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Prometheanism and its "incarnations"

Prometeizm i jego „inkarnacje”

ABSTRACT:

This essay is a modest attempt to trace the “incarnations” of Promethean thought that emerged in Poland in the interwar and postwar periods, during the Cold War, and especially after the collapse of communist ideology in Poland and the dismemberment of the USSR. The circle around Jerzy Giedroyc in Paris, the intellectual engagement of the former activists of the Promethean networks in various anti-communist groups during the Cold War, and the protagonists of the Intermarium concept had common elements with the classical Prometheanism of the interwar period. The active support of students from Ukraine, Belarus, and the republics of the Caucasus and Central Asia by Polish educational institutions could be seen as a cultural dimension of certain neo-Promethean romantics. The conclusion is based on my own experience within the international scientific community of Prometheanism research since 2008.

KEYWORDS:

Prometheanism, network, Caucasus, Russia, Turkey

STRESZCZENIE:

Niniejszy esej jest próbą prześledzenia „wcielen” myśli prometejskiej, które pojawiły się w Polsce w okresie międzywojennym i powojennym, w czasie zimnej wojny, a zwłaszcza po upadku ideologii komunistycznej w Polsce i rozpadzie ZSRR. Krąg skupiony wokół Jerzego Giedroycia w Paryżu, intelektualne zaangażowanie byłych działaczy sieci prometejskich w różnych grupach antykomunistycznych w okresie zimnej wojny oraz protagoniści koncepcji Intermarium mieli wspólne elementy z klasycznym prometeizmem okresu międzywojennego. Aktywne wspieranie

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studentów z Ukrainy, Białorusi, republik Kaukazu i Azji Środkowej przez polskie instytucje edukacyjne może być postrzegane jako kulturowy wymiar niektórych neoprometejskich romantyków. Konkluzja ta opiera się na moim własnym doświadczeniu w międzynarodowym środowisku naukowym zajmującym się badaniami nad prometeizmem od 2008 roku.

KEYWORDS:

prometeizm, losy, Kaukaz, Rosja, Turcja

Prometheanism was an unofficial strategy of at least one segment of the Polish ruling elites, diplomats, and high-ranking intelligence officers towards the Soviet Union in the interwar period. Its long-term goal was to destroy or at least significantly weaken the Soviet Union by providing financial, moral, and infrastructural support to the representatives of non-Russian activists, former politicians, and military personnel who fled from Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Crimea, Central Asia, Volga and the Kozak region, as well as the Northern Caucasus, after these parts of the world were occupied by the Red Army in 1919–1921 and incorporated into Bolshevik Russia, which later became the Soviet Union. Prometheanism was not an ideology: While its beginnings were rooted in the history of the Partitions of Poland in the 18th century, the uprisings against the oppressors and the activities of the Hotel Lambert, the circle around Prince Czartoryski in the 19th century, and Polish literary Romanticism, Promethean strategy in the early 20th century and especially in the interwar period reflected the geopolitical situation and internal political divisions. Prometheanism had an external and an internal dimension, and the concept was somewhat fortunate that its protagonists were in power and not in opposition like the Polish National Democrats (*endecja*). The Prometheans saw the main source of instability and threat as coming from Soviet Russia and then the USSR, and were less critical of Germany than the National Democrats around Roman Dmowski. On the domestic front, Joseph Pilsudski's circle sought to consolidate the multi-ethnic and multi-denominational Second Republic. Prometheanism had to forge a Polish-Ukrainian nexus. Therefore, Prometheanism should be understood as a supra-confessional and supra-ethnic concept.

The literature on Prometheanism is now abundant¹. I argue that scholarly research and semi-academic engagement with the history of Prometheanism, its agencies, institutions, etc., have contributed to the popularisation of knowledge about the phenomenon and even helped to create a certain aura of revitalisation of its ideas, which is certainly not the case. For this reason, it is important to briefly review the main trends in the historiography of Prometheanism. The aim of this article is not to classify all the literature of and about Prometheanism², a modest attempt to do so was made in my monograph on Prometheanism, published in 2022 by Franz Steiner Verlag in Stuttgart³. In this study, I would like to touch on the "incarnations" of the phenomenon throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. With regard to the incarnations, it should be added that Pawel Libera, who was preoccupied with the question of "Prometheanism after Prometheanism"⁴, so, this contribution does not claim to be pioneering.

