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Close Countries – Distant Countries. Polish-Swiss Freedom Analogies in the 19th and 20th Centuries

*Kraje bliskie – kraje dalekie.
 Polsko-szwajcarskie analogie wolnościowe w XIX/XX w.*

ABSTRACT

The French Revolution became an inspiration for freedom movements not only in France itself, but also beyond its borders. The ideals expressed in the Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen also animated revolutionary and national liberation movements in Switzerland and on Polish soil throughout the long 19th century. The historiography of both countries tends to attribute a special role to Switzerland for the Polish idea of independence, as a country that is a refuge of freedom. The Poles deprived of it were to benefit from the support of the Swiss in their efforts to regain independence. However, there is limited confirmation for this finding in historical facts. They prove that despite the common beginning of the liberal ideas of the 19th century, as the French Revolution can be considered, the social history of the Swiss and Poles ran along completely

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different paths. Different understandings of the idea of freedom and divergent methods of its realization with simultaneous mental differences between the two nations make it clear that this Alpine country could only to a limited extent fulfil the role of an asylum for Polish independence thought. Even after Poland regained statehood, the differences between the two nations did not disappear, which is illustrated by selected issues from the history of the 20th century. The narrative of Swiss-Polish relations adopted by Polish historiography requires a certain revision, taking into account the indicated differences in the understanding and realization of the idea of freedom, which both nations have demonstrated over both centuries.

Key words: Switzerland, Polish-Swiss relations of the 19th and 20th centuries, historiography

The loss of independence by the Commonwealth at the end of the 18th century began over a hundred years of Polish efforts to regain full sovereignty. In their aspirations for independence, they often sought models in Western Europe, counting also on its military assistance. In this context, France, which during the 19th century almost continuously embodied liberal ideas, both in political and social terms, was the most frequent subject of attention.

However, France was not the only country that spread the idea of freedom, so important for Poles in those times. At its south-eastern borders there was the Swiss Confederation, which from the very beginning of its existence took as one of the main elements in the propaganda sphere the slogan of freedom and fraternity, expressed by the official maxim of the soon (in 1848) to be united state: 'One for all, all for one', which to some extent coincided with the most famous Polish call of the day of the struggle for independence 'For our freedom and yours'. This fact was the basis for the belief in Polish and partly Swiss historiography that this small Alpine country was practically the refuge of Polish independence aspirations throughout the 19th century¹. Such a statement, although not without

¹ In the Polish historiography of the 20th century, there was relatively little interest in Swiss history. This is evidenced by the fact that during this period, there was only one synthetic study of the history of this country by J. Wojtowicz, which can only serve as a compendium of knowledge about Swiss history, but certainly not an exhaustive study. However, more detailed research into Swiss issues in the context of the Polish history of the 19th and 20th centuries was essentially carried out by only two Polish historians: above all, by Halina Florkowska-Frančić and Marek Andrzejewski. Other historians (J. Lewandowski, W. Śladkowski) also published works on the subject, but they were individual single or only limited in their connection with the history of Polish-Swiss relations. However, Polish literature devoted to Switzerland in the fields of political science, cultural studies, sociology and law presents itself much better. Similarly limited in number are works devoted to Polish issues by Swiss historians, the most important of which are articles by E. Bonjour. This is the reason for the fact that mutual relations in the context of the attachment to the

foundation, is nevertheless a simplification. It should be remembered that this community of slogans for freedom, although they came from the same sources, was implemented in a completely different way, which is particularly evident in the breakthrough moments in the history of both nations in the 19th century. An analysis of mutual correlations in the context of the international situation clearly shows that Switzerland was only to a certain extent a naturally pro-Polish area. Sometimes the two nations were divided not only by a large geographical distance, but also by a different understanding of the very idea of freedom.

Even the first period of the struggle for independence – the Napoleonic era – revealed the fundamental differences between the Swiss and Polish understanding of freedom in the social space. It should be noted that at the threshold of the 19th century, Switzerland as a whole was not homogeneous linguistically, religiously or politically. This was the legacy of previous centuries, marked by various conflicts between individual cantons, which were based on political, religious and even social considerations². It was not uncommon for the population of individual cantons to become dependent on neighboring political organisms. This was the case, among others, in the areas of the later canton of Vaud, the Bern Jura or amid the inhabitants of the eastern part of Switzerland, living under the domination of a foreign political apparatus, which, in addition, most often pursued a language and religious policy hostile to the population. The case of Bern is the most convincing in the context of its authorities' policy towards Vaud, Emmental and Jura. This first province, although it was already religiously identical to Bern at the time (not without its previous longstanding efforts to perpetuate Protestantism in these areas), was nonetheless French-speaking and had a Romanesque mentality that was completely different from the spirit of the Germanic world. Emmental, on the other hand, was civilizationally and linguistically Germanic, but the population was mostly Catholic, with which the Bernese often tried to fight with draconian penalties (e.g. death for attending mass). Jura was not only French-speaking, but also mostly Catholic subjects of Bern.

idea of freedom of both nations are treated in a rather schematic way and are most often based on premises that are not fully authenticated.

² The most important determinants of the formation of the ethnic, linguistic and religious division of Switzerland have been extensively covered by A. Porębski, *Wielokulturowość Szwajcarii w procesie zmiany*, in: *Naturalnie neutralna. Polityka zagraniczna Konfederacji Szwajcarskiej w XXI wieku*, ed. A. Nitzke, Kraków 2014, pp. 39–44; This division also remained valid after 1848, essentially influencing the construction of the federalist model of the state, which in its assumptions of multiculturalism did not fundamentally change its face even in subsequent decades. Cf. R. Baer, *Die Schweiz und ihre 26 Kantone: Eine Landeskunde in Regionen, Traditionen und Wappen*, Rzeszów 2005.

While the peasant population of Emmental or Jura resisted the power of the capital's patriciate, the more ambitious, educated and wealthy families of the French-speaking part of the canton chose rather to emigrate and engage in political activity in France or even the Netherlands, not being able to pursue their own political aspirations in their home country, as Benjamin Constant's family and himself are probably the best illustration³. Such examples of complicated national-religious relations can of course be multiplied (Thurgau, St. Gallen, Bellinzona, Lugano, Locarno, Sargans).

It is therefore no coincidence that the outbreak of the French Revolution also had a big impact in Switzerland, and its slogans expressed in the Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen of 26 August 1789 met with acceptance and very quickly found their importers, the most famous of which were Frédéric-César de La Harpe and Peter Ochs. Swiss émigrés in France, who founded the Patriots' Club in the summer of 1790, were very interested in French military aid⁴. The activity in Paris of the founder of this club – a political emigrant from Freiburg – Jean-Nicolas-André Castella, therefore resembles almost simultaneous efforts of Polish emigration undertaken in the same place and almost for the same reasons⁵. The rapid penetration of revolutionary ideas, especially in its French-speaking part, was most often mediated by Geneva, which intellectually imitated France and Paris, which was already a tradition there, and in the near future would even lead to some disputes, e.g. over the tradition of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The society of the German-speaking Switzerland, on the other hand, was somewhat more reserved towards the revolution, although its slogans were not unknown there either⁶. The creation in Switzerland of a huge number of letters and leaflets with antifeudal, anti-patrician and libertarian attitudes at that time was later considered to be the beginning of the modern press in that country, which quickly showed its strength. Already in 1789, the first revolutionary movements, both in the French and German-speaking part of the country, were manifested through it. The 1789 uprisings in Toggenburg and Schaffhausen, the revolt in the Rhône valley the following year, the lavish celebration of the 2nd

³ T. Kästli, *Die Schweiz. Eine Republik in Europa. Geschichte des Nationalstaats seit 1798*, Zürich 1998, pp. 232–233.

