

An East European View of American Anthropology in Eastern Europe

Leszek Dziegiel

Many pages in past (and the present) issues of the Newsletter have been devoted to the complex role of the ethnologist in Eastern Europe. The following article is devoted to still another perspective on the same subject. By one of our Polish colleagues, it was originally published in the book reviews section of the Polish journal Hemispheres (No. 3, 1987). It constitutes not only a review of the article in question (one of our primary bibliographical tools) but a general critique of American ethnological work in Eastern Europe. There is much here to think about and we have, therefore, reprinted the article in whole (including typographical errors). We hope to include in our next issue of the Newsletter responses from Halpern, Kideckel and any other readers who have something to say on the subject.

Joel M. Halpern, David A. Kideckel, ..Anthropology of Eastern Europe," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1983, No. 12, pp. 377-402, Academic Press.

Two American social anthropologists, Joel Martin Halpern of Massachusetts University and David A. Kideckel of Central Connecticut State University, published in 1983 a comprehensive paper on "Anthropology of Eastern Europe". But on the 24 pages with 221 bibliographical references the careful reader will in vain look for social and cultural problems of the areas which already at high school geography lessons he used to identify with Eastern Europe. The Ukraine, Russia, Byelorussia, the Baltic countries? Nothing of that kind. For both scholars Eastern Europe begins on the Elbe. Nevertheless, "for sociocultural reasons" they have excluded the territory of the German Democratic Republic from their analyses. Nor do they discuss problems of the nations of the European part of the Soviet Union, although in that case they offer no explanation for their decision. They write about "the Slavic states of Europe outside the U.S.S.R. and the geographically contiguous states of Albania, Hungary and Romania". They are not concerned with Greece supposedly because of the cultural difference of that country with strong traditions of the ancient civilization. In fact, however, even a cursory reading of their

paper enables one to discover the main causes of their selective analysis. The meridionally oriented slice ranging from the Baltic to the Adriatic and the Black Sea, cut out of the rest of the European continent, is in their eyes more or less homogenous culturally, in view of the present-day political situation. As we shall, however, note later, the more profound cause of such an interpretation of the anthropological facts in Central and South-Eastern Europe must be seen in the very uneven knowledge of European problems which marks both authors. One of them boasts, it is true, that he has been concerned with East Europeanist anthropology for 30 years, but the perspective in which both scholars see us emerges clearly from their own publications which they both quote.

Now Halpern refers to 24 items of which he is the author or a co-author and 21 of which show by their title that they pertain to the Balkan Peninsula, mainly Yugoslavia. Within the last-named country Halpern is concerned solely with the culture of the Serbians. In one of his papers he even discussed the convergences between the cultural change in Serbia and in Laos (sic!). It is true that in another paper he pointed to the contrasts between the economy of Serbian peasants and that of the Laotian peasants. It can be seen, however, that within Eurasia the Balkan Peninsula and the Indochinese Peninsula are equally near to him.

Kideckel quotes only four of his own Publications connected with the subject matter of their paper, but all of them are concerned with Romania. Out of the 221 items used in the writing of the paper under consideration as many as 151 are concerned with the Balkans or with the fortunes of Balkan ethnic minorities in the United States.

Hungarian problems are represented beyond all doubt by 27 items; but they can perhaps be found also in the papers concerned with Transylvania, which is now in Romania. In turn, analyses concerned with Hungary also refer to the minorities which have for ages lived together with the Hungarians. In the remaining 23 items in the bibliography we find—next to those which refer to Eastern Europe in general—a few items which deal with Czechs and Slovaks. Poland, after all a country inhabited by 37 million people, is treated quite marginally by the students of Serbia, Transylvania and Laos. This is reflected by merely eight items, four of which written by Poles: two papers by Anna Kutrzeba-Poinarowa, one study by Jozef (quoted as "Josef") Obrebski, and one article of which P. T. Bogdanowicz is a co-author.¹