As a rule, the literature touches on various aspects of the Prometheanism, but there is a small number of publications that focus on the network's activity as a whole; both its Polish "part" and other non-Polish Prometheanisms. The reason for this, perhaps the most important one, is the plurality of languages in which the sources and Promethean discourses took place⁵.

¹ More on Prometheanism: T. Snyder, *Sketches from a secret war: a Polish artist's mission to liberate Soviet Ukraine*, Yale 2007; R. Schattkowsky, *Osteuropaforschung in Polen 1918–1939*, Wiesbaden 2019; Z. Gasimov, *Warschau gegen Moskau. Prometheistische Aktivitäten zwischen Polen, Frankreich und der Türkei 1918–1939*, Stuttgart 2022; M.R. Garboś, *The Clash of Internationalisms: Prometheism, National Communism, and the Fate of the Soviet Borderlands, 1889–1939*, Diss. Harvard University, 2021; A. Turkowski, *A return to prometheanism: The space of opinion on Polish–Russian relations in postcommunist Poland*, "Europe-Asia Studies" 75 (2023), no. 4, pp. 675–699.

² I would like to thank Slawomir Lukasiewicz and the entire staff of the journal for inviting me to write this article and for providing me with amazing, detailed, and intellectually challenging feedback on the first draft of my paper.

³ Z. Gasimov, *Warschau gegen Moskau. Prometheistische Aktivitäten zwischen Polen, Frankreich und der Türkei 1918–1939*, Stuttgart 2022, pp. 30–44.

⁴ P. Libera, *Prometeizm po prometeizmie. Zarys historii ruchu prometejskiego po 1939 roku*, "Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość" 1 (2022), no. 39, pp. 40–64.

⁵ Of course, the main discourses in the Polish media in the interwar period, the correspondence between Polish activists, etc., took place in Polish. Journals such as "Wschód", "Biuletyn Polsko-Ukraiński", etc., the important programmatic writings of Włodzimierz Baczkowski and other Polish Prometheanists, were published in Polish. The majority of secondary literature, especially on Polish-Ukrainian relations in the last three decades, was published in Polish. The Russian language is of paramount importance: The Promethean journals of the Kozaks, North Caucasians, and Kalmyks were published in Russian. The

The Polish historians Józef Lewandowski⁶ and later Sergiusz Mikulicz⁷ provided the first outlines of the network. Lewandowski published his articles on Prometheanism before emigrating from Poland to Sweden in 1969. Mikulicz wrote several articles and a monograph, the very first. All these works were written according to the spirit of the times. In this context, it is worth mentioning the monograph on the life and work of one of the most important Polish Prometheanists, Tadeusz Holowko. The author of the monograph was Iwo Werschler (1932–2015). The book was published in 1984 and was based on his doctoral thesis which he defended at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań in 1979. Compared to the works of Lewandowski and Mikulicz, it was remarkably less ideological⁸. Rychard Woytak, a Polish-born American historian of Eastern Europe, also published an article on Prometheanism in 1984⁹. Woytak certainly approached it differently. Interested in the Polish secret services of the interwar period and during World War II, which greatly influenced Woytak's own life, he described the Promethean networks

main opponent of the interwar Prometheanists, the Paris-based "Dni", was also published in Russian. Russian is also the language of a large part of the research literature on Caucasian emigration in general, on Russian-Polish relations. French was the language of the main Promethean publication, "Le Prométhée", and, along with Russian, was an important language of correspondence among Prometheanists. "Tryzub" and a large number of other journals associated with and opposed to Prometheanism were published in Ukrainian, one of the essential languages for the study of Promethean networks. Azerbaijani Promethean magazines like "Yeni Kafkasya", "Azerbaycan Yurt Bilgisi", "Odlu Yurt", etc., were published in Turkish, as were some of the North Caucasian news outlets. The same was true of Central Asian journals founded in Istanbul in the 1930s. Turkish is also an important language for the study of memoir literature. The Crimean Tatar activist Cafer Seydahmet published both his memoirs and his diary in Turkish. The Georgian Prometheanists and their Georgian opponents had several important journals, mostly based in Paris between the wars. They were all published in Georgian, which was also the language of correspondence between the circle of Noe Jordania, the government in exile, and Georgian activists throughout Europe and beyond. Armenian Prometheanism did not emerge despite the contacts of the 1930s, but the Armenian diaspora media was an important source for studying the perception of Prometheanism "from the outside". There were short-lived Promethean journals in Finland, such as "Turan", published in Turkish and Finnish, the Finnish part of which remains largely unexplored.