⁴ P. Dürrenmatt, *Schweizer Geschichte*, Zürich 1963, p. 344.

⁵ J. Wojtowicz, *Historia Szwajcarii*, Wrocław 1989, p. 141.

⁶ In one of his essays on the relationship between Switzerland and Poland, Edgar Bonjour even states that the enthusiastic reception of the revolution by the Poles was in opposition to moderate support in Switzerland. This explains, however, not so much the political difference between the two nations, but rather their distinct mentality. E. Bonjour, *Die Schweiz und Polen, ein historischer Rückblick*, in: *Die Schweiz und Europa. Ausgewählte Reden und Aufsätze von Edgar Bonjour zu seinem 60. Geburtstag am 21. August 1958*, Basel 1958, p. 92.

anniversary of the demolition of the Bastille in Yverdon, culminating in the brutal pacification carried out by the Bernese army, or the April revolution in Jura in 1792⁷, are just a few of the very numerous symptoms of the popularity of ideas imported from beyond the north-western border. Sometimes the revolutions were also temporarily successful, as in the aforementioned Geneva, where in December 1791 there was a coup d'état, the overthrow of the conservative government, and the introduction of broad civil rights. Thus, it can be said that the French Revolution was very close to the Poles and the Swiss in the context of their freedom aspirations.

For the Swiss, however, the aspect of statehood was much less important, but they attached great importance to civil liberties, local tradition and respect – not always in line with European trends – for their own path of development. As small communities, often hermetically sealed and at the same time very diverse, the inhabitants of the Alpine cantons based their idea of freedom on the conviction that it was in a way carried out from the bottom up, rather than in a broader community, as the state or nation, allegedly carrying the liberal slogans, should be considered. This was mainly due to their historical tradition. Until the 19th century, there was no single Swiss state. The soon-to-be-established – in 1798 – Helvetic Republic was more French than Helvetic from the point of view of its legal order and constitutional and social solutions. It should be noted that even after the appearance – very late after all – of a proper, independent Swiss state (1848), this tradition of grassroots belonging was not abandoned. The official name of the Swiss Confederation in German, *Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft* means 'Swiss conspiracy' and the adjective *eidgenössich* has acquired a new meaning in Helvetic culture, which has replaced even the original one, 'sworn'. However, it is hard to deny that since 1848, we have had to deal not so much with conspiracy in the Alps as with a state, created by free citizens and not by France for supposedly free citizens, as was the case in the era of the Helvetic Republic. Hence the very rapid deconstruction of this legal entity constructed by the French, which was carried out, it is worth noting, by the Swiss themselves and by armed uprisings against the 'liberators'.

It soon turned out that French policy towards the 'allies' was not so much to liberate them as to engage them in their own war machine and economic system. It is very clear that with regard to Switzerland, the policy of revolutionary France was divided into two fundamental periods: until the Jacobins and from the Directoire, i.e. 1795 can be considered a caesura. French expansionism towards the Confederation, a complete

⁷ E. Gagliardi, *Geschichte der Schweiz*, Band 3, Zürich 1937, pp. 1037–1065.

misunderstanding of the political tradition of the Swiss people in the construction of the Helvetic Republic, the territorial trimming of the new Swiss state, numerous abuses and sometimes brutal pacifications of the rebellious population (e.g. in Stans) led to a widespread denial of 'French freedom'⁸. Popular paraphrase of the official maxim of the republic, whose original wording is *Une et indivisible* (One and indivisible) ironic was changed to almost identical sounding *Une et invisible* (One and invisible) was a meaningful testimony to the fact that no one saw this freedom. The idea of returning to the confederacy formula, expressed by Napoleon's 1803 Mediation Act, somehow prevented further escalation of the 'Helvetican revolt' within the Napoleonic system, but the negative perception of the 'liberators' could not be reversed.

Meanwhile, on the Polish ground, this quest to reconstruct the statehood dominated over social and political issues. Independence – such a frequently repeated word in the Polish political thought of the 19th century refers more to the state and nation than to a citizen to whom we would attribute 'freedom'. Both concepts are, of course, very close, but the nuance of meaning between them well illustrates the difference in the understanding of this problem between the Poles and the Swiss. It is symptomatic that Polish political thought moved away from social issues for almost half a century, and focused on the state aspect, while in Switzerland, the opposite was true. Only the beginning was shared – the inspiration by the French Revolution, which was most strongly referred to during the Kościuszko Uprising. It was one of the elements of not only national, but also anti-feudal tendencies, which in Europe at the time were – one could say – the political avant-garde. One can even say that the Kościuszko epos was in large part an instalment of the French Revolution, but on the Vistula River – both figuratively and literally. The insurgents' radicalism, which boils down to hanging traitors (real or their portraits), bears clear marks of the Jacobin guillotine, and the fact that the *kosynierzy* soldiers were also called Jacobins was not unjustified. The term was, in fact, much longer, and even during the November Uprising, the patriotic club was still defined in this way, although at that time, it was already clearly pejorative because of the very foundation of this other, state-forming and not social vision of the road to independence.

Kościuszko's Proclamation of Połaniec of May 7, 1794, which formally granted limited personal freedom to serfs, also fits in with the idea of the French Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen, which speaks of the right of every person to freedom and citizenship. The war

⁸ Cf. H. Nabholz et al., *Geschichte der Schweiz*, Band 2, Zürich 1938, pp. 315–353.

with Russia, considered to be the mainstay of reactionism, which was conducted in large part by the *kosynierzy* forces, resembled the confrontation of the Revolutionary Guard with the armies of the combined Prussian and Austrian forces – both politically and militarily: the Revolutionary Guard, composed mainly of peasants, was as badly trained and armed as Kościuszko's troops, and the patriotism of the soldiers of both formations was – one could say – their main weapon.

The fall of the Kościuszko Uprising and the subsequent radical change in social and foreign policy in France after the overthrow of the Second Directory should have ended the fascination with revolutionary ideals among the 'peoples' seeking support in Paris, seeking to gain or regain freedom. This is what happened in Swiss history, as mentioned. The Poles, meanwhile, remained largely with the French. The history of Dąbrowski's Legions, the Danube Legion or the army of the Duchy of Warsaw shows it clearly. Even facts such as the Treaty of Lunéville, which obliged France to stop supporting Austria's internal enemies and consequently sending Polish soldiers to suppress the freedom aspirations in San Domingo or the obviously violent French intervention in Spain did not change this.

In such a situation, it should be stated that Switzerland was not the most suitable area for the development of Polish political thought of that period – after all, it was connected above all with Napoleon. It is probably not a coincidence that Tadeusz Kościuszko settled down in the Swiss Solothurn, and the theses expressed in Józef Pawlikowski's brochure about the inability to break out into independence only with the help of foreign intervention, which corresponded to the Chief's views⁹, were, in a way, an image of a different vision of freedom – Franco-Polish on the one hand and, one could say, Swiss-Kościuszko on the other.

