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*THE HERITAGE OF THE OLD POLISH REPUBLIC'S HISTORICAL RELICS
IN ITS EASTERN BORDER REGIONS*

1. Historical background

The stability of the frontiers of the Polish state for the last 50 years has been largely responsible for the fading from our consciousness of the fact that the geographical, demographic, and, consequently, cultural situation of Poland today does not correspond with the tradition shaped over the centuries. However, for the generation of our grandparents that tradition was still natural and the only one known to them. Today no one in Poland questions its frontiers. The ordeal that a considerable number of Poles went through during the Second World War as well as the current drama of the people of Yugoslavia and Caucasia prove that it is easier to live in a mono- than in a multinational country. On the other hand, the present frontiers and ethnic situation of Poland are the outcome of the actions of powers which did not at all aim at the welfare of Poland and Poles. For many years this subject could not even be discussed, to say nothing of pointing out what losses to the nation's biological and cultural substance had been sustained in consequence of the changes during and after the last war, carried out in an exceptionally brutal way. Poland as a multinational and multicultural state, with a territory about three times as large as the present one, is for most of our contemporaries but a dead item in history textbooks. The recollection of such a Poland, glimmering here and there, is burdened with maudlin sentimentalism and nostalgia for the lost paradise. Still much worse, it is sometimes poisoned with the venom of the past conflicts and resentments which find no justification in the present situation. The smallest amount of reliable information concerns the heritage of the old Polish Republic, outside the present borders. The extent of this ignorance has glaringly been revealed in the wave of publications of the last few years, in which the Dnieper was with difficulty distinguished from the Dniester, Podolia from Polesie or Pokucie, and Kamieniec from Krzemieniec.

Until the middle of the 14th century Poland was a medium-sized state, in principle nationally homogeneous (I omit here the problem of the division of Poland into dukedoms and of German colonization – a feature typical of the whole of Central

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Europe), culturally and economically oriented westwards. The eastern frontier of the state was also the border of Latin Christianity, beyond which there lay Orthodox Ruthenia and pagan Lithuania. During the second half of the 14th century this situation underwent a profound change. The first step was the incorporation by Casimir the Great of Red Ruthenia and Podolia, but a real turning point was brought by the raising to the Polish throne of Ladislas Jagiello and union with Lithuania – at that time a veritable East-European power. While in 1300 Poland, still divided into several dukedoms, occupied an area of about 200,000 sq. km and in 1370 – after the incorporation of Ruthenia and Podolia (but without Silesia and Pomerania) – 240,000 sq. km, by around 1400 the territory of Poland-Lithuania had increased nearly fourfold. Changes of this kind were bound to have a profound effect on the political, economic, and cultural situation of the country, their beneficial or negative effect on Polish history being the subject of much controversy among historians. However, such opinions remain outside the scope of the present considerations. From our standpoint the most important phenomena were a transition from a nationally uniform to a multinational state and its reorientation from the West to the East. Until as late as the end of the 18th century the Polish Republic was composed of two elements: the Crown, or the Polish Kingdom proper, and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Behind this official dualism there was a much more complicated national structure. In the first place, both the Crown and Lithuania extended over the vast Ruthenian territories which never attained a separate status within the state's organization. Furthermore, the country was inhabited by numerous minorities – Germans, Jews, Armenians, Tatars, Karaites, and Walachians, as well as by Italian, Greek, Scottish, and Dutch communities. There were various distinctive characteristics of these minority groups but – apart from the tightknit German community in Pomerania – the most permanent of them was a religious-cultural distinction, forming a barrier to integration. This is why until the 20th century there survived not only a very numerous Jewish community but also an incomparably smaller Karaite group. On the other hand, the acceptance of a union with the Roman Church by the Polish Armenians afforded the elite of their merchants and craftsmen the possibility of integration with the Polish nobility, at the cost, however, of a rapid loss of their own language and cultural tradition.

