Both in the Polish and Russian language the term 'nation' is understood in a slightly different way than the English word 'nation'. It is understood not only in cultural but also political terms, and in numerous contexts it is used to denote 'the people' or an 'ethnic nation/ethnos'. Thus, when we use words 'nation, nationality, narodnost', sometimes only the context makes it possible to decide whether we mean the nation, nation or ethnos.

However, this lack of clear distinction in the colloquial discourse should not make one conclude that there are not fully shaped nations in Poland and Russia. It is just that the colloquial discourse fails to notice these vague distinctions. In the scientific discourse in both countries, these differentiations have been precisely defined and used for a long time.¹

As it is generally accepted by all researchers, modern Polish and Russian nationalist movements, are incredibly diverse, and to much extent dispersed

and marginalized. And exceptionally some of them pass the threshold of inclusion into the political system. This means that they are not relatively uniform, and it is impossible to find a movement, which could be defined as the most representative in terms of its political importance. Therefore, it is necessary to search for some common features of various ideological and political trends present in both countries.

The first of them is, elementary for any social group, opposition between ‘we’ and ‘others’. Others are all those who do not belong to our in-group, they are different from us, and therefore they should be perceived and thus treated in a different way. In case of small social groups (e.g. Gemeinschaft) such a distinction is made through measuring the sense of emotional closeness and distance. In case of communities typical for large social groups, the situation is slightly different. Social bonds are then mediated and face-to-face relationships are impossible – therefore emotional ties are not of personal nature. They can only be mediated through symbols, irrespective whether they are of personal (common ancestor, charismatic leader etc.) or reified nature. In such a case, ‘the other’ is distinguished from ‘the ours’ through some symbolic identity determinants – whether it may be attire, language (or even particular phrases – usually greetings), or any other symbolic determinants of social identity.

If such a distinction is missing, a social group ceases to exist. The nation is a large social group categorized as Gemeinschaft. It differs from this kind of groups with relatively small number of characteristics, out of which the most important include totality, permanency and the existence of extensive historical myths. The latter are also of political importance.

A national, ethnic or political community cannot exist without myths. Usually they are myths of genesis, myths of advantages over others (victorious battles or wars, but also myths of some eminent persons or the whole nation) as well as images of ‘the other/the alien’. Depending of the prevalence of expansion or defense tendencies, either inclusive or exclusive myths begin to dominate. On the one hand, national myths constitute a principal com-

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ponent of the national consciousness and on the other, they become the resources out of which national ideology is created. The more developed the national myths are the richer a particular ideology may become. The basic issue is the question how it presents the nation. The image cannot be impartial, it cannot expose the nation's own ignobility or especially its crimes. The latter is admissible only within a mature form of patriotism which allows the awareness of the necessity of co-operation with other nations within the frame of a larger community, e.g. that of a continental nature. However, it is impossible to discuss a classic Eastern-European nationalism in this context. Thus the principal question is: to which extent the national historical myths, which have political importance, contribute to purification or sacralization of the nation? Purification means here the tendency to disregard negative elements in one's own history, and if it is impossible, to relativize or diminish them. Sacralization means then perception of one's own national tradition as something sacred and immaculate. If there happens to be any incidents that must be negatively evaluated, they are perceived as the result of operations carried out by some hostile forces or nationally external/foreign elements. Sacralization is then close to the totalitarian political gnosis with its ontological dualism that is a sharp distinction between the world of good and the world of evil.

To which extent sacralization or purification of national tradition occur in the Polish and Russian nationalist thought? The answer is far from being simple. It generally depends on the type of a given trend in political thinking since nationalism is neither homogenous phenomenon, nor does it blend with other trends.

Generally, nationalist movements connected with religion are pretty strong: that connected with the Orthodox faith in Russia, and that associated with Catholicism in Poland. In Russia, the most significant representative of this trend was Ioann, the metropolitan of Petersburg and Ladoga. In Poland, in turn, the best known 'personage' is a monk Tadeusz Rydzyk, the head of the “Maryja” Radio.

In Russia, the movement of the orthodox religious nationalism tends to link closely the sacralization of the Rusia's state territory with sacralization of the state itself and nationalization of the Eastern Orthodox Church. It directly expresses both a messianic and prospective myth of the Third Rome. The task of the Russian nation is to save all humanity. Even though it is
impossible just now, then at least the intact deposit of the Orthodox faith should be preserved. Since the Russian nation is a “God’s message carrier” [?] Bogonośca, so it has the same task as the „Chosen Nation” once led out from the Egyptian captivity. The prospective messianism is closely connected with xenophobic fear of more developed civilization centers.

