of which I managed to save from the evacuation (Excerpt from letters of my son Bronisława Liguda-Kozak from the family archive). After the liberation, my husband returned sick from the camp, but despite this, he immediately started social work; he was a member of the City National Council an employee of the Verification Commission (for the city of Opole, the district and the Silesian Voivodship) and an honorary member of St Adalbert's Hospital, he later took over its administration, led the reconstruction of the hospital, balanced its balance sheet and saved its surgical equipment. My husband died in 1950 in Prószków. I continued to live in Suchy Bor, where I returned after the war. My daughter Stefania graduated in chemistry (now living in Austria) and Irena in agronomy, but exhausted by excessive work and war experiences, she became seriously ill. I therefore had to live with her and take constant care of her. (Pawleta 1965, 326–327)

Liguda-Pawletowa was for years an ambassador of Polishness in Opole Silesia. She owned two Polish bookshops and supplied the Polish population with Polish language primers, fiction and non-fiction books, as well as press. Thanks to her commitment, hard work and openness, she easily established contact with the public, winning people over. Through her activities she strove to ensure that her compatriots had access to the Polish word in times of struggle for national identity.

It is difficult to fully describe all of Marta's activities in a short sketch. She was a person of great kindness and nobleness of heart, a well-known, valued and well-liked figure. She went down in the memories of her readers and friends as a person of extraordinary activity and intellectual attractiveness. She was an honorary member of the Association of Polish Journalists. At the Association's initiative, she received a high state decoration: the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta. She died, aged 89, on 26 March 1974 and was buried at the cemetery in Suchy Bór, near Opole.

CONCLUSION

Marta Liguda-Pawleta's activities reflect a strong sense of Polish identity and patriotism. Presented in narrative form, the activities of the editor and educator confirm the thesis that a strongly felt and manifested local identity strengthens patriotic attitudes both in the individual's immediate environment and in the wider community. This allows one to propose the conclusion that the ideas of localism and regionalism, reflected in the activities of individuals, can be an effective way of achieving community-wide goals. This conclusion becomes particularly relevant in the context of globalisation processes, which on the one hand aim at the unification of certain spheres of human activity (e.g. economic, including production, consumption, services), but at the same time cause the growth of the opposite processes, which see value in local and regional potentials. These, in turn, are built through the activities of individuals linked by similar or even convergent self-identification. The example of Marta Liguda-Pawleta seems to confirm this being a strong proof of mutual dependences of local/regional identity and societal activism.

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