The incorporation of the Ruthenian lands and the union with Lithuania made Poland switch over to East-European policy and with time led to a conflict with Moscow, so disastrous in its consequences. The state included vast but sparsely populated territories with a poorly developed economy and civilization and additionally devastated by Mongol-Tatar invasions and the policy of grab pursued by pagan Lithuania. Ethnic Poland, until then mainly importing cultural values from the West, became henceforth their exporter to Lithuania and Ruthenia. This undoubtedly conspired to slackening the development of the Crown, systematically drained of its educated and enterprising elements (an example of this process on a large scale was the necessity of sending to Lithuania the first generations of clergymen). On the other hand, there was a great eastward expansion of the Polish language and culture, and wide possibilities of a social and economic rise opened up to individuals and whole families from central Poland. As a result, the 15th and 16th centuries saw a considerable Polonization of the elite in Lithuania and Ruthenia. In return, the local aristocracy, owners of enormous latifundia, had gained the dominating position in the whole of the Polish Republic. Towards the end of the 17th century a representative of the Ruthenian family of the Princes Wiśniowiecki won the Polish crown, and as late as the 20th century among 18 Polish families bearing the title of prince as many as 11 were of Lithuanian-Ruthenian descent. In the first half of the 17th century the process of conversion of great Orthodox families to Catholicism came to an end. Thus Orthodoxy came to be the religion of the

lower classes and in point of fact as from 1596 it was gradually losing its believers in favour of the Greek-Catholic (Uniate) Church united with Rome.

In the 17th and 18th centuries the Polish-speaking, Roman-Catholic elite of magnates and gentry – apart from certain regional differences and animosities – represented throughout the Polish Republic a uniform cultural model founded on the Jesuit educational system and deeply imbued with Baroque expression in language, literature, and art. With time the Polonizing processes in the eastern borderland went so far as to ensure after the Partitions a cultural flowering in local Polish circles with practically no contact with the heartland of the country. The borderland was the cradle of great Polish Romantic literature. The borderland intellectual elite's consciousness of its own identity at that time is excellently illustrated by the first line of the Polish national epic "Pan Tadeusz". When writing, in Polish of course, the words "Litwo, ojczyzna moja" (Oh, Lithuania, my Fatherland), Adam Mickiewicz meant his native region of present-day Belarus, where in the mix of population one could find Belorussians, Poles, Jews, and Tatars but only very rarely Lithuanians. We might add here that Mickiewicz never visited Warsaw or Cracow and that the second Romantic "bard", Juliusz Słowacki, never set foot on the territory of present-day Poland.

2. Creation and destruction

The cultural heritage of the pre-partition Polish Republic is today the property of four nations and states: Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. Looking back, each of them creates its own interpretation of particular episodes of the past and its own hierarchy of importance of the testimony of this past. When viewed from the Polish standpoint, the character of the Polish Republic's culture finds its fullest reflection in those borderland monuments which testify to the penetration of Latin culture into the East, realized through the generation of phenomena hitherto there unknown or through a creative synthesis with the local traditions. In the course of over half a millennium of the process of interest here one can clearly discern an alternation of upward and destructive tendencies. The former are observed in the periods of peace, stability, and economic prosperity, whereas the latter are connected with wars, revolutions, and frequently also with deliberate actions on the part of the authorities carrying out their specific political programme.

A synthetic presentation of prolonged processes occurring over vast expanses is not possible without far-reaching simplifications. Taking this unavoidable risk, we may state that the first, very long creative period lasted until the middle of the 17th century. During more than two and a half centuries following the conclusion of a personal union with Lithuania, the political and cultural model of the Commonwealth took form. External dangers first from the Teutonic Knights and next from Moscow, Turkey, and the Tatars did occur (in the last case as an endemic borderland plague) but never threatened the state's existence. The borderland regions were an area of intensive building of Latin churches and magnate's residences – as a rule fortified castles adapted to the local conditions but in terms of technology and stylistic forms drawing on West-European experience. Other types of buildings, mainly those connected with towns, were less developed. However, in larger centres such as Lvov, Wilno, Luck, or Kamieniec there developed full urban structures of Western character. A particularly important role at this stage was played by the Gothic, on some territories persisting till the end of the discussed period. On the other hand, from the second quarter of the 16th century also Renaissance elements gradually appeared, followed by Mannerist ones, which in the Lvov circle gave rise to a specific art combining North-Italian and Netherlandish motifs

with the Eastern fondness for lavish decoration. In the first half of the 17th century we can already find examples of Early Baroque. The art of the Orthodox Church was lively and basically distinct from Western models. Nevertheless, a very original type of Gothic Orthodox churches was created on the territories of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Supraśl, Nowogródek, Synkowicze), while in Lvov, from the second half of the 14th century the same builders erected Orthodox and Catholic churches.