Halpern and Kideckel do realize that in our part of Europe such terms as social anthropology, cultural anthropology, ethnology, and ethnography are used interchangeably. This

is borne out by their references. which include works by European authors. They also make at the outset the reservation that their essay is to be primarily a review of the studies made by Americans in that part of Europe. It is only exceptionally that they have made use of works by non-American authors, published in English in Western professional journals. They do add, however, that their field of research was defined by statements made by "East European ethnologists" provided they had been published in English in a professional journal in the West. By the way, in the case of the Polish ethnological disciplines the paper by J. Burszta and H. Kopczynska-Jaworska, "Polish Ethnography After World War II", published in the Swedish periodical *Ethnos*, has totally escaped their notice.²

It must be said that the two Americans do not try to minimize the problems which an analysis of the cultural relations in the area they choose to call Eastern Europe creates for them and their colleagues. In their opinion, an important obstacle is to be seen in the strong sense of political and national identity, typical of that territory, which allegedly always confined anthropological studies to political and linguistic areas. It is interesting to find that the two authors do not mention at all another obstacle, which seems to be a very important one, faced by a foreigner who wants to analyse a large part of Europe in an integrated manner. Such a scholar must acquire the command (at least in the passive sense) of several quite different European languages. Otherwise he cannot do real field work nor read the native scholarly publications of a given country. He must therefore act in isolation from the local milieu. The problem of language barriers is practically non-existent in the analyses carried out by Halpern and Kideckel. It seems at moments that such an isolation is for them neither embarrassing nor harmful.

Traditions of studies of culture of Central and South-Eastern Europe are relatively very young, as compared with research on African and North American peoples. It has been only in the last two decades that the number of American scholars interested in the part of Europe under consideration has increased rapidly. They have experienced both successes due to a new field of research and failures resulting from specific cultural features of that region (and also from the fact that that part of Europe has had for years its own scholarly milieu that studied cultural phenomena in the respective countries).

Here, however, Halpern and Kideckel put forth the claim that in that part of Europe "the nature of these research traditions and their dominant ideas can differ greatly from Western anthropological thought and practice". Those traditions were namely due to the striving to work

out national identity, based on peasant cultures dominant in those countries. But let us have a closer look at the criteria by which the two Americans try to single out the area under consideration from the rest of Europe. They refer to such features, supposedly common to all the countries in question, as the peasant character of their cultures, a low level of urbanization, and general civilizational backwardness. Further they mentioned the fact that the said area has been peripheral relative to the spheres of influence of the great empires: Ottoman Turkey, the Habsburg empire, the Russian tsardom, Western capital, and the Soviet Union (sic!). They also claim that ethnic quarrels have been common among the various groups living on both sides of a given State frontier, and that ethnic membership has been linked to definite religious allegiance. It must be noted in this connection that the religious factor has been minimally noticed by both the authors of the essay under review and by those American scholars whose works are largely the basis of the overview. Impressed by the number of national conflicts and the stormy history of Central and South-Eastern Europe during the last two centuries, marked by the clashes of influences of alien empires. the two Americans rather hastily try to compare our region to South-Eastern Asia, influenced for millennia by co-existing Chinese and Indian civilizations. Finally comes the most important common feature: forty years under the socialist system after World War II.

When presenting the historical trends in anthropological studies, both Americans go back to the first Western descriptions and travelers' reports from that part of Europe, published in the United States prior to World War II. Their task was mainly to make the reader interested in the colourful mosaic of cultures and nations. Westernized East European politicians and intellectuals are claimed to have presented their respective countries in the form of descriptions similarly tinged with exoticism, when they strove to bring their countries closer to the Western readers. Halpern and Kideckel nevertheless are aware of the fact that local research interest in the cultures of those countries began in the early 19th century in connection with growing nationalism. The further growth of ethnographic studies and reflections on native cultures is linked by the two American authors to the then increasing (at least in their opinion) political role of the peasant parties in the period 1918-39.

