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**Summary of the doctoral dissertation “*Action to destroy Orthodox churches in the Chełm region and southern Podlasie*”. A study of memory and postmemory written under the direction and supervision of Małgorzata Bieńkowska PhD hab., Associate Professor, and Karolina Radłowska PhD.**

Memory has a polymorphic and polysemic dimension for me. In my opinion that represents a multiplicity of coexisting social realities that constantly negotiate their place in social space. This dissertation is related to one of such realities. It concerns the construction and functioning of the social world of memory based on a difficult historical experience from the group's past. I refer to the Orthodox community in Poland and the memory of the history called "The action of destroying Orthodox churches in the Chełm region and southern Podlasie<sup>1</sup>". I indicate the common name, because the official name of the operation, of which the destruction of Orthodox churches was a part, is the Polonization and Revindication Action. This is also the reason why the phrase "Action to destroy the churches" in the title was put in inverted commas.

The history I am referring to happened in a few summer months in 1938. Therefore it is an "episode" of the Polonization and Revindication action, as well as the complicated relations throughout the interwar period between the Polish state and the Orthodox religious minority and the "eastern" national and ethnic minorities, including the Ukrainian minority. This is especially noticeable at the end of the Second Polish Republic. At that time it was destroyed more than a hundred Orthodox churches in the Chełm region and southern Podlasie. This happened with the support of the government and the military. This episode was, and to some extent still is, a difficult and problematic history for members of the Orthodox community and the institution of the Orthodox Church in Poland<sup>2</sup>. Its consequences

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<sup>1</sup> The region defined as "southern Podlasie" refers to the northern part of the current Lubelskie Voivodeship with the city of Biała Podlaska.

<sup>2</sup> In the dissertation, I use the terms Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church, as PAKP (official name), and the Orthodox Church in Poland interchangeably.

are visible in the social, cultural, religious and material spheres. This is also because sacral construction is a special type of material culture and material product – temples are places of religious practice, as well as centers integrating the local community<sup>3</sup>. Sacred buildings also symbolize the presence and roots of communities in the cultural landscape. As a result, they also become an element of local tradition and collective identity. Their architecture and equipment represent the historical past. As a consequence, temples are a point of reference for identification with the group, they are the center of religious life in the area. The parish functions not only in religious but also in social reality<sup>4</sup>.

This dissertation, which is a *case study* analysis, consists of several parts assigned to different dimensions. The first two chapters are intended to define the theoretical framework of the studied phenomenon. In chapters one and two I discuss issues related to collective memory, post-memory and collective trauma. They are the main point of my deliberations and reflection. These issues are discussed by me within many scientific disciplines: sociology, history, philosophy, psychology, genealogy and others assigned to the social sciences and humanities, as well as going beyond them – as in the case of epigenetics<sup>5</sup>. Presenting many perspectives I focus on the social one and the collective nature of these phenomena and related processes.

In the third, relatively shortest chapter, I present the specificity of Polish memory and its transformation, with particular emphasis on the process of democratization of memory in Polish conditions. In this part I also present relationalities in connection with minority memories, at the same time positioning these memories. As a result, this part can also be regarded as an introduction to the issue of memory regarding the Orthodox community in Poland and my research.

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<sup>3</sup> Abel, abp. (2010b) *Słowo wstępu*. W: *Ślady przeszłości. Historia i terażniejszość prawosławia na południowo-zachodnim Podlasiu w świadomości społecznej*. A. Bobryk, I. Kochan (2010). Siedlce: Siedleckie Stowarzyszenie Społeczno-Kulturalne „Brama”, Siedleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe, s. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Bobryk Adam, Kochan Izabela (2010) *Ślady przeszłości. Historia i terażniejszość prawosławia na południowo-zachodnim Podlasiu w świadomości społecznej*. Siedlce: Siedleckie Stowarzyszenie Społeczno-Kulturalne „Brama”, Siedleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe, s. 7-8.

<sup>5</sup> Investigating this issue goes beyond the competence of a sociologist, because it requires non-sociological tools and concerns the dimension of the unconscious. Despite this, in the theoretical part, it seemed necessary to emphasize the existence of this dimension as a kind of "biological record", which, in my opinion, corresponds to the memory of trauma in the social dimension.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the historical background of the episode, I refer in the memorial space. The historical perspective makes it possible to “present” the event and to contextualize it, i.e. to embed it in a historical context. In this part, I present the reality of the interwar period discussing the situation of national and religious minorities. This is an introduction to describing the causes, course and direct effects of the destruction of Orthodox churches in the Second Polish Republic. The historical conditions in this case is a kind of "aspect explaining the existing social reality"<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, it is also a "pretext" to discuss the usefulness of the historical perspective in sociological research and the relationality of sociology and history on the basis of historical sociology and social history.

In the next, fifth chapter, I present the methodology of research on the memory of 1938 among the Orthodox community. In this part, I describe the aim of the research, research problems, used methods and techniques. I extended this chapter with a description of the development and course of the research process and the issues of research into minority groups by researchers belonging to them.

The sixth chapter is the conclusions from the research. It is devoted to an in-depth analysis of memory narratives, tendencies, attitudes to the described history and the meaning given to it. I point to people who experienced the described history, the hierarchs of the Orthodox Church in Poland, as well as the leaders and representatives of the young generation of Orthodox people. A comparison of these narratives shows the collective memory of a part of the Orthodox community in Poland and its various dimensions in the form of autobiographical, official memory or colloquial. In this part, I also focus on Orthodox media discourse, as well as commemoration practices and the process of memory transmission.

The seventh chapter concerns the social unconsciousness of the described history and the reasons determining this state. In this part, I focus on factors of an endogenous nature - the sources of which should be sought in the Orthodox community, and exogenous, i.e. external to it.

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<sup>6</sup> Głowacka-Grajper Małgorzata (2016) *Transmisja pamięci. Działacze „sfery pamięci” i przekaz o Kresach Wschodnich we współczesnej Polsce*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, s. 81.

The culmination is the conclusion based on the presented research results where I try to answer the question whether the memory of the Orthodox community about the described history can be assigned to the traumatic memory.