Poles did not wander from this French path in the 1830s, either. The revolutions that began in France in July 1830 largely resulted from imitating both ideals and ways of achieving them. The words about the Franks' rainbow in the song 'Warszawianka' are to some extent a reflection of this longing for freedom and, at the same time, a declaration of modelling oneself on those who, at least to some extent, succeeded in throwing off the socio-political shackles. After the fall of the November Uprising, it was not without reason that the Great Emigration settled mainly in France, especially at the Lambert Hotel. Of course, one should not forget about the Polish Democratic Society, which also had its branches outside France – including in Switzerland – but it was much weaker in terms of organization, finances and politics. The influence of both organizations on

⁹ [J. Pawlikowski], *Czy Polacy mogą wybić się na niepodległość*, Paris 1800.

the perception of the Polish issue is also uneven. This is not only because of the great merit of the camp of Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, both in the political and cultural arenas, as well, to some extent, because of his aristocratic character, the links he had with the social elite not only in France but in other countries as well.

Meanwhile, 'bottom-up' initiatives and independence groups were sometimes pushed into the background. This happened not only in the era of their functioning; the memory of such organizations and their activities also remained relatively small. In the general historical consciousness of Poles, it is a little more difficult to learn about such organizations as the Association of the Polish People, founded in 1835 (although the names of Szymon Konarski or Franciszek Smolka are probably not unknown), the General Confederation of the Polish Nation, established two years later (which was not popular even at the time of its existence), or the Union of the Polish Nation, founded in 1839. There were, in fact, many more organizations of this type; none of them were recognized and hardly any of them were noticed during their lifetime. Meanwhile, for the Swiss, this type of 'initiative' was the most important and is mentioned much more often in Helvetian historiography, although usually German or Italian ones, and less often the Polish.

This is clearly visible in the analyses of the international republican movements of the 1830s, which very often settled in Switzerland. Their participants (and sometimes also animators) were Poles who, after the fall of the November Uprising, fought 'for our freedom and yours' outside the Polish lands. As an illustration, we should mention for example Ludwik Oborski's Holy Troop, composed of Polish emigrants in France, who in April 1833 tried to support the uprising in Frankfurt. Such events attracted the attention of the Swiss not only because Frankfurt was closer than Paris or Warsaw, but also because the Swiss liberal movement had its clear roots in the academic centers of Germany and new ideas were very often imported from there¹⁰. In the German-speaking Switzerland, Basel soon became the transponder of slogans from the north, and in particular the 'Zofingen' student association, which even gained some kind of primacy over branches in Zurich or Bern, often sending its own declarations to these centers¹¹. In such a situation it is hardly surprising that there were political

¹⁰ E. Bonjour, *Die Schweiz und Deutschland, Berührungen während der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Die Schweiz und Europa. Ausgewählte Reden und Aufsätze von Edgar Bonjour zu seinem 60. Geburtstag am 21. August 1958*, Basel 1958, p. 68.

¹¹ The Basel branch of the association tried to animate other centers of the liberal student movement in other cantons as well, by means of appeals, the most characteristic of which is the one from 1831. *Die Zofinger-Verein Schweizerischer Studierender in Basel an die Vereins-Abteilungen in anderer Kantonen*, gedruckt bei Felix Schneider, Basel 1831.

upheavals at that time, even in Switzerland, often with a bloody course and most often ending with a change of political face of the cantons affected. As a result, Switzerland very quickly became, as André Holenstein put it, 'a state-and-legal and ideological special zone and a refuge of liberalism in Europe'¹². The Helvetians were therefore looking for such fighters who would enjoy the confidence of a soldier resulting not so much from strategic genius and social position as from his democratic convictions. It is not without reason that one of the main Helvetian periodicals supporting democracy and closely following Polish democratic groups even in distant England was called *Schweizerischer Republikaner*. This was also one of the main reasons why it was not possible to engage Polish commanders to carry out republican revolts in the cantons of Switzerland, although there were such attempts (Generals J. Skrzynecki or J. Chłopicki).

Meanwhile, some of the emigrants associated with the Holy Troop made a permanent mark in the history of the Helvetian liberal movement¹³. It is impossible not to mention Karol Kloss, best known to the Swiss, and perhaps a little less so to the Poles, one of the main actors of the Basel Revolution in 1832. This Polish military officer led the revolt troops against the feudal authority of the city's patricians. The successful, short campaign, which boiled down to mutual invasions of the warring sides, culminating in the battle of Frenkendorf, resulted in the disintegration of the canton into two separate ones – the conservative and patrician Basel City, and the liberal and civil Basel District. In recognition of his merits, Kloss was granted citizenship, a life pension and the right to settle in the newly established liberal canton¹⁴. The individual commitment of this man and his value as a true freedom fighter was appreciated, even if he could be considered a radical or even eccentric individualist among his compatriots. The Swiss career of this military man illustrates very well the problem of a different view of the idea of freedom, which for the Swiss, as mentioned, is in a way bottom-up and democratic, not nationwide and animated by respectable institutions or large political groups.

It is worth noting that despite all the sympathy shown to the Poles by the Swiss during the November Uprising, they did not directly participate in it to a greater extent, although such cases as the Zeltner family (Urs Franz Xaver and Franz) can of course be cited. The uprising was seen

¹² 'eine staatsrechtliche und ideologische Sonderzone sowie ein Hort des Liberalismus in Europa'. A. Holenstein, *Mitten in Europa. Verflechtung und Abgrenzung in der Schweizer Geschichte*, Baden 2015, p. 199.

¹³ M. Żejmo, *Stosunki polsko-szwajcarskie. Przeszłość i teraźniejszość*, Gdańsk 2016, pp. 62–66.

¹⁴ H. Florkowska-Frančič, *Karl Kloss*, in: *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/013571/2009-02-26> [accessed on: 30 I 2020].

as a top-down war: there was the Polish state apparatus (the Kingdom of Poland), the Polish army, the Polish Parliament, etc. It was therefore in some sense a war of strangers, like many others going on at the time. Moreover, the Polish authorities showed limited willingness to focus on the social issues, which were most important for the Swiss. It is enough to recall that even the most burning peasant issue was considered by the Sejm in principle only at one particularly difficult moment, which should be considered as Dybicz's offensive to Warsaw. On the other hand, the Patriotic Club (in its program very close to Swiss ideals) was perceived in aristocratic-conservative circles as 'Jacobin' and 'radical' – in a word, dangerous, and for a not inconsiderable part, such as Gen. J. Chłopicki, even more dangerous than Russian cannons. That is why the Polish uprising of 1831/32 was not as popular as the next one, which broke out under the Russian partition 30 years later.

The period of the Spring of Nations, in turn, was, in a sense, an inhibition of mutual political relations between the Swiss and the Poles in the context of the freedom aspirations of both nations. Of course, the program of liberalism and democratism still remained valid in Switzerland just as it was popular in Polish circles, yet both nations followed their own path in a way. On the Polish lands, revolutionary movements were mainly fights for political independence. This was the case in the Prussian and Austrian partitions, in the latter the Krakow Uprising also had an important social element – however, in the era of the Galician raid of 1846, a certain activation of peasants on the battlefield against the invader and not the nobility was observed (Chochołów-Aufstand). In the Russian partition, on the other hand, there were no such movements at all, which, given the recent defeat of the uprising, was perfectly understandable. Meanwhile, there was a civil war in Switzerland, which, although short-lived and not very bloody, almost completely absorbed the political environment there. Moreover, this conflict was not so much a political issue as a social and regime one. In addition, the war had a clear religious tone – the Catholic cantons that formed the *Schutzvereinigung* (more commonly referred to as the *Sonderbund*) were inclined to withdraw from the confederation and to arrange their socio-political life in an overly conservative way. This was the main reason for the intervention of the liberal Protestant cantons, which were also defending the consensus reached in the 1830s and, one could say, were the guarantors of legalism. The fact that the Catholic Appenzell-Innerrhoden did not take part in this war, although it did not leave the confederation, for which it was fined, is symptomatic, as is Neuchatel, whose formal leader – the King of Prussia – did not wish to escalate liberalism on his French-speaking estate either. Although figures such as

W. Chrzanowski or L. Mierosławski were already known in the world of liberals, the Swiss conditions were specific. Sympathy to the Catholics (who lost this war, suppressed by the federal army commanded by Gen. H. Dufour), the not very successful, although loud initiatives of the above mentioned Poles to combine the Polish liberal and European stream, and finally the activity of the Swiss people building their unified state at the moment when the other countries were only just engulfed by the fire of revolution (the aforementioned civil war took place in autumn 1847, in the following year the constitution was passed¹⁵ and a broad program of reconciling the two sides was implemented) contributed to a certain kind of stoppage in mutual relations.