While postponing the more comprehensive polemic to the concluding part of the present paper, we have to note again that authors' knowledge of the countries situated to the north of the Carpathians is less than modest. In the period before 1939 they mention the Pole Obrvebski,

whom they present as a disciple of Malinowski who in his studies conducted in Poland and Yugoslavia referred to the then prevailing anthropological interests in the West. They not only fail to mention Moszynski, whose disciple Obrebski really was, but do not even include in the group of Westernized intellectuals Florian Witold Znaniecki, co-author of *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, in 1940-50 professor of sociology at the University of Illinois in Urbana. The American anthropological studies in that part of Europe prior to World War II were mostly concerned with the Balkans, mainly Albania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Romania. Scholars who were active there, such as Philips Mosley, Vera Erlich and Irwin Sanders, met on that occasion local researchers, such as Gusti and Stahl in Romania and Filipovic in Serbia. Their contacts with the arrivals from the United States helped the European scholars to find their way to the Western milieu and gradually to win renown on the other side of the Atlantic. In the opinion of the two authors the scholars' attention was attracted by the feature common to East European societies, mainly the impact of even remote historical events upon contemporary behaviour of individuals and their ways of establishing their identity.

In Halpern's and Kideckel's opinion, after World War II interests in the anthropology of Eastern Europe were changed. Descriptions of culture intended to define national and ethnic traditions came to be more and more often replaced by endeavours to answer more detailed questions. The new generation of researchers wanted to analyse the history of the growth of local capitalism and also the structure, potential, and problems of the contemporary East European socialist societies. The authors of the paper under review fail, unfortunately, to state with more precision whether that reorientation of interests marked local researchers, or the American ones, or both. In any case, the post-war period is claimed by them to have been marked by two theoretical orientations in anthropology concerned with Eastern Europe. One of them, which they call socio-structural, analyses peasant society in the form of the family, community, relationships to local institutions, symbols and systems of values. Emphasis is laid on the cyclicalness of phenomena. Attention is drawn to social change which yields new social groups such as peasant-workers and groups of emigrants living abroad.

The adherents of the socio-structural orientation do not deny the importance of modernization, but they nevertheless tend to emphasize the continuity and the adaptive abilities of peasant culture also within broader socialist economic systems. They point to the transient nature of political systems as compared with age-old culture patterns. That approach encourages

the researchers to seek the key to the comprehension of culture systems in Eastern Europe in analysing the lives of individuals and communities in their historical perspective.

The authors of the essay claim that the last decade witnessed among American scholars a great popularity of the orientation which they call politico-economic. There emphasis is laid on watching interactions between local cultural units and national and even supranational institutions. That is supposed to help one to better understand the formation of cultural systems typical of Eastern Europe. There is, therefore, much greater interest in the effects of the capitalist and the socialist systems. production relations, trade and class systems. The scholars' attention is focused on change rather than cultural continuity. Unlike the adherents of the socio-structural orientation, they do not seek answers about the future in the elements of the cultural past. In the opinion of Halpern and Kideckel, the adherents of the politico-economic orientation treat the present developments as a qualitative deviation from past patterns, as a kind of linear development. Those researchers assume that "socialism and socialist institutions. especially planned social change. are considered to have an enduring effect on East European life".

The authors of the essays try to offer examples of the pre-1939 and the post-1945 approach. Like on all occasions, the works they quote pertain almost exclusively to Yugoslavia. The latest studies strive to watch in detail the changes which the rural community has undergone after the introduction of the socialist system, and primarily after the collectivization of agriculture. The various monographs are said to compare the situation prior to the introduction of the socialist system to the present realities of life. Halpern and Kideckel assure us that such an approach makes it possible for the scholars to better assess the process of socialist change or else to find the cultural continuity of peasant societies. For instance, P. D. Ball reflects on how collectivization has changed both the social hierarchy and its individual perception in the Hungarian rural areas. C. M. Hann analyses increased social stratification due to new economic opportunities with which the inhabitants of a backward village are faced Z. Salzman and V. Scheufler take the case of the Czech village of Komarov to discuss the role of collectivization as the carrier of general modernization. American scholars also wrote favourably about the scholarly standard of some local scientists, particularly about the book *Proper Peasants: Traditional Life in a Hungarian Village* by E. Fel and T. Hofer.

