

# Patryk Wawrzyński

---

## Conference Report 3rd Trialog International Conference "Between Oder and Neman: Issues of Cultural Memory", Kaliningrad (Russia), 26th-29th April 2012

---

The Copernicus Journal of Political Studies nr 1 (1), 166-169

---

2012

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

relations and overshadowed by his desire to become head of a federal state that would be composed of both countries.

In the last part of the monograph, *Multi-directional foreign policy of Alexander Lukashenko (2001–2010)*, the author describes and analyzes the changes in Belorussian foreign policy in the course of the last decade. His analysis of the reasons for the changes in the foreign policy conducted by the Belorussian president is accurate and extremely valuable. The author perfectly captures the problems and failures that forced Alexander Lukashenko to redefine his assumptions and goals. What is more, he accurately portrays the manoeuvres between the East and the West of the Belorussian president, who wanted to achieve the best position in negotiations on the matters important for his country. The most important objective of Alexander Lukashenko's policy – the absolute priority of staying in power – is also highlighted.

A considerable merit of the publication is the extensive list of literature on the subject placed at the end of the book that enables the reader to find other publications on a given area of the Belorussian foreign policy. The reader may be greatly impressed by the rich source material and studies not only in Polish, but also in Belorussian and Russian. Analysed were normative acts on bilateral relations of Belarus, studies, monographs, academic syntheses, Polish, Belorussian, and Russian press, as well as academic and press syntheses available on the Internet.

To sum up, the book is best described as solid and unconventional. The author has put a lot of effort into seeking out source materials and studies. The monograph is an outstanding analysis and a summary of the foreign policy conducted by Belarus. It is an excellent book on the politics of a country marginalized by many researchers, and, what is more, it is full of remarkable insights that can be a good starting point for further research on the issues discussed by the author. Interestingly, it is the first publication by a Polish academic which contains an analysis of Belorussian foreign policy from the perspective of Belorussian goals, interests, and needs.

**Patryk Wawrzyński**

Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland

### **CONFERENCE REPORT 3<sup>rd</sup> TRIALOG INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “BETWEEN ODER AND NEMAN: ISSUES OF CULTURAL MEMORY”, KALININGRAD (RUSSIA), 26<sup>th</sup>–29<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2012**

Questions about politics of memory and political influence on collective memory are becoming more and more popular within international academic discourse. The importance of these issues is evidenced by the state's growing interest in using narratives about the past as a substantiation of current decisions and programs. Initially, the German debate expanded to include the entirety of Europe and has joined

the conference to discuss the propositions for German, Polish, and Russian academics examining local and regional aspects of cultural memories.

Twenty-four researchers representing different academic centers in three countries took part in the conference. Students from the local Immanuel Kant University in Kaliningrad also participated in a special panel session. The conference was divided into five sessions: (1) *Issues of cultural memory*; (2) *Collective memory and local identities*; (3) *Myths, stereotypes and symbols in the context of cultural memory*; (4) *Monuments and Architecture as sites of memory and Cultural Heritage*; and (5) *Sources of memory: memories, music, poems and interviews*. These were preceded by the opening general session, which included speeches by representatives of the three founding institutions of the Dialog Project: the Russian Immanuel Kant University in Kaliningrad, the Polish Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, and the German European University Viadrina in Frankfurt am Oder. Russian academics delivered the opening speeches. Valerij Galcov's speech was about Internet-based research on the identity of Kaliningrad Oblast while Marina Šenderiuk considered the aspects of methodology and informational query in research on regional identities. Unfortunately, both showed that cultural memory research in Russia is a novel and developing field of academic interest that does not adopt the newest approaches and remains based on the original French research position.

The first session included four speeches. Ilja Dementev presented his research on Kaliningrad Oblast as a point of junction of different national sites of memory; Natalja Andrejčuk examined an intermingling of cultural memory and identity. She also presented the state of the discipline in Russia. Afterwards, Yvonne Pörzgen explained the phenomena of the varied identity of Kaliningrad, referring to its German past and Russian presence. Then, Piotr Zariczny presented his research on the press' influence on cultural memory and national identities, describing his self-formulated proposition of a research procedure. The session confirmed academic divisions between different states in a preferred approach to understand the concept of cultural memory and the factors of its influence on society and politics. However, it was a valuable opportunity to become familiar with the distinct methodologies applied in Germany, Poland, and Russia to recognize the issues associated with cultural memory.

The second session was composed of five speeches. The keynote speech was delivered by Beata Lakeberg and dealt with the issue of the presence of collective memory narrations in Silesian regional calendars. Katarzyna Woniak, who referenced the transformation of the local, socially shared understanding of Liberation Day in a comparative perspective, delivered the second speech. Afterwards, Roland Cerny-Werner (representing the Universität Salzburg) presented the cultural and political aspects of the new demarcation of the state's borders after World War II in the context of the division of the Roman Catholic dioceses. He also considered these changes in the wider context of German-Polish relations and state-church relations in communist states. Then, Olga Kurilo aired her hypotheses about identity changes and different (past and present) memory landscapes in Kaliningrad Oblast, exploring the cases of local

Baltic Sea resorts. Finally, V. Maslov, P. Polch and L. Gimbickaja, Russian academics, presented the results of their collective research project about the toponymy of Kaliningrad Oblast and its influence on local cultural memory and regional identity. This session was an interesting instruction in a few different procedures for examining the cultural memory as a justification of local identities, and a general correlation between these two phenomena was shown thanks to the different case studies that were presented.