In the middle of the 17th century there began a long period of wars, which lasted more or less till the end of the first decade of the 18th century. Its stages are marked by Chmielnicki's revolt in the Ukraine in 1648, the Swedish invasion of 1655–1660, which wrought enormous destruction in the whole country, the invasion of Poland by György Rákóczy, Duke of Transylvania, further wars with Moscow and Turkey, and, finally, the Northern War which was largely waged on the Polish territory. These happenings, despite some periods of stability and even military successes, broke Poland's power, with the irretrievable loss to Moscow of considerable territories with Kiev and Smolensk, and – temporarily to Turkey – of Podolia with Kamieniec. The previous achievements were in large measure destroyed. In the territories which went to Russia then no historical monuments have survived that would witness their former belonging to the Polish Republic. Heavy losses were incurred by the wars with the Turks. The Turkish occupation of Kamieniec left unusual evidence in the form of a minaret at the Cathedral – erected, curiously enough, on a Renaissance chapel made over into a plinth. In the periods of peace the investments were focused in the first place on making up for the losses, but there also sprang up new foundations, sometimes of extraordinary sumptuousness and artistic quality, predominantly in Italian High-Baroque forms (Church of SS. Peter and Paul, Wilno; Camaldolese Church, Pożajście).

The epoch of the reign of the kings from the Saxon dynasty – Augustus II (1697–1732) and Augustus III (1733–1763) – is regarded as the period of profound political, intellectual, and moral decline of the country. At the same time, though, it was a period of stability and increasing prosperity. Beginning from the second decade of the 18th century Moscow, having gained a prevailing influence on Polish affairs, relinquished for some fifty years its attempts at further reduction of the Polish lands. Slightly earlier, under the terms of the Treaty of Karlovitz of 1699, the Polish Republic had regained Kamieniec, and the Turkish and Tatar threat had disappeared. The country was compensating for the losses by leaps and bounds and the building boom continued, to attain its apogee between about 1740 and 1770. The financial resources permitting greater investments were almost exclusively in the hands of the magnates and wealthy gentry as well as the Church hierarchy. It is sometimes surprising to note the founding abilities of the persons who did not hold any particularly high positions on the social scale. As a result, the Saxon epoch has left an enormous number of works of art, frequently of great artistic quality. This is especially true of the borderland regions where a strong concentration of estates facilitated embarking on large-scale enterprises. It was there that a considerable or perhaps even predominant part of important Polish artistic achievements of that time came about. The newly built residences no longer had to function as defensive structures, instead usually taking the form of the French *entre cour et jardin* layouts. In the domain of sacred architecture a great role was played by numerous monastic, especially Dominican, foundations. The 18th century dramatically altered the architectural scenery of the eastern borderland, giving it the stamp of the Late Baroque and the Rococo. The initially prevailing Italian and French models – filtered through Dresden – were replaced after 1740 by inspirations coming from the Habsburg countries and Southern Germany. This was accompanied by the phenomena, previously unknown, which constituted as it were last but not least chapters in the European development of certain typological and stylistic currents. Here we can adduce a specific stage of the

evolution of towerless church facades, in the 18th century acquiring in the borderland the most elaborate form¹, next Jan de Witte's original contribution to the concept of the spatial arrangement of a domed church² and, finally, the Rococo sculpture of the Lvov school. Jan Jerzy Pinsel, the leading exponent of 18th century sculpture in Ruthenia, was an artist talented on such a scale that had he worked in one of the important European centres he would undoubtedly have been recognized as an important individuality in the history of world art. That this did not happen was only due to the absence of mechanisms that would transmit to the centre the information about achievements on the peripheries.