In Poland, the movement of nationalist Catholicism idealizes the national past of Poles through overrating those events which prove the nation’s grandeur. However, the importance or even existence of facts which would distort the image of the beautiful and sinless catholic Polish nation are not mentioned or even sometimes totally denied. Thus, not only is the fact of murder committed by Poles on Jews in a town of Jedwabne (1941) negated, but it is in all possible way proved that the evidence was planted by ‘the other’, that is Jews and Stalinists.³

Purification of the national tradition in this case is strongly linked with xenophobia and anti-Semitism. “The others” though are not only other nations, but also broadly understood supporters of Europe, Masons and liberals. The latter – irrespective of the level of customary conservatism – are identified not with democracy or free market, but with freethinkers who do not respect any values. All of them are the tools of the secret center of evil that aims at enslavement of the Polish nation through subjection to the Western idols of the money and hedonism. However, in its essence, the Polish nation is good, wise and merciful. It is enough to cut off the influences of the West and turn to traditional Christian values and traditions. Both in a Polish and Russian version of religious nationalism, we have to do more with sacralization than purification of the nation.

In Russia and in Poland, somewhere at the margin of ideological life appear followers of the Pan-Slavic idea with its slogan of unification of all Slavs due to not only their common origin or blood bonds but also due to some imaginary community of culture and tradition. In Russia this way of thinking is represented by Jevgienij Troickij Nikolay Kikieshev, and in Poland – Bolesław Tejkowski and his collaborator Barbara Krygier who are better known for their anti-Semitic declarations.

Naturally, Russia is entitled to the role of the leader of the Slavic movement and nobody else is able to deprive it of this task for good, since the Russian idea is ‘conciliatory’ in nature and therefore adequate to unite all Slavic-brothers. The most important concept here is the ethnos. Such nation is attributed with all positive characteristics. Troickij writes openly: “The real patriotism of the nation (Russian) has always been innately linked with humanism, mercy and general human values”. This belief supplemented with the myth about the liberation of Slavic nations from the Turkish or German invaders by the Russian nation makes the conclusion quite overt. The modern Pan-Slavism is the movement that sacralizes the Russian national tradition and, in spite of its non-statocratic nature it legitimizes the imperial tendencies of Moscow.

In the modern communist thought, both in Polish and Russian one, the nation is traditionally identified with the working class, and its purpose is the liberation from capitalist oppression. At the same time, some relatively new phrases appear in the discourse. For instance, in the program of the Polish Socialist Workers’ Party it is declared that the main goal of this organization is to protect national interests of Poland as the warranty of the Motherland’s security and its full sovereignty. In this case, the protest against Poland’s accession to the NATO and EU is meant. Thus, this full sovereignty is to facilitate communists to take over the authority. The category of the nation is then subordinated to the communist political gnosia. In the programs of Russian communists, the necessity to create a political system that suits the national spirit is mentioned. The core of such spirit is an imperialistic ideology, narodnost’, patriotism and internationalism. The ease of linking imperialistic ideology with internationalism is the result of referring to the soviet tradition and Russian empire. It is a blend of Marxism-Leninism and nationalistic statocratism. In both cases the nation

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is sacralized only in the form of imaginary entity, the entity which will develop as a result of creative actions carried out by imperious communist parties. However, whereas Russian communists mean first of all the soviet nation – the nation that used to live in the territory of more or less the former Soviet Union, the Polish communists dream rather about peoples all over the world that would achieve the model of Chinese communism.

In turn, the conception of the Polish and Russian fascists seems less complicated. Alexander Barkashov – a long-standing leader of the Russian National Unity, identifies the Russian Nation with the absolute good. Such a nation can be created only by those who know historical truth, and at the same time oppose the devilish Jewish evil and the powers subordinated to it, such as the USA and Israel. Thus Russia should be purified from ethnic foreigners/aliens so that the holy Russian land could be totally devoted to the absolute good. This mode of thinking is less noticeable in the programs of Polish fascist organizations, for example in the publications of the National Revival of Poland.

What is typical for all the above mentioned nationalist trends in thinking is the belief in the existence of high, moral and spiritual values, a huge development potential and an array of other great properties unique exclusively for our one’s own nation. In this case, other nations, particularly the western ones, are deprived of such qualities and thus our nation should be perceived as the one that takes natural, moral and cultural precedence over others. All these nationalist tendencies, to less extent purify, and to more extent sacralize one’s own nation. This refers both to historical and prospective myths. The myth of the present, in turn, is usually composed within the motif of struggle against the prevailing powers of the evil ‘other’.

What is unique for both Russian and Polish ideological tendencies is the lack of meaningful differences between them. Thus we have to do here with parallel and frequently analogical ways of thinking irrespective of the phraseology applied or topics that appear in particular myths. Purification and sacralization of one’s own nation are then just categories that denote the power of their positive stereotypes. There are no differences between the particular nations – presumably not only between the Polish and Russian ones.

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And the final conclusion: sacralization, or to less extent – purification, of one's own nation helps to create at least partly imaginary entity. Therefore any attempt to diagnose the condition of the nation in a relatively objective manner without concurrent reference to the external doer of the negative deeds means the destruction of the myth of this imaginary nation. Without such an attempt, in turn, it is difficult to achieve the threshold of political representation. Therefore, nationalist movements in Poland, and in Russia, are as such rather doomed to marginality.