The primacy of Yugoslav problems is also unquestionable when it comes to the study of kinship systems and social structure. The two Americans mention a lot of names of authors and

titles of works. especially by Anglo-Saxon scholars. but by continental ethnologists as well, who have been concerned with those problems in many regions of Yugoslavia. The vast amount of data is reflected in the fact that Balkan cultural realities are more and more often being compared with those in Western Europe, North America and Japan. The Yugoslav *zadruga* has for a long time enjoyed special interest on the part of the scholars, who also did not lose sight of the changes which have taken place in post-1945 Yugoslavia following urbanization and industrialization. The authors complain in this connection that Albania, before 1939 a field of study by Western anthropologists, is still closed to foreign researchers.

The study of oral tradition, rites and symbolism of the inhabitants of Eastern Europe have been taken up by many scholars, both native and foreign. Some of them are fairly attractive in view of their subject matter. For instance, G. Klingman presents the traditional Pentecost rites in the Romanian rural areas in the light of the secularization policy pursued by the authorities. A group of scholars have studied "political rituals and symbolism in socialist Eastern Europe." G. Silverman wrote about the folklore policy in Bulgaria. R. Rotenburg compares "May Day parades in Prague and Vienna." D. A. Kideckel analyses the lay ritual and social change in Romania. G. Klingman is concerned with poetry as a form of politics in the Transylvanian rural areas. F. A. Dubinskas is interested in culture patterns and political symbolism in Yugoslavia. O. Supek draws our attention to the political aspects of the carnival in Croatia. The subject matter of a paper by C. Chase. pertaining to Poland can satisfy the liking of sophisticated gourmets: "Food Shortage Symbolism in Socialist Poland".³ Let us recall the merriment caused in this country by the various lay rituals organized by the authorities, but having no counterpart in the genuine folk tradition, such as the First Potato Festival.⁴ Yet it turns out that foreign anthropologists are ready to treat all that with deadly seriousness. They happen to treat us more seriously than we treat ourselves.

Let those references to rituals and symbolism in Eastern Europe be concluded by a glimpse of common sense. The authors of the paper under review point to the works by A. Simic and C. Boehm. The former compares certain forms of behaviour specific to southern Yugoslavia to analogous manifestations of folk culture in Mexico. The latter refers in his analysis of the traditional code of honour in Montenegro to the principles of conduct known in communities inhabiting other regions of the Mediterranean basin. Is that a forerunner of a more rational treatment of peasant cultures in the region under consideration and a tentative comparison with

regions marked by certain historical and cultural characteristics, and hence of a departure from the schema of Eastern Europe ranging from the Baltic to the Adriatic? Unfortunately, Halpern and Kideckel do not take up that issue at all.

What is the specific contribution of the anthropology of Eastern Europe to world anthropology? Halpern and Kideckel show that strong regional ethnic divisions are the main interest of the anthropologists concerned with that area. The sense of ethnic membership is an important element of the personality of the inhabitants of that region. It is often at variance with the official policy of national integration. Sometimes it turns into a weapon in the struggle for the economic rights of a given area, neglected in that respect by the central administration, or for the rights of a group whose status is in fact lower than that of the other groups. Examples are taken mainly from Yugoslavia, which is in fact an ethnic mosaic in the region inhabited by southern Slavs; minority problems in Romania and Hungary are also discussed. The authors of the papers one-sidedly associate those conflicts and rivalries with that part of the European continent, and forget about the revival of Flemish, Walloonian, Basque, Corsican and Welsh separatism. On the other hand, they are correct in pointing out that those animosities penetrate even the milieus of anthropologists and ethnologists themselves, who quarrel vehemently in the name of local patriotisms. They are also right in voicing their apprehension that ethnic particularism will be difficult to neutralize even by class oriented socialist political systems. It may be said in this connection that animosities among the various ethnic groups in Central and South-Eastern Europe have often been fanned on purpose by foreign authorities interested in the quarrels among peoples and nations in that region of Europe. The two Americans refer only to quarrels and conflicts as supposedly specific elements of that part of the world.