A very important evolution occurred in the art of the Uniate Church which at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries had definitely gained advantage over the Orthodox Church. The evolution tended towards the Latinization of architecture and furnishings of religious interiors, this resulting *inter alia* in the fully Western forms of Orthodox churches, reduction of the iconostasis and making it look like a Baroque retable, and introduction of elements absent in Orthodox art, such as side altars, pulpits, and figure sculpture. The artist's religious denomination was of no special importance for obtaining commissions from particular churches. The Lutheran Johann Christoph Glaubitz, the most outstanding architect of the Wilno region, was as frequently employed by the Catholics (including the Jesuits) as by the Uniates.

The colourful Saxon epoch, full of contradictions, evading unequivocal evaluations, was interrupted by the civil war of 1768 (The Confederation of Bar) and subsequently by the First Partition of Poland in 1772. As a result, Russia annexed a substantial stretch of Belorussian lands, and Austria the so-called Galicia, including – in addition to Little Poland up to the Vistula – Red Ruthenia with Lvov, and part of Podolia. The successive partitions of 1793 and 1795 brought about the disappearance of the Polish Republic from the map of Europe. Each of the partitioners treated its acquisitions somewhat differently. Prussia's policy, rigid but rational, does not lie within the sphere of the present considerations. Russia, during the first fifty years of ruling the Republic's eastern border regions, was relatively liberal, tolerating the existence of the Church union and even refusing to accept the papal decree of the dissolution of the Jesuit Order. The definitive pacification of the borderland and the establishment of a large port at Odessa gave rise to a boom in the Podolian and Ukrainian grain market. Between about 1780 ad 1820 there sprang up on these territories an enormous number of Neoclassical residences. The land there was still mainly in Polish hands, therefore the erection of palaces frequently went hand in hand with the foundations of Catholic churches. Paradoxically enough, the first blows to the Latin cultural heritage in the borderland came from Catholic Austria. Soon after the annexation of Galicia, the imperial government – under the influence of the idea of enlightened absolutism – embarked on a wide-scale campaign of closing down monasteries. This led to the dispersal, semi-official plunder, and destruction of an immense number of movable works of art. Moreover, the dissolution of monasteries frequently entailed the demolition or radical reconstruction of monastic buildings. The confiscation of church plate was repeated twice again in connection with the needs of war in the years 1806–1807 and 1809.

The situation in the Russian partition zone changed diametrically after the suppression of the November Uprising of 1830–1831, the repressions reaching their apogee after the January Uprising of 1863–1864. The tsarist authorities used all means to weaken the Polish element and to bind the borderland population as closely as possible with Russia. The measures taken to this end varied, including confiscation of estates, prohibition of the purchase of land by Poles, and deprivation of a considerable number of the Poles living in the borderland of their noble privileges. Furthermore, the Russian government undertook a large-scale campaign of dissolving Catholic monasteries.

Catholic churches were converted into Orthodox ones or frequently demolished. The year 1839 saw the suppression in the Russian zone of the Uniate Church, which was compulsorily incorporated into the Russian Orthodox Church. The above-mentioned distinctive features of Uniate churches were systematically obliterated.

In 19th century Galicia the situation was much better, and as soon as it was granted autonomy in 1867, it actually flourished culturally. In Lvov and the provinces there sprang up a multitude of architectural works representing different varieties of historicism followed by Secession and Modernism. The years 1880–1914 witnessed the building in Galicia of a remarkably great number of Catholic churches. The preferred stylistic "attire" was Neo-Gothic, which clearly distinguished Catholic from Orthodox churches. Although the union in Galicia survived, the increasing Polish-Ukrainian national conflict caused that – contrary to the 18th century integrating tendencies – each of the two rites now aimed at emphasizing a clear-cut architectural distinction of its churches. For the same reasons the Neo-Gothic, regarded as the Polish national style, was almost the only form of expression used in the architecture of Catholic churches throughout the Russian partition zone, built despite hindrance created on the part of the authorities.

The First World War was a real disaster for the Polish cultural heritage. The eastern front, like a destructive steamroller, drove several times over the Polish lands. Historic buildings were often used by both parties as cover and points of resistance. The regions in which fighting went on for several months were literally razed to the ground. Particularly severe ravages were suffered by timber architecture in hundreds of country towns. *Ruiny Polski* [The Ruins of Poland] – the title of Tadeusz Szydlowski's book published in 1919 – was not in the least exaggerated.