⁶ J. Lewandowski, „Prometeizm” – koncepcja polityki wschodniej pilsudczyzny, "Biuletyn WAP" 1958, no. 2, pp. 100–138.

⁷ S. Mikulicz, *Prometeizm w polityce II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warsaw 1971.

⁸ I. Werschler, *Z dziejów obozu belwederskiego. Tadeusz Hołowko – życie i działalność*, Warsaw 1984.

⁹ R. Woytak, *The Promethean Movement in Interwar Poland*, "East European Quarterly" 18 (1984), no. 3, pp. 273–278.

with great passion and fascination. About 10 years after Woytak's article, the French Turkologist Etienne Copeaux published his amazing study on Prometheanism¹⁰. His main focus was on Turkic communities, on the activity of Azeri and Tatar protagonists in Istanbul, in Romanian Dobrogea, and in the Crimea. His main sources were the articles of Woytak and then the Turkish and Azerbaijani media of the 1920s–30s. I had the honour and the opportunity to communicate with Etienne Copeaux at the very beginning of my postdoctoral research on Prometheanism. He wrote to me that he had decided to leave the subject because of the lack of Polish competence. Nevertheless, his article, with its strong focus on Turkic discourses and deep knowledge of Ottoman and Turkish history, was not only well received but also intensively read.

In 2000, three Polish historians, Grzegorz Mazur, Andrzej Grzywacz, and Marcin Kwiecień, edited and published the documents, writings, and letters of Edmund Charaszkiewicz, a Polish high-ranking military official responsible for Promethean tasks¹¹. This collection of documents remains of the utmost importance for the study of the network's past.

In 2005, Yale University Press published a book by Timothy Snyder, *Sketches from a Secret War: A Polish Artist's Mission to Liberate Soviet Ukraine*. This book focused on Prometheanism as a cultural history of Polish-Ukrainian rapprochement amidst the interethnic tensions of interwar Poland as well as the restraints in the political relations between Warsaw and Moscow. Snyder "internationalised" the issue of Prometheanism, spreading the knowledge about this Polish concept. The book was republished several times and translated into several Eastern European languages. The popularity and fame of Snyder's fascinating book also brought fame and popularity to the phenomenon of Prometheanism, and the Polish concept entered the history of European political concepts.

The volume edited by Marek Kornat and published by the Polish Academy of Sciences in 2012, was an important step in the attempt to approach the history of Prometheanism, its networks, important institutions, agencies

¹⁰ E. Copeaux, *Le mouvement prométhéen*, "Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée Orientale et le Monde Turco-Iranien" 16 (1993), pp. 9–45.

¹¹ A. Grzywacz, M. Kwiecień, G. Mazur (eds.), *Edmund Charaszkiewicz. Zbiór dokumentów pplk. Edmunda Charaszkiewicza*, Cracow 2000.

and actors from different perspectives¹². While Lewandowski, Mikulicz, Komar, and Woytak, and to some extent Copeaux, attempted to outline the entire network in the form of an article or a monograph, Kornat organised a conference in Warsaw and then edited the volume with articles written mostly by members of the “community” of Promethean scholars, both international and Polish.