The Balkan perspective makes the two American scholars engage in another simplified reasoning about the general civilizational backwardness of Eastern Europe in the 20th century and its complete economic dependence upon others in the recent past. Halpern and Kideckel must have apparently heard little about such old cities with mediaeval traditions as Prague, Wroclaw, Gdansk, Cracow and Budapest, because they write about poor urbanization of that part of Europe. Further we read that the local "relatively small-scale urban centers were principally inhabited by cultural groups from outside the region until well into the nineteenth century", surrounded by a sea of native peasants. Those countries, except for Czechoslovakia, were supposedly marked by a lack of industry. They were fully dependent upon foreign capital,

which—as is shown by examples drawn from pre-1939 Romania and Bulgaria—favoured the survival and even the development of a rigid and oppressive social hierarchy. That feudal reality, which rather resembles the operettas of Ferenc Lehár, disappeared radically only after World War II when the policy of development, controlled centrally by socialist government, dragged that region from backwardness. But here comes the cold shower applied by the author to the East European reader who is not willing to return to the epoch of *The Merry Widow* and *The Tsarevitch*:

"Viewed from the perspective of the 1980s, the enormous external debt of many East European nations to Western banks is definite evidence of the revival of economic dependency in the socialist epoch. As past dependency undermined the lives of East Europe's people, fostering rigid class structures, it threatens to do so today."

The principles of stylistic composition suggest that the discussion of the American anthropological essay should be concluded by that apocalyptic vision. But Halpern and Kideckel have in store a number of other remarks, interesting, though perhaps not that striking. They give, above all, examples of studies concerned with the integration of rural communities with their regions and the rest of the country following a change in agrarian systems. They also discuss studies of social facts connected with industrialization and urbanization. The works on cooperative farms quoted by Halpern and Kideckel pertain mainly to Hungary and Transylvania. In the opinion of the two Americans, it follows from those field studies that the change in the agrarian relations, planned by the State authorities, contributes to economic growth, the rise of the living standards, and the release of manpower reserves owing to the modernization of agriculture. This is borne out by G. Patterson's field study on the rural areas in the Romanian province of Oltenia. This is why the concluding remark made by Halpern and Kideckel sounds puzzling: "Still, the verdict on socialist agrarian systems and their ability to transform rural life is a mixed one." The authors of the overview complain that so far there have been no comparative anthropological studies on the rural areas in the various socialist countries in Eastern Europe because "agriculture in Poland and Yugoslavia has remained largely private."

There are also, in their opinion, no “systematic discussions of socialist industry from an anthropological perspective.” By sticking stubbornly to the conception that the part of Europe under consideration is a land of peasants, Halpern and Kideckel, and above all the authors they quote, are not particularly concerned with workers from big industry areas. They are above all interested in the impact of industrialization and urbanization upon the rural areas, and in particular in the phenomenon of peasant-workers. There are also studies on the "peasantification" of towns. Foreign anthropologists differ from one another in the assessment of what they describe. If we are to believe Halpern and Kideckel, at least part of the publications try to go beyond a politely optimistic stereotype and analyse the totality of complex facts objectively. But here, too, the data are unfortunately taken totally from South-Eastern Europe.

In the part dedicated to the emigrants from the said part of Europe, living mainly in the United States, the two authors focus their attention on emigrants from the Balkans. But we find here some Polonica, too. Halpern and Kideckel quote the publication of Anna Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa with the comment that she sheds new light on the peasant emigration from Poland, analysed between the world wars by Jozef Obrebski. But here, too, no mention is made of Znaniecki's study of Polish peasants. Reference is made to the study of H. Bloch on the changing roles of the Polish emigrant women in their daily family life.