The short period of 20 years between the two world wars permitted only partial making up for the losses in the part of the Polish Republic's former eastern borderland which had found itself within the frontiers of renascent Poland. Historical monuments were entrusted to the care of conservators. On the other hand, Lvov came to be, beside Warsaw, the second centre of Polish architecture bearing a definitely modern stamp and at the same time distinguished by its excellent technological standard. In the fairly numerous Catholic churches built then one could note a frequent conscious reference to Baroque traditions, this being a continuation of the search for a national style in architecture.

The territories of pre-partition Poland, incorporated into the Soviet Union, experienced in the 1920s and 1930s the most tragic period in their history. There are the generally known facts of the deportation of hundreds of thousands of people or of the mass deaths from the artificially induced starvation in the Ukraine. Much less is known about the systematic campaign of annihilating all evidence of the pre-revolutionary epoch. In the eyes of the Stalinist government there was no essential difference between a Catholic church, Orthodox church, or nobleman's residence – all bore the stamp of hostile ideology. The extent of the ravages can be conceived by comparing the state of preservation of historical monuments in the eastern and western *oblasts* of Ukraine and Belarus. The statistics based on the inventories published in the 1980s – which, though incomplete, surely reflect in at least outline the facts – lead to unequivocal statements. The Ukrainian and Belorussian territories which in the interwar period belonged to Poland have retained scores of times as many ancient monuments per unit of area as the "old" *oblasts* subjected to the Stalinist purges.

The Second World War is generally considered the main cause of damage to European historical relics. This is true with regard to the places which were the scenes of battles, which sustained damage during carpet bombing and from the fury of the victorious Red Army. The eastern front of the Second World War, however, rolled back

and forth comparatively quickly. Those towns which were not treated as strategic points of resistance (Lvov, Wilno) remained intact. Although we lack data for fully justified assertions, it seems that the eastern regions of the Polish Republic suffered less during the Second than during the First World War and in consequence of the Stalinist authorities' policy.

The year 1939 saw the onset of the occupation by the Soviet Union of the Polish borderland, which since the end of the war has remained within the Soviet frontiers. From the very outset the Soviet authorities tried to establish their order there. The years 1940–1941 brought mass deportations of the Polish population deep into the Soviet Union, and from 1945 to 1946 the majority of the Poles inhabiting the borderland were forced to leave it. Heavy blows were dealt to the Catholic Church. The most severe devastation has affected the Ukraine. The situation looks slightly better in Belarus, where much more of the Catholic population has remained on the spot, and it is the best in Lithuania, where – owing to the Lithuanians' religious denomination – the Catholics are in the majority. The churches deprived of the care of the congregation and clergy were stripped of their furnishings, only a small proportion of them having been taken by those who were leaving or having found their way to museums. The buildings themselves were not as a rule simply destroyed but used for the functions at variance with their original purpose. As a result, the vast majority of borderland churches have been ruined or remodelled to an extent obliterating their historical value. The scale of devastation is very hard to assess for lack of earlier and contemporary inventory material. Nevertheless, as far as the territory of Eastern Galicia – in the last few years fairly well investigated – is concerned, it may be stated that only a few Catholic churches there have survived intact. A similar fate has befallen country palaces and manor houses.

In 1946 the Soviet authorities, behaving just like the tsarist government a hundred years before, suppressed the Uniate Church in Galicia. Although the Uniate churches converted into Russian Orthodox ones were not on the whole closed down, a change in ritual entailed the destruction of numerous objects of religious art not in accordance with the Russian Orthodox doctrine and liturgy.

In recent years the situation in the eastern borderland has undergone profound changes. Already in the last period of the Soviet Union's existence a considerable number of churches were returned to the faithful. The year 1989 saw the relegalization in the Ukraine of the Uniate Church which in the former Galicia had in a short time decidedly predominated over Russian Orthodoxy. The present authorities in Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine have relinquished their policies of official atheism, which, however, in some cases has been replaced by nationalistic attitudes. As a result, some Catholic churches are made over to the Greek-Catholic, Russian-Orthodox, or even Protestant religious communities. Now and then this is tantamount to the continuation of the process of destroying those surviving elements of furnishing which are not accepted by the new users. Besides, some dangers arise from rather extensive repairs which rarely ensure an appropriate level of conservation.