The numerous publications in the journals “Nowy Prometeusz” and “Pro Georgia” provided essential material on the Promethean variety. Thanks to the research of Sławomir Łukasiewicz¹³ and other colleagues, we know more not only about the rich history of Polish exile communities in the West but also about their mental maps, ideas, and entanglements with “classical” Prometheanism. Jan Pisulinski, Jan Jacek Bruski, and Łukasz Dryblak provided important research on Ukrainian-Polish relations in a general context¹⁴. Prometheanism was an important part of this framework, but of course not the only one. The Polish-Ukrainian nexus was and is of paramount importance for understanding Prometheanism, its emergence and development, and partly also its end. The Second Republic had millions of ethnic Ukrainians within its borders, and that was very different from the hundreds of Georgian, Azeri, or North Caucasian soldiers or emigrants on Polish soil. The integrative effect of Prometheanism also had to help Warsaw solve its internal problems with the wide range of very different political agendas within the huge Ukrainian community. The works of the above-mentioned Polish historians are in-depth analyses of the very dynamic Polish strategy towards Ukraine, the Ukrainian communities in Poland itself, in the USSR, and in European exile.

From today’s perspective, Prometheanism remains one of the most unique, prominent, and interesting Polish contributions to European thought. It was not just a strategy for supporting Georgian exiles in the Paris neighbourhoods

¹² M. Kornat (ed.), *Ruch prometejski i walka o przebudowę Europy Wschodniej (1918–1940): studia i szkice*, Warsaw 2012.

¹³ S. Łukasiewicz, *Trzecia Europa. Polska myśl federalistyczna w Stanach Zjednoczonych 1940–1971*, Warsaw–Lublin 2010. In English expanded version: *Third Europe. Polish Federalist Thought in the United States of America. 1949–1971*, Budapest 2016.

¹⁴ J. Pisuliński, *Kwestia ukraińska w polskiej polityce zagranicznej w latach 1918–1923*, Wrocław 2004; J.J. Bruski, *Między prometeizmem a Realpolitik. II Rzeczpospolita wobec Ukrainy Sowieckiej 1921–1926*, Cracow 2010; Ł. Dryblak, *Czy tylko prometeizm? Polityka państwa polskiego wobec wybranych kół emigracji rosyjskiej w latach 1926–1935*, “Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej” 51 (2016), no. 1, pp. 81–115.

and Azerbaijani newspapers in Istanbul, or the travels of the prominent Tatar writer and intellectual, Ayaz Iskhaki (1878–1954) to Finland and Japan to forge anti-Soviet sentiment and alliances; it was ultimately a much broader phenomenon. Polish Prometheanism deepened the engagement of Polish intellectuals with non-Russian cultures, languages, and literatures, and, of course, with Russia itself. Polish Prometheanism shaped Warsaw, and its prominent Instytut Wschodni (Institute of Eastern Studies)¹⁵, as one of the most fruitful Sovietological research centres in Europe at that time. And if we take into account the fact that the most intensive research on Russia and non-Russian nationalities in the 1920s–30s was conducted in Berlin, London, and Paris, and at some universities in Italy, Warsaw's importance in this regard had an international dimension. Roman Smal-Stockyj, a Ukrainian politician and independence activist, was born into the family of the eminent Austrian-Ukrainian linguist Stepan Smal-Stockyj, received an excellent education at European universities, and headed the Ukrainian Institute, one of several institutions in interwar Warsaw that were influenced by Prometheanism. After World War II, Smal-Stockyj emigrated to the United States and became one of the Eastern European immigrants and intellectuals who founded Eastern European studies in America. Smal-Stockyj embodied the diversity of Polish Prometheanism and its "life after death" during the Cold War. At the same time, it is also true that during the Nazi and Soviet occupations of Poland, Smal-Stockyj was neither arrested nor imprisoned in concentration camps: In German-occupied Prague, Smal-Stockyj researched and taught at the university and published a monograph, *Die Germanisch-Deutschen Kultureinflüsse im Spiegel der Ukrainischen Sprache*, meaning "The Germanic and German Cultural Influences Mirrored in the Ukrainian Language", and the whole research question should be perceived in the spirit of the time when Smal-Stockyj wrote it and the place where he did it. The book was published in Leipzig in 1942, and in 1949, a positive review of it was published by the German Orientalist Bertold Spuler¹⁶. Smal-Stockyj knew Prague; he stayed there in the early 1920s. In the interwar period, he cooperated with the Polish side and received a professorship at the University of Warsaw, and the

¹⁵ I.P. Maj, *Działalność Instytutu Wschodniego w Warszawie 1926–1939*, Warsaw 2007.

