

The nation's body and soul. Volkist motifs in Polish early national-democratic thought (1895-1918)

Summary

1. Research project objectives/Research hypothesis

The aim of the project is to analyze the concepts of the Polish nation which emerged in the early publications of the Polish national-democratic movement. The nation began to be identified with the people understood as a biological community (community of blood), and described using metaphors typical of the volkist ideology. In such an ideology (as defined by George Mosse, writing about the organizations preceding the national socialist movement in Germany) the body of the people / nation, understood biologically, is considered as the place where the national soul manifests itself as both a source and a focus of national aspirations. The hypothesis about the volkist character of the motifs, concepts and metaphors present in the thought of the Polish national-democratic movement will be tested by analyzing the source material of the national-democratic press addressed to the people, to the intelligentsia and to women, and on the basis of the writings by the movement's leaders, such as Roman Dmowski, Jan Popławski and Zygmunt Balicki. I will try to answer the question about the reasons why the concept of the nation prevailing within the movement took on volkist connotations, the socio-political circumstances of such shaping of the concept, the traditions important for the thinkers of the national-democratic movement, and the exact content of these volkist ideas. I will present these problems in a wider context of Central Europe and against the background of the available analyses of the volkist ideology and the *völkische Bewegung* in the German Second Reich.

2. Research project methodology

The research will be conducted in an interpretive paradigm and will consist in a discourse analysis of the concept of the nation and an analysis of nationalism understood not only as a political attitude, but also as a worldview and an associated repertoire of rhetorical means and styles. My research methods will thus draw on the achievements of discourse, ideological and rhetorical analyses.

3. Expected impact of the research project on the development of science

Discussing the heritage of nationalism is still urgently needed, and so it is important to clarify the origins of the main concepts used by the ideologues of the national-democratic movement. However, it has been quite an uncommon practice in historical reflection to focus on the issue of the corporeality of the nation, on the ways of recognizing it as a phenomenon that is expressed through specific human bodies and in relation to a specific location on Earth. Examining these aspects of the subject will contribute to developing reflection on the history of the Polish national-democratic movement, and fill a gap in the archives of the history of ideas, anthropology and cultural studies, adding to them threads which have not been analyzed in sufficient detail so far. Thus, the formation of Polish identity and forging of Polish independence in the years 1895-1918 will be presented in a new light.