The Shape of Europe in the Work of Oskar Halecki, Józef Mackiewicz, and Marian Kukiel*

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In his essay on the metamorphoses of territorial power structures in Europe during the Cold War and after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Ola Tunander uses the medieval city with its walls and masonry as a metaphor for explaining the new organization of societies: the ongoing staking out of new “metaphysical/physical” walls, on the one hand, and the crafting of networks free from the territorial bounds, on the other. There is also a suggestive image of the role of an exile intellectual in this text. He is placed (along many European intellectuals) on the Berlin Wall and compared with a witch in the early Middle Ages, sitting on the fence or gatepost, facing both sides of the town wall and explaining the chaotic “other” world behind the wall to the citizens within and to those who hold the monopoly of power there.

Certainly, the exile intellectuals during the Cold War interpreted/translated the meaning of events behind the Iron Curtain, acquainting the West with the current facts and wakening its memory about the “waste land behind the Wall.” History played an important role in these explanatory models. But the paradoxical nature of being émigrés could even mean that they treated the Wall, as in the old anecdote about Eifel Tower as the only place where one could not see its ugly construction and from which one could have the advantage of having a panoramic view; the question of what Europe is like without the bipolar division and the (historical) conceptions that seemed to naturalize these visions was at the heart of the work of some exile historians. They reformulated their concepts in polemical ways in opposition to political attempts to strengthen or legitimize the division.

This chapter presents three conceptions of Europe developed by Polish exile historians and seeks to reconstruct the intellectual history that underpins them. One of them has its roots in the medieval studies, the other in the ideas about modern sovereign state, and the third one concerns the history of 18th

* The first version of this article emerged from the project "History writing in Exile" and was published in Polish (Zadencka, 2009). The present text is extended among others with the interpretation of Halecki’s American connection—his praise of the Wilsonian doctrine and characteristic features shared with the German refugees Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss.

1 Tunander, 1995, 31–32.
century. It seems that all three of them are dominated by the spatial character of the imagination of their authors.

1 In the interwar period, Oskar Halecki (1891–1973) was already one of the most influential figures in Polish historiography. His research field included the early modern times, the Middle Ages and the Byzantine world. The springboard for his interests and the central focus of his work was the history of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and, later on, the question about the possible models for use in historical studies of Eastern Europe. At the very beginning, both concerns were related, as Halecki recounted later, to his early interest in the history of his international (Austrian-Croat-Polish-Ukrainian-Hungarian-Italian) family, one branch of which (Chalecki) was involved in the “death of the Jagiellonian Union.”2 His habilitation thesis (1915) concerned Polish-Russian relations in the fifteenth century and his habilitation lecture the Lublin Union of 1569. His main work of this early phase of his career was entitled *Dzieje Unii Jagiellońskiej* (History of Jagiellonian Union) and published 1919–1920.³

Halecki’s early works were of crucial importance in forming the historical knowledge of the Polish political elites that prepared the “territorial program” for the future state. He himself was active as the expert at the Polish delegation at the Peace Conference in Paris in 1919. In 1918 Halecki had been appointed to the newly established Chair of the History of Eastern Europe at the University of Warsaw.

In his works on Jagiellonian Union, Halecki stressed that the union was brought about on the basis of free will of both states. He wrote about “the astonishing expansion of the Polish state from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century”, which differed from the expansion of other colonial powers due to the “soft character of the Polish mission” and peaceful winning over of Russians by Catholicism.⁴

His view of the character of the Jagiellonian accord evolved with time from the opinion that it rested on legal and constitutional assimilation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to the position that the Commonwealth was an intricate

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2 For biographical and bibliographical information on Halecki see Mirosław Filipowicz in this volume.
4 His opinions about the grade of integration changed in some degree in connection to research done by Jan Adamus (1896–1962) on the Union in Krewo 1385.