

Dieter Bingen, Peter Oliver Loew, Kazimierz Wóycicky, eds. *Die Destruktion des Dialogs: Zur innenpolitischen Instrumentalisierung negativer Fremd- und Feindbilder. Polen, Tschechien, Deutschland und die Niederlande im Vergleich, 1900 bis heute.* Veröffentlichungen des Deutschen Polen-Instituts Darmstadt. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007. 428 pp. EUR 24.00 (paper), ISBN 978-3-447-05488-1.



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D. Bingen u.a. (Hrsg.): Die Destruktion des Dialogs

The extensive volume published in the outstanding series of Deutsches Polen-Institut, Darmstadt (DPI) is declared an answer to the question of historical preconditions of newest developments in the field of Polish-German dialogue. The editors rightly notice the backlash of negative national stereotypes in public discourse of both countries as well as the general change of the language of politics particularly in Poland. The asked questions are: do those stereotypes base on historical tradition, and who in the course of recent history was active in instrumentalizing them? The collected texts are divided into two groups: the first being research-based articles of historians predominantly working on post-1945 historical memory in Europe; the second consisting of studies in political science. The key notion is *Feindbild* to be understood as precisely addressed prejudice which is from its nature reality-proof. According to Josef Berghold's definition given in the volume, *Feindbild* denies the *enemy* will for a dialogue, dehumanizes him, being at the same time instrumental in creating the group's self-identification through exclusion and delimitation of *us* and *the others*. Inasmuch, we can rightly presuppose that the notion used could be equally replaced by its rel-

atives: prejudice and/or stereotype.

The first part of the book contents a variety of texts referring mostly to Polish-German relations with some attempts to create a comparative frame. Szymon Rudnicki (Warsaw University) characterises the guru of Polish integral nationalism Roman Dmowski whose attitude towards Germany is negative as it may be distinguished itself by inner logic and realism. Surprisingly, Rudnicki finds in Dmowski's programmatic texts the belief that as soon as the destruction of Polish state ceases to be the main tenet of German foreign policy the normal, peaceful relations between both countries are possible and highly desirable. Ingo Loose (Humboldt University, Berlin) attempts at widening the scope of Polish-German studies, pointing at the external factors that should be at least taken into consideration while constructing the historical narratives. His text leads to the conclusion that the transformation process of ex-German Wielkopolska region after 1918 wasn't dominated by the clash of nations. Many inter-ethnic conflicts find their explanation in the social and political processes that exceed the traditional frame of the historiography of bilateral relations. An-

drzej Michalczyk (Erfurt University) shows in an ingenious analysis of the Upper Silesian clash of nations how the nationalisation forced by the states upon both Polish and German parts of the region was being questioned at the lowest level of everyday-life occupations. It is however questionable, if the picture of Upper Silesians predominantly resistant to the national hatred fits the historical reality so well, as the author claims. Piotr Madajczyk (Polish Academy of Sciences) shows how the anti-German resentment was used by the Polish Communist authorities to strengthen their legitimacy, and how this activity proved to lose its effectiveness throughout the 1980s. Joanna Wawrzyniak (Warsaw University) in highly illustrative manner describes the fought-provoking phenomenon of the Polish communist propaganda of the 1960s that aimed at creating the picture of aggressive Israel as close relative and patriot of Nazi Germany. On numerous examples the mechanism is being deconstructed that consisted of traditional anti-Semitism, the victims contest (aiming at proving that Polish war losses were bigger than others) as well as of hysteric attempts to solve the societal crisis. The international competition for the title of the most tragic victim of the war is also the topic of the text by Klaus-Peter Friedrich (Marburg) who compares Polish and German post-war statistical studies concerning the numbers of killed during the German occupation on the one side and the victims of *Flucht und Vertreibung* on the other. It should be noticed that Friedrich's approach itself does not refer to a detailed study, so its main favour is the very act of questioning the elder (and partly present) official estimations as created for clearly political purpose and mixing authentic victims with clearly statistical population losses (for example in effect of the *be it voluntary of forced change of citizenship*). Nevertheless, even such a sketchy analysis shows the organisations of expelled Germans as unquestionable champion of creative statistics. Interestingly enough, although questioned by some German scholars, those estimations found their way to the mainstream of political life.