The two authors on many occasions point to the serious gaps in the anthropological works concerned with Eastern Europe. There is a lack, in the publications accessible to Western readers of any papers on political elites, on leaders and on the legitimation of their power. The problem is in fact of great importance not only for the anthropologists on the other side of the Atlantic. There are many other reservations addressed to European anthropologists and ethnologists, known to the two authors from occasional translations, who had studied the part of Europe under consideration. Halpern and Kideckel emphasize the fact that it is a very interesting area, which moreover has a long tradition of culturological studies conducted by local scholars. This is the difference between Eastern Europe and the vast areas of Africa, Latin America and Asia, where such studies have until recently been carried out almost exclusively by foreign anthropologists. Contacts between European and American scholars are promoted by the *Colloquium Anthropologicum*, published in English at Zagreb, despite the fact that the periodical is primarily concerned with physical anthropology. Halpern and Kideckel seem to have no idea

about the *Ethnologia Polona*, published annually for years in English and intended to be a visiting card of the Polish ethnological disciplines.

But let us revert to the two authors. They blame the field studies they discuss for a lack of general theoretical perspectives. They appreciate the opportunity for becoming acquainted with the opinions of such European scholars as Bicanic, Filipovic, Gavazzi, Gunda, Hofer, Kutrzeba-Poinarowa, Markus and Stahl, but they claim stubbornly that the anthropological achievements of local and foreign scholars still do not allow the East European problems to join the main trend in world anthropology. That part of Europe is still supposed to be of marginal interest for science. They conclude their analysis thus:

"If there is to be a viable East Europeanist anthropology, there needs to be integrating perspectives consistently addressed on multinational, regional, and cross-culturally comparative levels. Perhaps the pressure of regional identities is too strong for East Europeanist anthropologists who have gone native and become Balkanized in the process."

Ridiculing foreign naive enthusiasts of our geographical region and their no less naive generalizations can hardly be a source of satisfaction. On the other hand, however, it is worthwhile making our American colleagues realize several elementary truths and several essential shortcomings which are not on their list of the scholarly defects of East Europeanist anthropology, because we assume that our common goal is the mutual perception and comprehension of our respective cultures and ideas. The first question that must be raised is about what was the purpose of the review prepared by Halpern and Kideckel. Those scholars, who have a long experience of studies in Europe, have confined themselves to works written by Americans and by the Europeans whose contributions (in a rather random selection) can be read in English. They have thus deliberately cut themselves off from all those publications on Central and South-Eastern Europe which have appeared in German (on Hungary and Transylvania) and in French (on Romania), not to speak about works written in local languages. The thick volumes of Moszynski's *Kultura Ludowa Slowian* [*The Folk Culture of the Slavs*], written several decades ago, were an endeavour to cross the various frontiers of language and political areas, which are claimed today to limit so much the vision of researchers. Of course, that work has never been translated into English, as was also the case of many other scholarly publications by Polish, Czech, Hungarian and Bulgarian authors. The essay by Halpern and Kideckel, as has been said, does not take into consideration many essential European works that have been published in

English. It thus gives an untrue image, distorted be it only for that reason. It is interesting to note that they wrote in the initial part of their study that:

"the carefully plowed field of studies of European society is uninviting for the 'slash-and-burn' oriented (American) anthropologists bent on the cultivation of the new and unexplored. In contrast, East European ethnography demands long-term, painstakingly detailed research to establish the specific of the interrelationships of specific aspects of local life and national identity. The two approaches often find themselves on different paths."

But further in the text they do not mind much what they have written at the outset. To make matters worse, they have themselves undergone complete "Balkanization", but in a quite different sense of the term. They discuss the vast region from the Baltic to the Adriatic from the perspective of two or three Balkan countries they know themselves, tempted by easy generalizations. It is so as if someone analysed Scandinavia from the anthropological point of view mainly on the basis of one's field work in Iceland. It must be admitted that after decades of years spent in the thicket of Balkan ethnic tensions, animosities and rivalries one can come to the conclusion that quarrels are the specialty of the Europeans to the east of the Elbe.