However, the perturbations of 1847–1848 in Switzerland were significant for the apparently marginal issue, which the Polish question in the Alpine country might have been considered at the time. The established principles of correlation between the various levels of government (community-canton-federation) came down, in general, to the principle that, although Switzerland became a single external state, de facto it consisted of 25 politically distinct organisms, each with its own constitution, legislation, official language(s) and its own separate religious policy. For the federation, only the most important prerogatives from the point of view of the policy of the state as a whole (army, money, customs) had been secured. The then defined equality of citizens and equality of cantons soon became the most important principles of Swiss constitutional law and laid the foundations of Swiss federalism¹⁶. This was to guarantee the unhindered development of the ideas of freedom, which over time took deep roots in the local society¹⁷. This meant that for all liberal movements, of which, after all, there was not a shortage in Europe in the mid-19th century, there was an opportunity to efficiently organize propaganda, financial

¹⁵ The Constitution is considered to be the most important in the history of modern Switzerland. Despite several revisions, and later changes to the Constitution at the end of the 20th century, the Basic Law of 1848 introduced a system which in its assumptions survived the test of time. Cf. Z. Czeszejko-Sochacki, *Wstęp* in: *Konstytucja Szwajcarii*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 10–12; P. Stadler, *Die Diskussion um eine Totalrevision der schweizerischen Bundesverfassung 1933–1935*, 'Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte' 1969, 1, pp. 71–169.

¹⁶ D. Schindler, *Die Gleichheit der Kantone*, in: *Recht, Staat, Völkergemeinschaft, ausgewählte Schriften*, Zürich 1948, p. 147.

¹⁷ It is also characteristic that, in retrospect, for most Swiss intellectuals, the understanding of freedom as the meaning of Switzerland's existence has become almost dogmatic. This is most clearly illustrated by a statement by Paul Seippel, who, on the threshold of the 20th century, argued that Switzerland, in its internal structure, had become the 'nowoczesnym idealnym państwem, urządzonym na bazie uporządkowanej wolności' ['ideal modern state, based on orderly freedom']. P. Seippel, *Allgemeiner Überblick*, in: *Die Schweiz im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. P. Seippel, Band 3, Lausanne 1900, p. 573.

and political background in a neutral area, unless the cantonal authorities expressed their opposition. Their attitude to this kind of activity, however, depended most on the political face of individual cantons and to a lesser extent on possible pressure from the federal authorities, who cared about the international image of the state. Most often, however, foreign immigrants from democratic republicans found a friendly, sometimes even enthusiastic reception, even though there were cases of such 'support' being withheld by conservative cantonal authorities¹⁸. Over the years, after a generation had passed, a kind of new mentality of the Swiss democrats has developed, which, unlike the period of revolutions and Napoleon, was no longer so closed to the problems of Europe. On the contrary, it became quite vividly involved in its political life, and in the country, as E. Futer put it, the rule of liberalism prevailed¹⁹. It was then that the Swiss developed a specific dual affiliation – to the state as a political entity on the one hand, and on the other, to the culture of a particular area of civilization, which did not coincide with national borders²⁰. The need to manifest one's own distinctiveness in relation to neighboring cantons, as well as to dissociate oneself from the implication of nationality defined by belonging to a particular circle of civilization, naturally opened all local customs, political interests and local tradition to the level of the most important sphere of social life. This meant that only 'bottom-up' initiatives were able to break through to the national consciousness and these were the ones that the Swiss were most interested in, including at the international level.

For this reason, the extent of support for the January Uprising among the Swiss was completely different from their attitude or rather their knowledge, of the incidents in the Kingdom of Poland in 1830–1831. The January Uprising, which was a guerrilla war, in a way forced the active involvement of the Swiss²¹. Helping the 'citizens' who, in addition, raised their hand to what was considered to be a refuge of conservatism and centralism in Russia was, in a way, inscribed in the free spirit of the Swiss people, this corresponded to the ideals of the Swiss constitution, on which a new generation had already grown up. Thus, they, too, could be found among the insurgents' ranks. We should recall here above all the figure of

¹⁸ This phenomenon was already present in the previous decade. Cf. J. Lewandowski, *Polacy w Szwajcarii*, Lublin 1981, p. 26.

¹⁹ E. Fueter, *Die Schweiz seit 1848. Geschichte Wirtschaft Politik*, Band 1, Zürich 1928, pp. 37–87.

²⁰ P. von Matt, *Zirkelexistenzen. Die doppelte Heimat der Schweizer Literatur*, in: *Swiss made. Die Schweiz im Austausch mit der Welt*, Zürich 1998, p. 93.

²¹ Cf. J. Lewandowski, *Szwajcaria wobec powstania styczniowego*, 'Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Sklodowska' sectio F, 1993, 48, 6, pp. 59–63.

Colonel Franz von Erlach. This Swiss military officer even made an attempt to organize a Swiss unit, which was to number 200–300 people. This idea, however, did not meet with the approval of the federal government, which was afraid of the diplomatic perplexities that a recruitment campaign could bring to a neutral country. However, some volunteers managed to enlist in the insurgent army. The Helvetian press mentioned the twenty-member ‘Black Battalion’ composed of the Swiss and under the command of the famous Frenchman François de Rochebrune. Erlach himself also appeared in Poland. He took part in battles in the Lublin and Polesia regions. Eventually he had to cross the Austrian border, he was interned, but thanks to his citizenship, after interventions in Vienna, he was released quite quickly. He then published his memoirs²². His book soon became a military textbook used to train the Swiss army, which was organized on a militia basis.

The commander of one of Lelewel-Borelowski’s units was in turn Ludwig Bardet – the brother of the later Swiss Consul in Warsaw – Friedrich Bardet. He took part in the campaign in the summer and in the autumn of 1863. Alfons Pravex, the son of a French teacher, Pierre Parvex, is another example. After the uprising, he was exiled to Siberia. Thanks to his Swiss citizenship, he was released from Siberia in 1868 with a travel warrant to Switzerland. After a short stay in Warsaw, he left for Geneva. A similar fate met other Swiss, exiles to Siberia or hard work for participating in the uprising: Peter Caplazi, brothers Lucien and Jakob Mueli, Alexander Gagienard, Bernardo Semadeni, Franz Poma and Hieronim Thomann (the latter two were sentenced to death, but the sentence was not executed thanks to the involvement of the Helvetian authorities)²³. It is worth recalling at this point that the Swiss community of Grenchen (Solothurn canton) granted its citizenship to Marian Langiewicz, who even visited his new homeland after the uprising. A separate and quite extensive issue (and described in the literature) is the material help of the Swiss for the anti-Russian uprising. The facts quoted above (there are of course many more that could be cited) clearly indicate that the period of the January Uprising probably brought the two nations the closest. Paradoxically, the assessment given to the uprising by Polish historians can be much stricter than Swiss opinions, which focus on the aspect of ‘civil freedom’ (sometimes overestimating it considerably). They are less inclined to accuse

²² F. v. Erlach, *Die Kriegsführung der Polen im Jahre 1863. Nach eigenem Beobachtungen von März bis August an Ort und Stelle gesammelt*, Darmstadt/Leipzig 1866.