Along with the main Polish-German topic of the volume, two comparative cases are being studied. The first consists of four texts analysing the Czech-German conflicts in the period from late 19th century onwards. Markus Krzoska (Mainz) analysing the period 1897-1920 comes to the conclusion that the inter-ethnic dialogue most stubbornly occupies the local level. Kristina Kaiserová (University of *ÁstÁ nad Labem*) shows that the ethnic clashes in the Czech lands were accompanied by the confession conflict whereas at the same time it was

anti-clericalism that remained the only common Czech-German platform of cooperation before 1938. Martin J. Wein (University Beer Sheva) delivers an interesting context for the above-mentioned text by Joanna Wawrzyniak. Wein describes the elements of Czech pro-Jewish stance during the 1960s as an example of deeply rooted analogy-rhetoric that finds its manifestation also in the modern political language in Israel (in comparisons of the situation of inter-war Czechoslovakia with the present state of Israel, Germans with Arabs etc.). Wein claims that the assimilatory political language of the 19th century Czech Jewry was transferred via Zionists to the modern times, being simultaneously present in the Czech public discourse. Extremely important in the context of the editors program seems the text presented by Miroslav KunÁ;tÁ;t (Charles University, Prague), who analyses the presence of Germany in contemporary Czech political discourse. His conclusion is profoundly optimistic, since the *thin infrastructure of the civic Europe* (p. 128) seems to be strong enough to survive the attempts at revitalizing the anti-German resentments.

The second comparative unit includes two articles by Jacco Pekelder (University of Amsterdam) and Beatrice de Graaf (Utrecht University) on the German-Dutch relations from the 1960s to 1989, whereas in both cases the central issue are, surprisingly, close links between the *progressive* Dutch political milieu and the GDR leadership. As de Graaf puts it, the East German sympathy for Holland reached its end at the point where it was no longer possible to instrumentalize it for the GDR foreign policy.

The second part of *Die Destruktion des Dialogs* concentrates on contemporary instrumentalizations of negative stereotypes almost exclusively in the case of Poland. As such it gives a one-sided, though interesting, insight of the change of climate between Poland and Germany in recent years. Thus some Polish authors seem to try to cover the lack of bilateral perspective by including remarks concerning Germany to their Polish-centred texts. That is to say about Anna Wolff-Powska (Western Institute, Poznan) who points at the interrelations between the Polish and German politics in the context of the European *return to history*. A similar stance can be observed in the text by Stefan Garsztecki (Bremen University) who, while acknowledging the foolishness of Polish rightist anti-German rhetoric, points at the lack of good will to understand other's position on both sides of the Polish-German border. Agnieszka Stepinska (Poznan University) and Piotr H. Kosicki (Princeton University) deliver thorough analyses of Polish elec-