3. State of research

The historical heritage of the former eastern borderland has been very poorly investigated. There are many causes of this state but above all the fact that the destructive processes always preceded inventorying and research work. Written sources contain only very general information on the state of historical monuments prior to Austrian dissolutions and contributions and to the repressive measures taken by the Russians after the uprisings. The direction of historical studies, leading to the rise of history of art as

a separate branch, was gradually developing in the course of the 19th century, mainly in Cracow and Warsaw, and was quite naturally focused on the local problems. The year 1873 witnessed the establishment in Cracow of a Board of History of Art at the Academy of Science and Letters and 1882 the first Department of History at the Jagiellonian University. Initially, the interest of the researchers grouped around those centres concentrated primarily on mediaeval art (Marian Sokołowski, Władysław Łuszczkiewicz). The problems of the Baroque, most important to the borderland heritage, did not attract attention on a wider scale until after 1900 (Julian Pagaczewski, Franciszek Klein), that generation as a matter of fact lacking the time to go beyond the very rich store of historical relics in Cracow and its environs. The Department of History of Art at the Lvov University was set up in 1893; the scholars working in it were distinguished by their very advanced methodological awareness and truly European horizons. Their attitude, however, blinded them to some extent to the art of Lvov itself and of its region, until the end of the interwar period this art remaining the domain of researchers not connected with the University and representing in the main a historical-archaeological approach (Władysław Łoziński, Aleksander Czołowski, Tadeusz Mańkowski). The problems were also taken up by Ukrainian scholars (Mykoła Hołubeć, Ilarion Swiencićkyj); their studies focused on Orthodox Church art identified by them with Ukrainian art. The Russian scholarly milieu, in the making during the second half of the 19th century, showed an interest in those aspects of the borderland heritage which could be interpreted as documents of its links with Russia. Polish researchers in the eastern border regions belonging to pre-revolutionary Russia did not go beyond sightseeing and traditionally understood archaeology.

In the interwar period the renascent Polish state merely started a systematic campaign of inventorying historical monuments. All the same, thanks to the activities of the Central Inventory Office, of the Institute of Polish Architecture of Warsaw Technical University, and of local conservation offices, ample documentation in the form of photographs and measurements was accumulated; today it is in many cases the only trace of objects destroyed during the Second World War and in the postwar period. The year 1922 saw the establishment of the Department of History of Art at the Wilno University, the second in the borderland after Lvov. It contributed to the intensification of studies on the art of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, until then the most neglected. In the late 1920s the key importance of the borderland Baroque was finally appreciated and intensive studies on it were undertaken. In Wilno they were mainly conducted by Stanisław Lorentz and Marian Morełowski, and in Lvov by Tadeusz Mańkowski and Zbigniew Hornung as well as by the already-mentioned Mykoła Hołubeć and Ilarion Swiencićkyj. In the 1930s, following the publication of Adam Bochnak's pioneer book on Lvov Rococo sculpture³, the problem became the subject of a very interesting discussion or even a research contest between Tadeusz Mańkowski and Zbigniew Hornung⁴. The investigations were interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War, and subsequently by the incorporation of the border regions into the USSR. The only Polish art historian remaining in Lvov was Mieczysław Gębarowicz, indefatigably investigating the art of that region and documenting its devastation⁵. The Polish intellectual circles of Wilno and Lvov were to some extent reconstituted in Toruń and Wrocław, where attempts were made to continue as far as possible the prewar researches. Zbigniew Hornung affords the best example, as he remained faithful to the borderland problems till his death in 1981⁶.

For over 40 postwar years Polish researchers had no access to borderland historical monuments and to archives there. Contacts with scholars of the neighbouring republics, restricted by the stiff limits of official agreements, were practically nonexistent. The Polish publications of that period varied in their treatment of the eastern borderland problems. Reminding of them was not viewed favourably but they were not doomed to

obliteration from our memory. Hence their presence in some synthetic studies, while others offer a standpoint that might be defined as "Baroque (Rococo etc) art in People's Poland".