The singling out from the European continent of the belt ranging from the Baltic to the Adriatic had in fact only one factor in view, namely that of political system, even though—as the two authors admit—the varied specific features of that region have not still found reflection in anthropological literature. Other arguments intended to justify such a division of Europe sound artificial. Scholars who have spent thirty years doing research work in Europe, even if mainly confined to Serbia and Transylvania, should have a general knowledge of the geography and the history of the continent. In our part of the world, cut by the mountain ranges of the Alps, the Balkans and the Carpathians, the main cultural and migration waves followed the east-west line, and not the north-south line. This is why Yugoslavia and Albania, at least in their sea coast regions, are culturally closer to Greece, Italy, and Sicily, and perhaps even many other parts of the Mediterranean basin, than to Hungary, Bohemia, and Slovakia, not to speak about Poland. On the other hand the interior of Yugoslavia has a lot of common traditions with Romania and Bulgaria, owing to the Turkish slavery for several hundred years, and there are many references

to the Near East to be found there. The same applies to Greece, artificially eliminated by the two authors, which underwent strong Slavicization in the Middle Ages and later experienced long Ottoman slavery. The Hungarians, threatened by the Turks, were nevertheless in the cultural orbit of Central Europe (like Croatia and Slovenia) and had lively contacts with Austria. Our Czech neighbours have also been linked by age-old political and cultural tradition to the German countries. Finally Poland, separated from the south by Carpathians, had undoubtedly a lot of cultural features common with the Slavonic substratum, on which the German element coming from the region between the Elbe and the Odra was superimposed in the Middle Ages. Through the intermediary of the German lands and also Bohemia and Moravia Poland availed itself for centuries of the civilizational attainments of Western Europe. On the other hand, our cultural contacts with East European people—the Lithuanians, the Byelorussians, and the Ukrainians—are beyond dispute, which is not to say that we have identified ourselves with our eastern neighbours, whom by the way the two American authors have completely ignored in their essay concerned with Eastern Europe.

They write that all the states and nations they discuss lived on the margin of the policies of great powers. We have to ask: when? It is true that Bulgaria and Serbia were conquered by the Turks in the 14th and the 15th century, and the Romanian principalities on the Danube were controlled by the Porte until the mid-19th century, but the situation was quite different with the nations living further north. The Hungarians enjoyed the partnership status within the Hapsburg Empire until the end of World War I. Poland, in union with Lithuania, was an important European power until the end of the 18th century. Note also that the vast Polish territory served as an asylum to many nations and denominational groups which were fleeing from persecutions in neighbouring countries. In Poland they enjoyed considerable toleration—by the standards prevailing in those times. As long as the Poles were an independent people there were chances of political and religious pluralism in their State.

The regions singled out by the two American authors in an artificial manner had their diversified political and economic history. They differed markedly by living standards as late as in the 20th centuries. We read in the essay by Halpern and Kideckel that the part of Europe they discuss is for an anthropologist a genuine laboratory in which he can study rapid and centrally controlled social change that took place after a period of strong underdevelopment, and that "these circumstances are being duplicated in the developing world." This could have been

written only by a person who had no idea about the pre-war living standards in Bohemia and Moravia, in Greater Poland and Pomerania, and even in Hungary, and drew his knowledge of Central Europe from trips to Serbia and forlorn part of Romania.

It does not seem either that the two American anthropologists have grasped the essence of the denominational differences in the part of Europe they discuss, together with their cultural consequences. The two trends coming, respectively, from Rome and Constantinople, which brought different attitudes and loyalties, the disaster of the Turkish conquest with the resulting centuries of oppression and discrimination of Christians in South-Eastern Europe, and also many other consequences of the split of Christendom—all this seems to have been too intricate for the researchers on the other side of the Atlantic. They have also simplified the role of peasantry in the life of European nations. Their vision at least does not fit Polish and Hungarian traditions, which are more complex.