²³ Cf. M. Andrzejewski, *Schweizer in Polen. Spuren der Geschichte eines Brückenschlages*, Basel 2002, pp. 116–122.

the creators and participants of military and political unpreparedness and to highlight the negative consequences of this uprising, which were after all very serious. An attempt to analyze this phenomenon is, so far, an interesting, but at the same time unexplored issue of mutual relations.

It should also be noted that the most recognizable Polish institution in Switzerland – the Polish Museum in Rapperswil – was established at a time when it is difficult to speak of any institutional support from the country. It was established in 1870 on the initiative of Count Władysław Broël-Plater, with considerable support from the Swiss friends gathered around the writer Gottfried Keller, one of the co-founders of the Swiss central committee to help Poles during the January Uprising, author of a proclamation on Polish support²⁴. Swiss such as Keller not only helped the Polish insurgents in January, but also supported the efforts of Polish emigrants to create a center of Polish culture and history after 1864. Initially, such a museum was to be established in Zurich, where the famous Polish Freedom Column was to be erected, with eagle, facing Poland, taking flight, and the very meaningful maxim *Magna res libertas* [freedom is a great thing]. However, Zurich authorities feared such a visible manifestation and, under the influence of the persuasion of the Russian mission in Bern, did not agree to it. Agreement was obtained from the community of the nearby town of Rapperswil, which is situated on Lake Zurich, but belongs politically to the canton of St Gallen, so Zurich's power does not reach there. One can even say that the decision of Rapperswil's inhabitants was a successful promotional investment, because this very provincial town, although charming, soon became a recognizable brand in Switzerland thanks to the promotion of Poland, attracting not only Polish tourists. The initiative was therefore clearly bottom-up, even spontaneous in nature, which is another illustration of the problem.

Similar observations can be found in the analysis of Polish emigration in Switzerland in the period between the January Uprising and the First World War²⁵. Also in this period of time, some interesting relationships can be noted. One of them is the fact that it was largely an emigration preparing itself not so much for the role of national heroes fighting with

²⁴ G. Keller, *Das provisorische Comité zur Unterstützung der Polen an die Bewohner Zürichs*, in: *Gottfried Keller, Sämtliche Werke in 7 Bänden*, ed. T. Böning, Band 7, *Aufsätze, Dramen, Tagesbücher*, ed. D. Müller, Frankfurt am Main 1996, pp. 220–222.

²⁵ A detailed study on the subject was presented by H. Florkowska-Frančić, *Struktura społeczna polskiej emigracji politycznej w Szwajcarii w latach sześćdziesiątych XIX wieku*, Wrocław 1975, (in reference to the first decades of this period) and eadem, *Die Freiheit ist eine grosse Sache'. Aktivitäten polnischer Patroten in der Schweiz während des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Basel 2014, pp. 47–73 (in reference to the years preceding World War I).

arms in hand or eminent statesmen, but for the effort of lifting the country from the economic and civilization ruins. Of course, there were cases of political careers of Poles who had their Swiss papers (I. Paderewski, G. Narutowicz, or I. Mościcki), but even these were initially – one might say – non-political, but scientific or artistic. It is also to some extent an effect of the culture of the country where they had to develop their talents, where civic ethos played a primary role. One may wonder whether the popularity of the Swiss universities among the Poles of the period in question (about 6,000 graduates, a large number of scientists) was caused by the fact that these universities were relatively young (with the exception of the University of Basel, all established in the 19th century) or were Poles rather by their democratic character (it is worth mentioning here at least the women's doctorates which were not common in Europe at the time)²⁶. However, from the preserved relations between the Swiss universities of Poles, it appears that the first element played a decisive role.

The misunderstanding of the idea of grassroots democracy most often led to a situation in which Poles coming to Switzerland to study not only did not integrate with the local community (with a few exceptions), but they did not even notice the phenomenon of the local society, concentrating on living in a closed world of foreign students and most often returning to Poland without any special impressions about the Swiss themselves. This was also due to the fact that for Poles, their stay in Switzerland was a result of the political situation in their homeland and – as Marek Andrzejewski emphasizes – getting to know this country was not usually an end in itself, it was a secondary issue²⁷. There was also another aspect that made their adaptation even more difficult. Throughout history, the Swiss developed a kind of system of community behavior and action. The community (most often limited to individual communities, rarely cantons) was the category that allowed them to survive in very difficult mountain conditions and protect their own cultural individuality. As B. Crettaz argues, the Alps became one of the most important elements in the formation of a community identity, which he described as the identity of the first stage of the 19th century, the pre-industrial stage²⁸. In such a situation, individualism was most often considered there as a manifestation of maladjustment or at best a difficult to accept extravagance. Hence the

²⁶ Cf. J. Hulewicz, *Les Polonais dans universités suisses 1864–1918*, in: *Pologne-Suisse. Receuil d'études historiques*, Varsovie–Lwów 1938.

²⁷ M. Andrzejewski, *'Ta Szwajcaria to raj ziemski'.* *Obraz Szwajcarii w polskiej publicystyce, wspomnieniach i beletrystyce (1870–1918)*, Gdańsk 2007, p. 16.

²⁸ B. Crettaz, *Alpy jako źródło kultury*, in: *Socjologia wsi Szwajcarii*, eds. A. Kaleta, Ch. Giordano, Y. Preiswerk, Toruń 1998, p. 137.

exclusions of people who grew up above mediocrity, such as the well-known J. J. Rousseau in Geneva, while local tribunes were glorified, about whom nobody outside the borders of the canton, let alone the country, had heard, such as Hans Waldmann in Zurich. The social system, based on the primacy of the community over national feeling, also did not suit Polish students. M. Konopnicka's enunciations about the Swiss, expressed in letters or short stories, each of which is more biting than the previous one, sound very characteristic in this context: 'The thickness of nature, the despotism of democratism'²⁹, 'O, the stupid Swiss'³⁰, 'Switzerland did not leave me a good impression, and apart from a few charming sights and being moved by the wonderful nature, there is nothing nice about it. These people – they're just repulsive to me'³¹ – these are the more well-known, but not the only, ratings given to the Swiss by this Polish author. The furthest-reaching expression of her disapproval of the community as the basic unit of social life, which is the most important thing for this topic, was contained in one of her short stories, which she published in 1891 in 'Kraj', a few years later it was published in a separate brochure in Warsaw³². Of course, there were also quite a few opinions expressed by Polish writers in Switzerland, but even those opinions were not infrequently based on initial not very flattering observations³³.

A similar incompatibility of the Swiss sense of freedom with its Polish counterpart can also be observed during World War I. On the one hand, there is no doubt that Poles and their independence aspirations enjoyed considerable popularity in Swiss society, which was also a result of their activity in the local public opinion³⁴. This was the case at every stage of the war, although in a few moments the issue of Poles was particularly strongly emphasized. This was the case on the humanitarian level. We should mention the huge support for the General Committee for Aid to War Victims in Poland, operating in Vevey, led by the Polish Nobel Prize winner – Henryk Sienkiewicz. Other organizations carrying out

²⁹ 'Grubość natury, despotyzm demokracji'.