Contrary to occasional cursory opinions, borderland art has not been ignored by scholarly institutions or researchers on the former Soviet territories. A great effort has indeed been made in respect of documentation, and catalogues of the ancient monuments of Belarus⁷ and Ukraine⁸ have appeared as well as prestigious studies, frequently in many volumes, intended as textbooks⁹. However, those investigations were carried out as if independently from one another. The documentation stored in the archives of scientific institutes was not used in conservation work; nor was it even referred to in synthetic publications which for the most part consist of generalities not backed by any monographic studies. But historical investigations in the former USSR were above all burdened with two rigorously observed ideological principles. The first of them was a vulgarized Marxism treated as a universal method of all learning, and the second the interests of the Soviet state generally identified with the power interest of Russia, which nevertheless frequently covered up local nationalisms.

In consequence, individual artistic achievements are usually suspended in a historical void, while ideological pressure decides their interpretation or even a selection of material. This can be best illustrated by a catalogue of the historical monuments of the Ukraine – a publication that would seem far from any ideology – which came out between 1983 and 1985, *nota bene* in Russian¹⁰. It contains no information on the founders of particular buildings or on their successive owners. For instance, an index of burgher houses in Lvov lists several scores of anonymous "dwelling houses". As regards the monuments connected with the Polish tradition, thus above all Catholic churches, the selective sifting was of specific kind, numerous valuable objects having been omitted and at the same time hundreds of modest and late examples of Orthodox architecture published. The ample bibliography does not include any items written in Polish, although one can easily gather from the text that they were widely used. Even illustrations have been subjected to ideological treatment. The censor's ban on showing the sign of the cross has resulted in a specific framing of most of the reproduced photographs.

It has been a general practice to apply retrospective projection of present-day sociological and political ideas. Hence such ahistorical terms as the "Ukrainian" or even "Cossack" Baroque or "Belorussian" Rococo. In this way the historical union of the former Polish lands has been obliterated. Not only are the ties with the heartland of Poland and the Poles' participation in creating the borderland heritage passed over in silence but also the mutual relations between particular eastern border regions which today belong to separate states. Traces of their erstwhile unity persist as it were beneath the skin, for instance, in the form of the presence of the same artists in books on the history of art of particular nations, or in attempts at including in one's own heritage monuments from the neighbour's territory. All the same, familiarity with the scientific literature produced on the territory of the former USSR and access to the local records are an indispensable condition of studying the borderland heritage.

In the last few years the Poles have made considerable efforts aimed at making mutual acquaintance and at entering into closer relations with the scholarly circles of Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. Researchers from those countries have been offered numerous possibilities of publication and scholarship visits; conferences are frequently organized together¹¹. A keen interest is manifested by the other party (or in fact parties); there are more and more instances of collaboration and of exchange of material and experience. The main conclusion that can be drawn from the collaboration of the last few years is the mutual incompatibility of science and ideology. The conscious, independently motivated scholarly approach is an effective means of eliminating ideologi-

cal absurdities, the latter in turn filling as a rule the blank space created by the weakness of scholarship.

The gradual abolition in the years 1989–1990 of the prohibition of moving freely about the Soviet Union by foreigners opened up to Polish researchers entirely new vistas. A wave of enthusiasm resulted in almost mass travels eastwards, which bore fruit in the form of direct examination of historical objects by a number of art historians. In addition, those visits brought a considerable amount of photographic documentation, sometimes of great value, though for the most part failing to satisfy the criteria of professionalism. Programmes of aid offered by Polish institutions with the restoration of some historical monuments are now well under way, this being best exemplified by the restoration of the collegiate church at Żółkiew. Attempts have been made for the last 3 – 4 years to conduct systematic investigations aimed primarily at the inventorying of ancient monuments. One such initiative – which seems most advanced – the present author has the pleasure of heading, thanks to assistance from the International Cultural Centre in Cracow¹². Alas, the time of economic reconstruction of the country and of reducing the role of the state is not propitious to the institutionalization of these endeavours. The work requiring support in the well-established structure of a research institute has been conducted thanks to the personal commitment of a small group of people and favourable attitude of a cultural institution which is only at the stage of consolidating its own existence. Nevertheless, it appears that we may look into the future with moderate optimism. In spite of difficult conditions quite a lot has been achieved, this being evidenced by the publication of three volumes of inventory and by the accumulation of ample photographic and descriptive material. However, first and foremost the campaign has attracted a multitude of art historians of the youngest generation, including students. Some of them have rapidly become acknowledged specialists in the borderland problems. This generation, too, being free from the resentments of the past, can best communicate with people of its own age in Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine.