Roman Bäcker was supposed to deliver the introductory speech to the third session about the influence of historical myths on the national identity, but, unfortunately, he canceled, limiting the session to only three papers. The first speech was delivered by Patryk Wawrzyński about the presence of politics of memory in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Polish foreign policy, and included a review of the different visions of its usage. Afterwards, Konrad Tschäpe delivered a presentation about German and Soviet stereotypes during World War II and their impact on the images of enemy in the cultural memory of these two societies. Then, Larissa Gawrilina spoke about the adaptation of the structuralist approach, as well as the role of symbols and symbolic communication in the formation of texts about Kaliningrad. Regardless of abbreviated session and absence of Bäcker, a prominent Polish political scientist, the session presented fascinating propositions for understanding the role of memory as a confirmation of political phenomena and processes. Moreover, the session ignited a keen discussion about the consequences of the usage of memory narrations on relations between nations and states.

The following session included four speeches about spatial representations of memory with an opening paper by Hans-Christian Pust about iron monuments (a specific form of German paying homage) from the time of World War I and its political meaning after the capitulation of the State. The second speech, which was delivered by Gennadij Kretinin, was a presentation about military sites of memory and graveyards in Kaliningrad Oblast. Afterwards, Dominika Czarnecka presented her research on numerous monuments to the Red Army in Poland in first years after the collapse of communist regime. She attempted to present a change in the social recognition of these monuments as a symbol of gratitude to a symbol of contempt. Irina Belinceva then examined the peculiarity of Kaliningrad architecture in a social context, showing the transformation of Russians' recognition of historically German monuments in a region from "alien" to "own." Although I will not belittle the competences of the speakers, during the session a narrow approach to exploring the phenomenon of memorial sites prevailed. In spite of the interesting speeches, the wider context of socially shared knowledge and presumptions was missing because the speakers paid attention solely to spatial representations (which are different sites of memorials), without recognizing them as a part of social phenomena.

During the last session, different methodological approaches to issues of cultural memory, especially those concerning informational queries, were presented. Jurij Kostjašov presented the possibilities of the usage of memoirs; Larissa Emelianova – of interviews; Michał Mrugalski – poems; and Michael F. Runowski – music, especially

funeral marches and epitaphs. Only the last presentation included an innovative approach; the preceding presentations were just a reconstruction or adaptation of well-established and commonly used methods. This session also presented serviceable propositions for research procedures that may be used to examine problems related to cultural memory.

Recapitulating, the Third Trialog Conference in Kaliningrad was a fruitful meeting of academics from Germany, Poland, and Russia. The conference facilitated an open debate between research from these states (and from Austria). The Immanuel Kant University plans to publish the contributions of participants as a Russian-language book in 2012. It is safe to say that the book will be an important source for Russian academic society and may be the beginning of an important discussion or a contribution to the development of local studies on cultural memory. It is proper to congratulate organizers on a successful and productive meeting.

Judyta Węglowska

**A REPORT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC  
CONFERENCE *USTRÓJ TERYTORIALNY PAŃSTWA*  
*A DECENTRALIZACJA SYSTEMU WŁADZY PUBLICZNEJ*  
[TERRITORIAL SYSTEM AND DECENTRALIZATION  
OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT] (TORUŃ, 14<sup>th</sup> MAY 2012)**

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 2012 an international academic conference *Ustrój terytorialny państwa a decentralizacja systemu władzy publicznej* [Territorial System and Decentralization of the Central Government] was held in Toruń. In Collegium Maxium, a fine building of the Nicolaus Copernicus University, eminent scholars gathered to discuss the issues connected primarily with the Polish territorial system. The conference was held on the fifteenth anniversary of passing the Constitution of the Republic of Poland.

The main organizer of the event was the Centre for Eastern Studies and the Department of Polish Political System of the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies at the Nicolaus Copernicus University.

The conference was opened by Alfred Lutrzykowski PhD, who was the academic supervisor of the event. In the first part of the meeting took part Adam Marszałek, PhD – chairman of Adam Marszałek Publishing House, Prof. Andrzej Radziński, PhD – Rector of Nicolaus Copernicus University. The conference was also graced by the presence of the Deputy Senate Marshal – Senator Jan Wyrowiński, who spoke about the priorities that local governments should establish for themselves. The next speakers were Marian Fręckiewicz, Chairman of the City Council of Toruń, Mirosław Graczyk, Starost of the Toruń District, and Prof. Roman Bäcker, Dean of the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies. After those initial speeches, the floor was given to the academics who presented their papers.