³⁰ 'O głupie Szwajcary'.

³¹ 'Szwajcaria nie zostawiła mi dobrego wrażenia i prócz kilku uroczych widoków i tego wzruszenia, jakie daje wspaniała natura nic tu sympatycznego nie ma. Ludzie – ci są wprost wstrętnei dla mnie'.

³² M. Konopnicka, *Miłosierdzie gminy. Kartka z Hottingen*, Warszawa 1908.

³³ An extremely interesting picture devoted to this subject emerges from one of the most recent publications devoted to the image of Switzerland in Polish culture: J. Wolski, *Szwajcaria w piśmiennictwie polskim. Od XIX w. do czasów najnowszych*, Rzeszów 2019.

³⁴ H. Florkowska-Frančić, *L'Influence des Polonais sur l'opinion publique en Suisse pendant la première guerre mondiale*, in: *Asyl und Aufenthalt. Die Schweiz als Zuflucht und Wirkungsstätte von Slaven im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. M. Bankowski et al., Basel 1994.

such activities were also promoted, such as the Rapperswil exhibition of the Supreme National Committee, the Pro Polonia Committee chaired by Karol Potulicki, and even initiatives undertaken by private individuals, such as Prince Teodor Sobański or Franciszek Kallenbachow. Actions to support committees operating on Polish soil were popular, in particular the Prince-Bishop's Aid Committee for the Affected, headed by Bishop Adam Sapieha of Krakow. Of course, there are many examples of such lively sympathy and support for such initiatives among the Swiss³⁵. It should be noted, however, that almost all of them had the character of civic actions, but it would be very difficult to find examples of nation-wide undertakings, carried out by the federal and even cantonal authorities. Actually, there is only one such initiative known, very late in the era of the Polish state's rebirth and connected with sending food wagons to Poland, initiated by Poles themselves. During the war, the Swiss state authorities were generally not involved in the Polish question. This was also due to the fact that Switzerland at that time had quite serious problems of its own in surviving this time, difficult for the Swiss as well, so that almost all of Bern's efforts went in the direction of maintaining neutrality and provision of the country, other issues had to give way to this most important one. After all, the Swiss Confederation was the first neutral country to recognize the independent Polish state, which should also reflect its favorable attitude in the political field.

In contrast, the activity of the Swiss society on the propaganda level was very lively, as it was not carried out by certain state or cantonal institutions, but by the creators of public opinion (in those times it was mainly the editorial offices of the journals) and the public opinion as a whole most frequently referred to. It was the most important political space in this country, which as an entity created national policy, and not – as in the case of e.g. France – a weighty but not conclusive element of political life. Therefore, preventive censorship was unthinkable in Switzerland, while in France the press was quite effectively gagged on the Polish issue (and not only) at least until the February Revolution in Russia, which was painfully proved by the most important promoter of the idea of Polish independence among Western journalists of the First World War – Edmond Privat³⁶.

³⁵ Eadem, *Miedzy Lozanną Fryburgiem i Vevey. Z dziejów polskich organizacji w Szwajcarii w latach 1914–1917*, Kraków 1997, pp. 81–115; D. Płygawko, *Sienkiewicz w Szwajcarii. Z dziejów akcji ratunkowej dla Polski w czasie pierwszej wojny światowej*, Poznań 1986; P. Bednarz, *Für die Unabhängigkeit Polens: Berichte und Standpunkte der Schweizer Presse im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Basel 2019, pp. 151–164.

³⁶ Hence the completely different reaction of the French and Swiss authorities to Edmond Privat's Polonophilic propaganda activities. Cf. W. Śladkowski, *Edmond*

It is worth noting, however, that as the idea of reconstructing the Polish state was becoming more and more popular, the Swiss paid more and more attention to its national structure and, in a way, discovered fundamental problems that were very different for the two nations. Above all, the issue of mutual respect of rights between Poles on the one hand and Jews, Lithuanians, Ukrainians or even Germans on the other should be mentioned here. In the assessment of the national policy of the newly formed state by the Swiss opinion-forming dailies, we often find words of criticism and even accusations. They did not result from some surprising change in the tone of the local public opinion towards the Poles, but had much deeper foundations dating back to their roots in the Swiss understanding of freedom³⁷. According to them, this inalienable attribute of every person has its source in the human individual, and all historic rights to one or other province, or references to arguments of an economic or political nature, must give way to it. That is why the growing misunderstandings between the mentioned nations were so lamented, and the explosive armed struggle for the shape of Polish borders was interpreted as a failure of humanism and brotherhood. Of course, from the perspective of Switzerland, not threatened by Bolshevism, such discussions may have seemed important, but they nevertheless illustrate this mental difference between the Swiss and the Poles, which the inhabitants of this Alpine country were probably not fully aware of.

The same problem would also be revealed in the subsequent versions of mutual relations already deep in the 20th century. The murder of Gabriel Narutowicz, a Pole and a Swiss man at the same time, is worth mentioning. The campaign launched against him by the extreme right wing of National Democracy was largely due to the fact that Narutowicz was perceived as an 'stranger', supported by national minorities, without being anchored in one national party structure or another. He was needed and useful in the position of Minister of Public Works as a man of action who understood patriotism in terms of serving his homeland in his daily commitment to the practical solution of problems. As Minister of Foreign Affairs and above all as head of the nation he was the cause of serious objections being raised. He was not guided by the Polish *raison d'état*, but only intended to implement a program appropriate to the structure of the state that he found after his return from many years of emigration.

Privat i jego działalność we Francji i Szwajcarii podczas pierwszej wojny światowej, 'Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska' sectio F, 1968/1969, 23/24; P. Bednarz, *Edmond Privat i jego działalność na rzecz Polski w czasie pierwszej wojny światowej*, Lublin 2003.

³⁷ Cf. P. Bednarz, *Dylematy neutralnych. Szwajcarska opinia publiczna wobec kwestii polskiej 1914–1918*, Lublin 2012, pp. 335–342.

This structure was slightly different from that dreamed up by nationalists, which mainly led to his murder in 1922. Meanwhile, for the Swiss, the attempt to create a national policy, especially in the linguistic and religious context, and in addition by means of a specific party structure with a top-down defined ideology and state instruments, was unacceptable. That is why Narutowicz embodied in their eyes not so much a supporter of national minorities, but rather the realization of the aspirations of a society having one specific face, i.e. a multinational one³⁸.

It is worth mentioning that at the same time when a significant part of Polish society as well as the political elite were trying to realize national ideas under the sign of National Democracy, completely different tendencies could be observed in Switzerland. It was the interwar period that saw the most intense work of various social and cultural organizations, which tried to prevent the disappearance of linguistic minorities and cultural camps of individual cantons. The most characteristic in this respect was the activity of the Romansch League (Lia Rumantscha), which was an expression of diverse aspirations, both linguistically and historically, in the community of Grisons³⁹. Although this activity also had a political subtext (defense against Italy's aggressive policy intended to include Grisons in Mussolini's state)⁴⁰, this was perfectly in line with the understanding of the nation as a community of free people based on political, rather than religious or linguistic unity. As H. Florkowska-Frančić points out, the realization of the idea of 'Diversity in Unity' definitely distinguished Switzerland from the nationalistic policy of the neighboring countries⁴¹.