¹⁶ B. Spuler, Review of *Die Germanisch-Deutschen Kultureinflüsse im Spiegel der Ukrainischen Sprache* by Roman Smal-Stockyj, "Vierteljahrschrift Für Sozial- Und Wirtschaftsgeschichte" 38 (1949), no. 1, pp. 87–90.

aforementioned Ukrainian Institute managed to publish a number of books and pamphlets on Ukrainian literature and history. He maintained contacts with Ukrainian separatists in the Second Republic, but he belonged to the group of Ukrainian intellectuals loyal to the Polish state and enjoyed popularity among Caucasian and Central Asian Prometheanists. And apparently, this fact did not contradict his activity in German-occupied Prague. This, as well as his activities in post-war Germany and since 1947 in the USA, were closely intertwined. It shows that Polish and non-Polish Prometheanism was also intensively interwoven with other ideological concepts, geopolitical dynamics, political strategies, and, above all, with the transnational lives of Prometheanists – exiles and intellectual nomads of those troubled times. The aim of this essay is to explain the incarnations of Prometheanism; however, before attempting to do so, it is worth mentioning that there is no date for the beginning of Prometheanism, just as there is no date for the end of its existence. Several months after the Nazi troops and the Soviet Army invaded Poland from the West and East, and a part of the Polish elite had fled to London, the Caucasian and other Prometheanists continued to receive financial support from the Polish institutions. At the beginning of the 1940s, these activities could not be carried out to the same extent. But the leader of Azerbaijani political emigration in Europe, Mammad Amin Rasulzade (1884–1955), escaped from Poland to Romania with Polish diplomatic support. While a part of the Georgian political exile showed sympathy with fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, criticised Prometheanism, and was attracted by the extreme right-wing Georgian organisation Tetri Giorgi, there were Georgian Prometheanists who died in Nazi camps in occupied Poland, like the professor of Orthodox theology Grigol Peradze (1899–1942), or spent years there, like Jerzy Nakaszydze (George Nakashidze). And this was also an incarnation of Georgian Prometheanism born out of the Polish one. After the end of the war, Jerzy Nakaszydze and Roman Smal-Stockyj came together and, as Nakaszydze recalled, tried to revive and reestablish Prometheanism, but without success. However, it remains questionable whether it is possible to speak of success or failure with regard to Prometheanism. It should be noted that the Prometheans did not achieve their goal. The Soviet Union did not dissolve at that time, and on the contrary, its political and other activities, and many Prometheanists personally were targeted by the Soviet secret services already in the 1920s and 1930s. Several Ukrainian and Georgian exiles, as well as Polish politicians, involved in Promethean activities were

eliminated by Soviet agents in France and Poland at that time. The activities of others, especially from the mid-1920s, were under the control of Soviet diplomatic missions and secret services in countries such as France and Italy and especially in the Middle East. The revelations of the Soviet defector Gregorij Agabekov shocked the international community when his public interviews and books were published in the early 1930s¹⁷. These books were nothing other than an account of how the Soviet agents managed to corrupt the post offices in Persia, Afghanistan and Turkey, and how the letters and telegrams sent by the members of the Azerbaijani Musavat party, the Georgian Mensheviks, and the Armenian Dashnaks were first read by the Soviets and then could move on to Tehran, Kabul, and Istanbul.