Today we know about the art of the eastern border regions more than ever before. Unfortunately, the retreat from insanity in our part of Europe took place too late. We should not delude ourselves that even the most conscientious investigation will be able to fill the abysmal gaps in the monumental and source material. Extensive parts of the eastern borderland and a great many problems relative to the art of those territories will for ever remain a *tabula rasa*.

Endnotes:

¹ Z. Hornung, *Problem rokoka w architekturze sakralnej XVIII wieku* [The Problem of the Rococo in 18th Century Sacred Architecture], Wrocław, 1972, pp. 107–114.

² A. Miłobędzki, *Wiedeńskie kościoły centralno-podłużne a późnobarokowa architektura ziem polskich* [Viennese Central-Longitudinal Churches as Compared with the Late-Baroque Architecture on Polish Territories], "Rocznik Historii Sztuki" XVI, 1986, pp. 290–294; Z. Hornung, *Jan de Witte, architekt kościoła Dominikanów we Lwowie* [Jan de Witte, the Architect of the Dominican Church in Lvov], ed. J. Kowalczyk, Warszawa, 1995.

³ A. Bochnak, *Ze studiów nad rzeźbą lwowską w epoce rokoka* [Studies on Lvov Rococo Sculpture], Kraków, 1931.

⁴ Cf. especially: Z. Hornung, *Antoni Osieński, najwybitniejszy rzeźbiarz lwowski XVIII stulecia* [Antoni Osieński, the Most Prominent Lvov Sculptor in the 18th Century], Lwów, 1937; T. Mańkowski, *Lwowska rzeźba rokokowa* [Lvov Rococo Sculpture], Lwów, 1937.

⁵ Cf., *inter alia*, M. Gębarowicz, *Studia nad dziejami kultury artystycznej późnego renesansu w Polsce* [Studies on the History of Artistic Culture of the Late Renaissance in Poland], Toruń, 1962; idem, *Szkice z historii sztuki XVII w.* [Essays on the History of 17th Century Art], Toruń, 1966; idem, *Portret XVI–XVIII wieku we Lwowie* [Portrait from the 16th to 18th Century in Lvov], Wrocław, 1969.

⁶ Cf. Z. Hornung, *Majster Pinsel snycerz. Karta z dziejów polskiej rzeźby rokokowej* [Master Pinsel the Woodcarver.

A Page from the History of Polish Rococo Sculpture], Wrocław, 1976; idem, *Jan de Witte...*, op. cit.

⁷ *Zbor pomnikau gistorii i kultury Belarusi* [Monuments of the History and Culture of Belarus], Minsk, 1985–1988.

⁸ *Pamyatniki gradostroitelstva i architektury Ukrainkoi SSR* [Monuments of the Town-Planning and Architecture of the Ukrainian SSR], Kiev 1983–1986.

⁹ *Istoriya ukrainskavo mistetstva* [A History of Ukrainian Art], Kiiiv 1977; *Gistoryia belaruskava mastatstva* [A History of Belarussian Art], Minsk, 1987–1990; *Lietuvos architektūros istorija* [A History of Lithuanian Architecture], Vilnius, 1987–1994; *Lietuvos TSR dailės ir architektūros istorija* [A History of the Art and Architecture of the Lithuanian SSR], vol. 1, Vilnius, 1987.

¹⁰ *Pamyatniki...*, op. cit.

¹¹ Cf., *inter alia*, *Ochrona wspólnego dziedzictwa kulturowego* [Protection of the Common Cultural Heritage], ed. J. Kowalczyk, Warszawa, 1993; *Kultura artystyczna Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w okresie baroku* [Artistic Culture of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the Baroque Period], ed. J. Kowalczyk, Warszawa, 1995.

¹² Cf. *Materiały do Dziejów Sztuki Sakralnej na Ziemiach Wschodnich Dawnej Rzeczypospolitej* [Materials for the History of Religious Art in the Eastern Borderlands of the Old Polish Republic], ed. J. K. Ostrowski, part I, vol. 1–3, Kraków, 1993–1995.

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