

Europe in Polish Public Discourse

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"Europe in Polish Public Discourse" by Grzegorz Żuk depicts linguistic patterns of "Europe" in Polish debates on history, society, as well as in contemporary Polish media. One may promptly identify that the book addresses the most interesting questions at the frontiers of Polish studies. These range from such areas as the evolution of Polish society and politics, economic transformation after 1989, Polish identity in the EU context, to ideas of modernization, Europeanization or globalization in contemporary Polish thought. The book is structured in four parts. Part 1 uncovers the notion of 'Europe' and its connotations in Polish discourse. Parts 2 and 3 compare historical Polish understandings of Europe and modern Polish interpretations of European integration in the context of Polish self-perception. Part 4 highlights the findings on how to reconstruct the picture of Europe in the consciousness of the Polish society. The book's source basis is framed by period of 1989-2004 years.

The book is aimed at all levels of students and professionals. Not least because of the quality of chapters (essays) that allows distinct audiences to feed their epistemological curiosity on the topic. Żuk's methodology consists of reconstructing the picture of a selected element of reality on the basis of data obtained from linguistic material. The author analyses and interprets the data in the context of the culture in which it was created. He relies on a theoretical framework delivered by J. Bartmiński, the former supervisor of Żuk's doctoral dissertation at the Department of Polish Philology at UMCS University in Lublin. The author thus distinguishes two main discursive profiles of Europe – *Europe as a stronghold* and *Europe as a community* that are juxtaposed against the backdrop of two other points of view – a realist one and an idealist one. The research design mainly draws on linguistic analysis, which revolves around Bartmiński's concept of 'linguistic pictures of the world' (LPW).

The concept of LPW (*linguistic picture of the world*) that frames the book's theoretical background is developed only in the introduction. The concept of LPW can be illustrated in a form of concentric circles: the most inner represents the language system, then the norm of its use (based on polls, social research), and the actual use of language (based on text analysis). The LPW is not a theory, thus we can indeed seminally distinguish between the sources and objects of analysis, however, this theoretical framework would hardly allow one to build complex explanations on the substance of social constructions. The history of the notion of "Europe" as such can hardly be viewed as a history of the relevant social discourse. Especially if considering the fact that the book does not unfold its narrative in the context of any particular discourse theory. Therefore, a short introduction, as it stands in the book, cannot provide sufficient theoretical framework to interpret the historical context of

Polish public discourse. Moreover, the author defines public discourse as a "collection of linguistic statements publically available in the form of written and spoken texts intended for a wide audience, most often delivered through the media" (p.11). This view is controversial if considered against the backdrop of a rather "narrow" bibliography. The dissertation on which the book draws was delivered around ten years ago. For this reason, the bibliography could have been updated and expanded. The reader is not informed neither by the title nor by the short cover's outline that the narration runs only up to 2004.

The central aim of the first chapter is to outline the history of the notion of "Europe" in the Polish context. The author reconstructs the very foundations and the essential aspects of the notion, its definitions in writings and dictionaries, historical understandings, derivatives and phrasemes. Żuk looks at how the issue came into the field of linguistics, how it developed in historiography, why it generated political debates, wherever it was used. The end of the first chapter presents the findings of polls as an attempt to reconstruct the social understanding of Europe. Polls were conducted basically among a few hundreds of Polish students. On the one hand, it poses a range of questions regarding "Europe" (especially its connotations, associations or valuation). On the other, it poses a theoretical challenge – namely that of assessing how to analyse public discourse (what should be considered and why?).

Chapter two examines the problem of Poland as the Eastern boundary of Europe. It outlines important theoretical contexts – Europe as a stronghold or community – and assesses how these orientations impinge on the perception of Europe in Poland. This view is indeed supported by the interesting analysis of the several myths that describe the role of Poland in Europe (Eastern bulwark of Christianity; Poland as a bridge between East and West; Poland as Charon of Europe; Polish uniqueness). Eventually, this way of looking at things shall be challenged by the vast amount of literature in the broad research fields of history, economy and social sciences.

The third chapter links debates on the notion of "Europe" and the process of European integration, observed from the perspective of selected Polish media. Unfortunately, the material upon which the chapter draws is rather scarcely selected. The first section of the chapter deals primarily with the perception of the EU as a threat. The second section draws a "portrait" of European integration in the eyes of its supporters. Press media provide the basic source of information for this analysis. The difference between these two approaches to European integration represents the main distinction between 'Europe as a stronghold' and 'Europe as a community'. Żuk's study looks at how far the aforementioned visions can be deemed manifestations of "packages" of ideas in Poland. The basic distinction is simple: On the one hand, "Europe" is perceived as a chance, business, standard, better quality of life; on the other hand, "Europe" remains a kind of threat, chaos, Germany-driven institution, or even an invader. The common portrait is ambiguous. The interest in these matters has been increasing continuously at the beginning of the 21st century, especially before the accession of Poland to the European Union.

Significantly, Żuk's analysis focuses our attention on the linguistic picture of Europe in Poland at the beginning of this century. Europe is presented as a "home" (important for Poles because of teachings by the Pope - John Paul II) and thus Polish people should "feel at home" in a unified Europe, the argument goes. It's interesting to look at how the author describes the debates within Polish discourse with regard to the European Union. At its simplest, the perspective reveals a dispute between realists and idealists. This is a view of Żuk's that is rooted in

the peculiar Polish context – i.e. "between hope and fear". If one casts this double look, the resulting pictures of the world offered by the rival approaches are indeed very different. Finally, focusing on questions about Polish understandings of Europe makes us think about Polish identity in the European context. As noted earlier, the author focuses mainly on press (weekly or monthly newspapers) as a data source. Apparently, there is a lack of information from other valuable sources such as the Internet and relevant academic literature. Another flaw reflects the missing (but necessary) emphasis and extended analysis of political discourse. The debates advanced by national and international think tanks, university-based research centres or leading academic journals are regrettably not duly considered in the book as well.

The narrow conception of discourse makes it impossible to examine the role played nowadays by (already well-described) discourses. What is still unclear, for example, is whether the mentioned discourses still exist after ten years. Therefore, the contemporary Polish studies' agenda is full of difficult and absorbing questions, such as the importance of identity, self-perception of the Poles, Polish media and society. Nevertheless, we can observe constant development of research designs in European studies conducted in Poland. To summarize, this book provides a noticeable contribution on the market of related literature and – its weaknesses notwithstanding – remains one of the most interesting publications on the roots of Polish perception of Europe, Europeanization, Europeans and European integration. Żuk's title will be definitely a useful source of knowledge for students, journalists, academics and policymakers interested in social underpinnings and developments in contemporary Central Europe.



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