Different formulas of functioning of Poland and Switzerland as states in the discussed period, in the context of political solutions, let alone the practice of political life, should also be noted. This first level is obvious not only because Switzerland was a federal state, but also because there was a completely different understanding of nationality. The principle of the Swiss understanding of the political community was the conviction that the citizens belong not so much to the state as the other way round. In other

³⁸ The influence of Narutowicz's Swiss years on the formation of his personality was described by M. Andrzejewski in several of his works, of which the Swiss edition of the biography of the first President of Poland should be mentioned above all in this context: M. Andrzejewski, *Gabriel Narutowicz. Wasserbauer, Hochschullehrer und Politiker*, Zürich 2006.

³⁹ H. Florkowska-Frančić, *Retoromanie. Trudny sukces małej grupy: perspektywa historyczna i stan obecny*, 'Przegląd Polonijny' 2004, 4, pp. 21–33; W. Catrina, *Die Rätoromanen zwischen Resignation und Aufbruch*, Zürich, 1983.

⁴⁰ R. Ruffieux, *La Suisse de l'entre-deux-guerres*, Lausanne 1974, p. 336.

⁴¹ H. Florkowska-Frančić 'Obrona duchowa kraju' w Szwajcarii przed II wojna światową. *Między kulturą i polityką*, in: *Wokół historii i polityki. Studia z dziejów XIX i XX wieku dedykowane Profesorowi Wojciechowi Wrzesińskiemu*, eds. S. Ciesielski et al., Toruń 2004, pp. 173–184.

words, the citizen is Swiss because they is a member of the community (in Swiss terms, the community is one town), which is part of the basic political cell (canton). Since the canton is part of a federation, the citizen of the community is a Swiss citizen and their nationality is not evidenced by the citizenship of the state, but of the community. The granting of civil rights in a given community implied civil rights in the state, but never the other way round – the state did not grant citizenship, even though there were federal laws regulating (or at least ordering) the various cantonal laws on the subject. However, in the Polish legal practice, the situation was completely different. This was not only the case during the initial period of Polish independence, but also after 1926, when the idea of the state began to prevail over the idea of the nation (until 1937), the political community was also to be unitary, not diverse. Hence the fundamental problems and political upheavals in the nationally heterogeneous territories, e.g. in Silesia or Eastern Lesser Poland. Particular attention should be paid to the former region. The Silesian Autonomy, functioning quite well until 1926 (regardless of the natural friction between the Poles and the Germans after the uprisings) based on the Christian democracy trend, dominant on both sides of the national division, broke down almost suddenly after the May Coup. Characteristic for the discussed topic is the fact that the chairman of the Upper Silesian Mixed Committee, supervising the implementation of the Geneva Convention on Upper Silesia concluded in 1922 – a Swiss citizen, former member of the Helvetic Federal Council, Felix L. Calonder⁴² – had the biggest problems after the May Coup and they were not only caused by the German side. He himself, on the other hand, as a man brought up in the Swiss spirit, could not always take the Polish side⁴³.

Another equally eloquent example showing the Swiss ‘grassroots’ attachment to freedom in the context of mutual relations dates from World War II. It concerns the internment of Polish soldiers of the 2nd Rifle Division under the command of Gen. B. Prugar-Ketling, who in June 1940, backed against the Swiss border, decided to cross it. It should be remembered that these soldiers were quite a serious problem for the authorities of the Confederation. They wondered how to react so as not to lead to a more serious crisis with Berlin and whether they could risk their own safety at all in the name of the tradition of neutrality. It should be noted that the federal policy towards refugees and interned persons during World War II was a kind of breakthrough. Often, waves of refugees, even civilians,

⁴² J. Simonett, *Felix Calonder 1863–1952*, in: *Die Schweizer Bundesräte. Ein biographisches Lexikon*, ed. U. Altermatt, Zürich–München 1991, pp. 327–332.

⁴³ P. Stauffer, *Polacy, Żydzi, Szwajcarzy*, Warszawa 2008, pp. 13–92.

not to mention the military, were not welcomed by the federal authorities. It should be reminded that in 1940–1945, they did not allow the entry of more than 24,000 Jews, who were threatened with loss of life, calling on the Conference of Evian in July 1938, during which Switzerland clearly defined its future unfavorable policy towards foreigners. It was to consist in the immediate relocation of possible refugees to other countries in the face of insufficient means of subsistence in Switzerland itself. This principle was further tightened in 1940 in the name of the implementation of the so-called ‘overcrowded boat policy’, which boiled down to the complete closure of borders to new fugitives. Of course, such a hard stance led with time to social protests and as a result to a partial easing of the regulations, which only happened towards the end of the war, and the reception of hundreds of Jews from Hungary a few months before Hitler’s fall was in a way already whitewashing of the country’s image. In such a situation, the appearance of the Polish army at the borders of Switzerland – what is more, at the peak of the Third Reich’s military power – was very troublesome for the federal authorities. It was finally decided to implement internment procedures, although not without problems. The surrender of the Polish soldiers’ weapons to the Germans was a derogation from the applicable norms of international law, but this derogation was seen as a price for the safety of the Poles and their own society in the face of unambiguous threats of German diplomacy⁴⁴.

Meanwhile, the practically enthusiastic reception of Poles by ordinary Swiss citizens resulted from the perception of Polish soldiers as those who were the first to oppose the regime trampling on freedom. This is well illustrated by the words contained in the diaries of one of the participants of those events: ‘As far as the population is concerned, it refers to the interned Polish soldiers simply with enthusiasm and cordiality [...]. Our soldiers are covered with flowers, given cigarettes, chocolate and so on. Not infrequently, civilians even try to give them money, underwear and other useful objects of everyday use. At all the stops, people come out with tea, lemonade [...] everywhere one can hear warm greetings and ovations for Poland and the Polish army’⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ It should also be mentioned that after September 1939, Switzerland did not cease to recognize the Bern facility as a legal representation of the Republic of Poland despite repeated protests by the Germans.

⁴⁵ ‘Jeśli chodzi o ludność, to odnosi się ona do internowanych polskich żołnierzy po prostu z entuzjazmem i serdecznością [...]. Żołnierze nasi zasypywani są kwiatami, obdarowywani papierosami, czekoladą itd. Nierzadko cywile starają się obdarzyć ich nawet pieniędzmi, bielizną i innymi pożytecznymi przedmiotami codziennego użytku. Na wszystkich postojach ludność wychodzi z herbatą, lemoniadą [...] wszędzie słychać

This popularity resulted not only in the authorities recognizing this division as part of the Polish and not the French army, and as a consequence not handing the soldiers over to the Germans after the formation of the Vichy government, but also enabled the integration of Poles with the local population as far as possible. No other nation of interned soldiers in Switzerland during this war received as much support and, on the other hand, put so much into the development of the local infrastructure as the Poles. This was not due to the fact that Poland was on the Allied side. British and American airmen interned in Switzerland, who either escaped from the Third Reich or were forced to land in Swiss territory, were very often met with an unfavorable reception, and the internment camp created for them near Lucerne, in terms of its standard and treatment of the detainees there, could not in any way be compared to Polish internment camps. The former were most often seen through the prism of the 'accidental' bombardments of Basel or Schaffhausen, while the Poles, as soldiers fighting for freedom, not only enjoyed considerable liberties, but were also allowed to study in Swiss secondary schools and universities⁴⁶.