toral campaign discourses, whereas Artur Lipinski (Poznan) focuses upon the phenomenon of political stigmatization of post-Communist *Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej* (Democratic Left Alliance). Justyna Wona (Wrocław University) shows how the national stereotypes mirror in the media market in Poland. Piotr Forecki (Poznan) analyses classical example of nationalist hatred in the bulletin *Szczerbiec* that apparently rejects everyone apart from its own editors and obsessively trails Jewish influences (which he naturally finds in a phenomenon described by the Author as *judaeus ex machina*, p. 326). Bernadette Jonda (University Halle-Wittenberg) gives an overview of opinion polls in Germany and in Poland in respect to the attitude of Youth towards the neighbouring country, assuming that it is much better than claimed by the circles in power and media. Klaus Bachmann (Wrocław) and Anna Skwarek (Willy Brandt Centre, Wrocław) compare two models of right extremism: the Dutch *Leefbaar Nederland* and the Polish *Liga Polskich Rodzin*, to state that despite apparent similarities the gap between their political programs is immense. Whereas the Dutch chauvinism deserves the somewhat confusing description *postnationaler Rechtstextremismus* (p. 364), the Polish radicals remain deeply rooted in the traditional nationalist discourse, being, so to say, a belated, backward reactionaries confronted with the progressive western version of the movement. The German *Feindbild* of Poland is a topic of only one study by Peter Oliver Loew (DPI), who goes through extreme rightist German press reconstructing its picture of Polish neighbour. In conclusion the Author states that it is not impossible for this discourse to be included into the German mainstream but let it be added that it could be in fact interesting to investigate, if such interference does not appear already. The extreme right view of the Polish participation in the war in Iraq that Loew analyses, does not differ from the stance of the normal German media, although it is naturally not an element of the complex *Feindbild* as created by the German extreme right.

The above-mentioned texts are accompanied by two research reports. The first by Christian Lotz describes the comparative project of the *Leipziger Kreis für Forum für Wissenschaft und Kunst* that aims at characterising the image of the enemy in Polish, West and East German and Bulgarian press and literature. The second is an experiment with the participation of Polish parliamentarians leading to the typology of their attitude towards Europe.

An interested reader will find some more thought-provoking ideas in the minutes of the discussion of the conference participants. Here, I will restrict my-

self to picking up those aspects, which appear as most actual and somehow responding to the thematic and methodological limitations of the book. Kazimierz Wątycki (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Szczecin) backed by Markus Krzoska appealed for a new, internal, German debate that would problematise the German anti-Slavism inasmuch as anti-Semitism became a topic of German public discourse. Thus as Wolff-Poweska argues it would be illustrious to deliver broader German perspective of the topic under examination in the volume. Why this wish hadn't been fulfilled becomes clear in the light of comments by Dieter Bingen and Peter Oliver Loew, both co-editors of the book. They create a confusing dual scheme of stereotype (*Feindbild* in the nomenclature as used in the volume) and reality. According to them it is the task of the researcher to confront the stereotype with the truth, showing that the first is false. Supported by the theory expressed in several papers in the volume according to which the micro-level of the international relations remains immune (or at least resistant) from the national hatred instrumentalized by the macro-level (to be understood as politics), this assumption leads to the thesis that it is possible to replace stereotypes (which are false by nature) with truth as soon as the nationalist political leaders seize to dominate the political scene. This thesis may rightly seem strange at the end of the book that begins with the assumption (by Berghold) that the stereotype (or *Feindbild*) is characterised by immunity to reality. It may however partly explain the focus on Polish problems and scarcity of Germany-centred texts. The recent Polish public discourse includes openly anti-German motifs that are widely commented by the German mass-media, whereas the change of the German historical discourse and attitude towards Poland does not deliver such radical expressions. Yet, the distance between the allegedly neutral image of the other and the stereotype of the national enemy may rapidly shrink; the borders between both categories are flexible. The already existing motifs may change their bias and gain a clear aggressive character, and the other way around: they may get civilised and find their way to the mainstream discourses. It is a challenge for the researchers to map not only the clearly formulated *Feindbilder* but to deconstruct their elements in seemingly neutral formulations. Moreover: although some of the authors (above all Anna Wolff-Powska) mentioned the need to perceive given national discourse in constant co-existence and interference with the discourses of the other side, this assumption seems not to have found its place in the editors' concept. Yet the image of the other seems closely related to the self-

image and thus clearly demands wide and well balanced comparisons and tools of âentangled historiesâ.

Despite the shortcomings of its structure, the volume edited by Bingen, Loew and Woycicki gives a wide perspective of the Polish (to the lesser extent also German,

Czech and Dutch) problematic dealing with âothernessâ in its most critical moments. Thus, it is a useful source of solid, research-based knowledge instrumental for every German-speaking reader who wants to get a deeper insight of the Polish historical and political discourses.

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