The Eastern Europe as understood by Halpern and Kideckel will always be difficult to analyse by a foreign anthropologist, because its geographical, historical, and economic conception is false. Suppose that another American anthropologist tried to single out, on the basis of alleged similarities, a region that covers Norway, Denmark, West Germany, Switzerland and Italy, in order to carry out their integrated cultural analysis. Singling out the belt from Hammerfest to Palermo would have exactly as much sense as doing that with the region ranging from Gdansk to Tirana. In connection with the field work studies they quote one can doubt whether their authors had been really objective, and whether they had succeeded in avoiding various pressures and persuasions when they were collecting their data and preparing the work for publication. But for that one would have to become thoroughly acquainted with the items quoted by Halpern and Kideckel. Let us therefore assume their scholarly credibility.

Finally, the essay of the two American authors tells us Poles a truth which is clear but not quite pleasant. For very many anthropologists on the other side of the Atlantic Eastern Europe means primarily Yugoslavia, a picturesque country with the Dalmatian seacoast and a network of hotels and camping places. The same also applies to Romania. The further we move to the north, where the climate is less pleasant and the tourist infrastructure is not always well developed, the more the research enthusiasm of foreigners fades. Their perception of our-Polish-culture is less than modest. Under the Polish cloudy skies cultural exoticism attracts at most those who are fond of political sensations such as the symbolism due to food shortages. Hence if we want the

knowledge of our society, history and traditions reach the centres of world anthropology at least on the scale of their knowledge of Montenegrin highlanders and Adriatic fisherman, we have to do something ourselves. We cannot rely upon the foreign students of the rites connected with the First Potato Festival. We can see here an important role for Polish scholarly publications appearing in world languages, and for an adequate number of translations of works by Polish researchers which are concerned with our culture or with general theoretical problems. I am convinced that there is much truth in the objections raised by Halpern and Kideckel about the local character of culture studies in our part of Europe, although our American colleagues somewhat naively assess the possibilities of making generalizations about old and tradition-rich European cultures. Nevertheless, it may be so that the Polish ethnographers do not face new opportunities for action, namely for making cross-cultural analyses covering Poland and the neighbouring countries. Such analyses could be made by organizing joint international research projects. I know that first steps in that direction have been made several years ago. Perhaps in the future Polish initiatives will give rise to joint Central European studies of local cultures, which, when published and presented to the international forum will mean something qualitatively new in the knowledge of our part of Europe.

Notes

1. A. Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa, "The Traditions. Present State, and Tasks of Ethnographic Science in the Polish People's Republic", *Soviet Anthropology and Archaeology*, 1982. pp. 3-40; also by the same author. "The Influence of the History Of Peasantry on the Model of the Traditional Peasant Culture and Its Transformations." *Program Soviet and East European Studies Occasional Papers*, Amherst 1983. No.2 pp. 85-98; J. Obrebski. *The Changing Peasantry of Eastern Europe*, eds. B. K. Halpern. J. M. Halpern. Cambridge 1976; F. T. Fine. P. T. Bogdanowicz. "Policy Response and Alternative Strategy: The Process of Change in a Polish Highland Village." *Dialect Anthropology* 7(1). 1982 pp. 67-80.
2. J. Burszta and B. Kopczyńska-Jaworska. "Polish Ethnography After World War II." *Ethnos*, 1982. No. 1—2, pp. 50—63. This is a contribution to the international discussion on *The Shaping of National Anthropologies*, initiated by the University of Stockholm Department of Social Anthropology.
3. C. Chase. "Food Shortage Symbolism in Socialist Poland". *Anthropological Quarterly*, 56(2). 1983. pp. 76-82.

4. M. Orlewicz. "Współczesne formy obrzędowości świeckiej jako przedmiot badań"
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[*Social Functions of Ethnology*], ed. Z. Jasiewicz, Poznań 1979, pp. 141-147.