

JOLANTA ŻYNDUL
Panstwo w Panstwie?:
autonomia narodowo-kulturalna w Europie Środkowo-wschodnej w XX wieku
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Jolanta Żyndul's *Panstwo w Panstwie?: autonomia narodowo-kulturalna w Europie Środkowo-wschodnej w XX wieku* incorporates recent developments in the fields of Jewish and minority studies in Poland and elsewhere. Representing a new generation and making use of multilingual archival materials from Polish and Israeli sources, Żyndul integrates the best of various traditions and scholarly discourses into her scholarship.

The book is important for the popular and academic reader and deals with ideas that are often neglected in the modern national state. The concept of non-territorial autonomy was first formulated by Austro-Marxists as a solution to the national problems of the Habsburg Empire. Only after World War I and the collapse of three major European empires did the issue come to the fore in the field of practical politics. Żyndul's work enables readers to re-examine an old hypothesis as the text generates a new and more complex understanding of questions of autonomy in East Central Europe. Though concentrating on national cultural autonomy as a political and ideological concept, the book goes beyond the boundaries of Jewish history and brings to light discussion on the overall phenomenon of autonomy for minorities. The book demonstrates that ideas for solving the Jewish question cannot be analyzed separately from general all-Polish or global developments in the arena of international minorities protection. Moreover, a wider contextual evaluation demonstrates the methodological advantages for regional analysis of the situation in former territories of the Austro-Hungarian, German, and Russian empires.

The author explores a variety of sources while focusing attention on numerous books, memoirs, documents, and newspapers dealing with the ideological genesis of national cultural autonomy. The inception of that idea, as well as the political application of the non-territorial autonomy theory (in Poland, Ukraine, and the Baltic States) became a contextual framework for analyzing the different states' politics toward minorities in countries aiming to implement the 'national cultural autonomy project' for more than half a century.

The book consists of five chapters. The first examines national cultural autonomy as a means for solving the Jewish question; Chapter 2 studies the Minorities Treaty; Chapter 3 explores national cultural autonomy as it affected the Jewish minority in the Second Polish Republic; Chapter 4 investigates national cultural autonomy in German political programs and in the European Congress of the Minority Congress; and Chapter 4 analyses national cultural autonomy in the second half of the twentieth century.

More specifically, in Chapter 1 Żyndul looks at the origins of the call for Jewish cultural autonomy among Zionists, Austrian socialists, and Jewish leftist parties in the tsarist empire. She explores Simon Dubnow's concept of autonomy while also investigating the Russian February Revolution and the place of autonomy in its events, and gives two examples of ways in which Ukraine and Lithuania attempted to implement autonomous policies. The author demonstrates deep knowledge of Jewish political thought and party programs at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

Chapter 2 presents an overview of negotiations for the Paris Peace Treaty and the Minorities Treaty, exploring Polish Jewish affairs and citing relevant issues behind the problem of Polish adherence to the principles elaborated in the latter treaty.

Chapter 3, well based and argued cogently, deals with attempts to implement national cultural autonomy for Jews in the Second Polish Republic. The text deals with issues related to the Provisional Jewish National Council, Jewish communities, language rights, and the National Curia.

Chapter 4 is concerned with issues of national cultural autonomy in German political programs and in the agenda of the European National Minorities Congress; the problems of the Weimar Republic and its policies toward minorities; national cultural autonomy in Estonia and Latvia; the concept of the national state as described by Paul Schiemann; the Union of German national groups in Europe; German minority politics of Gustav Stresemann in 1924–1929; the European Congress of National Minorities; and lastly, German policies toward minorities after 1933.

Chapter 5 explains national cultural autonomy, as defined by the author, in the second part of the twentieth century: Żyndul describes repatriation of minorities during and after World War II; policies toward minorities in East Central Europe, including in the 1990s; minorities in international law; and issues related to the Roma.

The text is logically structured and easy to follow, and the author has masterfully put together a variety of diverse sources. This was not an easy task to accomplish as the subject is complex, emotional, and still politically charged in many countries of the region. Żyndul's balanced story is thus an exception in a field of one-sided interpretations of this aspect of history; other texts rarely transcend narrow 'national' explanations.

Żyndul interprets national cultural autonomy broadly as it applies to the legislation given by the state to the hands of national minorities, primarily with relation to cultural affairs. Her broad interpretation of cultural national autonomy allows for an interpretation of very different manifestations of minorities rights as national cultural autonomy. In reality, this definition can serve only a very limited number of practical applications. The term is a product of its own time and of a peculiar post-imperial environment. This vague interpretation contradicts the forms of autonomy for non-territorial minorities that sprung immediately after the end of World War I in such distinct environments as Ukraine in 1918, the Second Polish Republic, and Estonia, among others. Following the author's explanations and cases presented for analysis, we come to understand that the existence of autonomous culture apart from that of the majority—be it in the U.K., Italy, or Germany—should be understood as national cultural autonomy. In actuality, as is true for non-territorial autonomy, an attempt to build a medieval corporate structure for Jews, as existed in Lithuania, should be treated as a clear-cut example of cultural autonomy. Inevitably, more precise conceptualization of the issues related to metanalysis of the national cultural autonomy could have served, in Żyndul's text, for more exact sorting of the definitions.

As a result, the author employed large-scale generalizations that are more often characteristic of the political science approach, though not exclusively limited to it. Her research into archival sources for national cultural autonomy in Poland and Israel could have served the purpose of the book better had the subject been analyzed from a narrower 'national' perspective; a fault of the book is that the author tried to apply her theory to all of East Central Europe.

The chronological scope of the book is broad. It discusses the issues of half a century, exploring events that took place in the lives of two or three generations. The different way the concept of autonomy was applied and the specific institutional solutions create a bewildering situation in the interwar period, not to speak about the situation after the World War II are ideologically stemming from the same writings and political decisions of the political groups. The lack of country-specific archival research (apart from the Polish and, to some extent, the German case) is felt strongly as well. Many

secondary sources and interpretations, especially for the Baltic countries, have become outdated. The author does not go beyond traditional treatment of Jewish autonomy in the Baltics, and especially in Lithuania, a region in which she believes the advancement of political animosities of the elite toward Jewish autonomy decided the fate of the social experiment. Her archival research in Estonia, Ukraine, Latvia, and Lithuania might instead have offered an substantial analysis of the cases of individual countries.

Nonetheless, the many strengths of the book easily outweigh its shortcomings. Żyndul's study remains a welcome and important serious attempt to discuss the difficult theoretical problems of national cultural autonomy by contemporaries. Above all, the volume sheds light and brings a good amount of new material to the subject of dealing emotionally with the many perceptions of the minority by the majority and the treatment of minorities by governments. The consequences were not always welcoming. The enthusiasm and knowledge, obvious fondness, and dedication of the author to this subject will, however, be felt by the reader. Ultimately, this book will have a key place in any examination of the interesting and undervalued subject of national cultural autonomy.

SARUNAS LIEKIS
Mykolas Romeris University
Vilnius Yiddish Institute