This difference in the perception of the sources of freedom and its practical application can be illustrated by many other examples, also from the post-war period. The Cold War era is, quite special in terms of Swiss foreign policy. Despite its official neutrality, the country was characterized by an almost open hostility to communism. This resulted not only from ideological differences and incompatibility of legal and economic solutions between the USSR and Switzerland, which is one of the most important elements of the financial order of the western world, but also from the violation of civil rights in the Eastern Bloc countries. From the first years after 1945 Switzerland became closely associated with the Americans, joining the various forms of pressure on the USSR, mainly financial, practiced by the USA⁴⁷.

serdeczne powitania i owacje na rzecz Polski i wojska polskiego'. Cf. Z. Prugar-Ketling, *Generał Bronisław Prugar-Ketling: wspomnienia syna*, Warszawa 2006.

⁴⁶ One of the most interesting and unfortunately less-known publications documenting this episode is a bilingual (German and French) album published by the Archive Polono-Helveticum Foundation in Freiburg: J. Sygnarski, Ch. Jungo, L. Emery, *Helvétie, terre d'accueil. Espoirs et vie quotidienne des internés polonais en Suisse 1940–1946 en images*, Fribourg 2000; Cf. M. Żejmo, *Druga Dywizja Strzelców Pieszych gen. Prugar-Ketlinga internowana w Szwajcarii podczas II wojny światowej*, 'Historia Slavorum Occidentis' 2014, 1 (16), pp. 135–152; W. Drobny, *Walka bez oręża: polskie obozy uniwersyteckie dla internowanych w Szwajcarii w latach 1940–1946*, Warszawa 1985; J. Smoliński, *2 Dywizja Strzelców Pieszych*, Warszawa 1992; M. Matyja, *Niespełnione nadzieje. Losy polskiej 2. Dywizji Strzelców Pieszych w latach 1940–1945*, Toruń 2013.

⁴⁷ J. Tanner, *Geschichte der Schweiz im 20. Jahrhundert*, München 2015, p. 309.

The phenomenon of 'Solidarity' is the most visible. Its popularity in Switzerland was not only due to its anti-communist face but is largely explained by the fact that it was a social movement, claiming elementary rights and, in addition, an overwhelming employee ethos. It was therefore in a way 'doomed' to success in Switzerland, whose inhabitants to this day automatically recognize the name of this trade union from behind the Iron Curtain, formed 40 years ago, even though they very often do not know the name of the current president of their own country (he has no real power, he only acts as a symbolic authority of the country when receiving foreign officers). However, it was difficult for the Swiss to comprehend what the mass membership in the Polish United Workers' Party consisted of, which as a 'leading force' was to guide it.

It should also be emphasised that the majority of the democratic opposition in the period of the People's Republic of Poland was connected with Switzerland, although – as it was mentioned – the country's political culture does not correspond to the Polish one, not to mention the mentality of its inhabitants⁴⁸. There were numerous civic initiatives that were undertaken to disseminate knowledge both about the communist system to which Poles fell victim, as well as supporting their fight for democracy or promoting Polish independence aspirations. Characteristic in this context is the fate of the Rapperswil Museum (since 1936, the Museum of Contemporary Poland), which, after the communists took power in Poland, was used to promote the new political system, which ended with the shutting down of this institution by the Swiss and its reconstruction under the name of the Polish Museum, but now under the care of volunteers, not the Polish state. The Institute of Eastern Europe in Freiburg or the Archivum Polono-Helveticum also established in Freiburg are other institutions operating on a civic level. They were (are) operated by Polish communities, but in a clearly Swiss spirit of citizenship and not of state institutionality.

All the above examples come from the same source, namely a slightly different view of the very idea of freedom and the way it emanates. In the case of the Swiss, it usually manifested itself in the individual and through its activity, most often at the level of the small community, which completely integrated it, was to serve the common good. Patriotic Poles, on the other hand, were more inclined to perceive the larger community,

⁴⁸ It was, in fact, a kind of continuation of the earlier – pre-war – traditions of organizing a democratic opposition in Switzerland, which at that time was concentrated in the so-called Front Morges around I. Paderewski, who lived in the town. However, the scope of its support in the country was limited. Cf. H. Przybylski, *Front Morges w okresie II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 1972.

most often a nation or state, as a basic entity and to work for its good, although often in opposition to all or most of its members, and often with the sacrifice of their own ego. The goal was the same – the prosperity of the country, but the method of achieving it was different. Thus, the accents in the assessment of the events taking place during the 19th and twentieth centuries were different, both in the eyes of their participants and in the historical memory of posterity. However, despite the common source from which both nations drew in pursuit of social and political and legal changes, as the French Revolution can be considered, the Swiss and the Poles followed quite separate paths. Hence the different system of education of citizens and the slightly different patriotic upbringing that was practiced (and still is) in both societies, the value of particular epochs and historical events is different. This can also be seen in the above mentioned issues related to the Polish-Swiss contacts in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, and this is by no means a closed list of examples; many more could be cited. It seems, therefore, that both countries, or perhaps more precisely nations, are very close to each other and at the same time very far away on the plane of freedom. The effort of the Swiss centers to promote their system of values (e.g. direct democracy) in Polish society was also doomed to failure. It did not correspond to the Polish mentality or tradition, just as the fascination with political organisms of an international scale was alien to the Swiss.

Problems with Switzerland's accession to the League of Nations (despite its Geneva headquarters), political and military neutrality, a few dozen years' lack of accession to the UN, negation of European Union membership, on the other hand, Polish efforts in the League of Nations in the era of regaining independence, political and military alliances, rapid membership in the UN, or the push towards the European Union after 1989, well illustrate the thesis put forward in the introduction about the distance between the nations in question in terms of understanding the mechanisms of freedom and how it is manifested.

(translated by LINGUA LAB)

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STRESZCZENIE

Rewolucja francuska stała się inspiracją do zrywów wolnościowych nie tylko w samej Francji, ale także poza jej granicami. Ideały wyrażone w Deklaracji Praw Człowieka i Obywatela animowały ruchy rewolucyjne i narodowowyzwoleńcze także w Szwajcarii oraz na ziemiach polskich w przeciągu całego długiego wieku XIX. Historiografia obu krajów skłonna jest przypisywać Szwajcarii szczególną rolę dla polskiej myśli niepodległościowej, jako kraju będącego ostoją wolności. Pozbawieni jej Polacy mieli korzystać ze wsparcia Szwajcarów w swych dążeniach obliczonych na odzyskanie niepodległości. Konstatacja ta znajduje jednak ograniczone potwierdzenie w faktach historycznych. Udowadniają one, że pomimo wspólnego początku idei liberalnych XIX w., za jaki można uznać rewolucję francuską, dzieje społeczne Szwajcarów i Polaków biegły zupełnie odmiennymi torami. Różne rozumienie idei wolności oraz rozbieżne metody jej realizacji przy jednoczesnych różnicach mentalnych występujących pomiędzy oboma narodami każą skonstatować, że ten alpejski kraj tylko w ograniczonym stopniu mógł spełniać rolę azylu dla polskiej myśli niepodległościowej. Także po odzyskaniu przez Polskę bytu państwowego nie zanikły różnice dzielące oba narody, co obrazują wybrane zagadnienia z zakresu historii XX w. Przyjęta przez polską historiografię narracja stosunków szwajcarsko-polskich wymaga pewnej rewizji, uwzględniającej wskazane odmienności w rozumieniu i realizacji idei wolności, którą wykazywały się oba narody na przestrzeni obu wieków.

Słowa kluczowe: Szwajcaria, stosunki polsko-szwajcarskie XIX XX w., historiografia

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