Soviet politics and communist ideology were the most important "other" for the Prometheans. Another "other" was Russian emigration. Unfortunately, the anti-communist sentiments among the Russian emigrants did not forge a Polish-Russian connection within Prometheanism. A small exception was the brief stay of Dmitri Filosofov, Dmitri Merezhkovsky, and Zinaida Gippius in Warsaw, but it had almost no effect on the hundreds of thousands of Russian emigrants in Paris, London, Prague, and other places. The Soviet press, similar to the Russian emigre newspapers, usually argued against the Prometheans, accusing them of "separatism" and alleged Russophobia. Soviet Georgian, Azerbaijani, and other non-Russian newspapers accused "their" emigrants of alleged treason, anti-Communist activities, and other sins. They were seconded by the central Soviet media from Moscow. That is why the main focus of the Promethean media in the interwar period was devoted to anti-propaganda and anti-argumentation with regard to the reporting of the so-called Russian white emigrant periodicals, such as the Parisian "Dni", the Soviet-Russian "Izvestia" and others. On this "front" the Ukrainian newspaper "Tryzub", the Azerbaijani journals in Istanbul such as "Azerbaijan Yurt Bilgisi" and "Odlu Yurt" and many other publications in Georgian, Russian, and Ukrainian languages fought regularly with the financial support of the so-called Ekspozytura Druga¹⁸ (Second Section) in Warsaw, the main Polish headquarters of material, political, and infrastructural support for the Promethean project.

¹⁷ G. Agabekov, *Die Tscheka bei der Arbeit*, Stuttgart–Berlin–Leipzig 1932.

¹⁸ Ekspozytura nr 2 Oddziału II Sztabu Generalnego Wojska Polskiego [Second Section of the Second Department of the General Staff of the Polish Army].

The variety of languages was large. The number of people actively involved in Promethean activities was several hundred. They were all multilingual, educated in the Russian schools of the late Romanov Empire, partly also in the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires. Some of them, like the Crimean Tatar leader and activist Cafer Seydahmet (1889–1960), embodied transimperial mobility at the turn of the century. He attended high school in Istanbul, then studied law in Paris, and then in Russia. In all likelihood, Russian was the main language of communication for most Prometheans, regardless of their region of origin. And it was a paradox of history that the prominent Polish co-creators and protagonists of Prometheanism, such as Tadeusz Schaetzel or the Marshal Joseph Pilsudski himself, went through the same Russian imperial socialisation as the Kazakh Mustafa Chokay (1890–1941) or the Georgian Menshevik leader Noe Jordania. They belonged to the same generation of non-Russian subjects of the Romanov Empire who faced the aggressive russification strategies of the 1890s. In fact, the interwar Prometheans belonged to two generations: Noe Jordania, born in 1868, was 53 when the Republic of Georgia was occupied by the Red Army in February 1921, and he left for France for good. He had a solid political career in Tsarist politics as a prominent Menshevik activist and was head of the Georgian state. Ahmet Caferoglu was 21 when he read in the Ottoman newspapers about the occupation of Azerbaijan by the Red Army in April 1920. Both were born in the tsarist Caucasus: Jordania in Guria and Caferoglu in Ganja. They both studied Russian, Jordania at the University of Warsaw and Caferoglu – at the Institute of Commerce in Kyiv. Caferoglu left the Caucasus a few months before the Soviet aggression for educational purposes and moved to Istanbul. Unlike Jordania, Caferoglu was not active in either tsarist or Azerbaijani politics during the independence period between 1918 and 1920. However, he enjoyed the internal imperial mobility moving between the Caucasia, Central Asian Samarkand, and Kyiv. Similar to Jordania, Caferoglu became a Promethean in the mid-1920s, when Polish intelligence officers managed to create an amazing network of people, information agencies, newspapers, magazines, academic institutions and conferences between Paris, Warsaw, Vilnius, Istanbul, Helsinki, Constanta, and Teheran. It should be noted, however, that the main centres of Promethean activity in the interwar period remained Paris, Warsaw, and Istanbul.

After the end of World War II, Poland reappeared on the political map of Europe with new borders and a strongly consolidated communist regime at

the top in Warsaw. The absolute majority of those who were directly involved in Promethean activity either died or were outside of Poland. Jan Reychman (1910–1975), a Polish Turkologist, who was to a certain extent connected with the Promethean academic institution of the Eastern Institute (*Instytut Wschodni*), abandoned even the field of his previous research of the interwar period, Turkology and Turkology-related studies after World War II, and at the end of the 1940s and in the 1950s, he began to work on issues related to Hungary, which was part of the same socialist bloc. Any incarnation of Prometheanism in communist Poland was, of course, a tricky issue due to the oppressive framework of Polish authoritarianism and the Soviet secret services actively operating on its territory. However, the Prometheanism of the interwar period shaped and forged in Polish society a genuine interest in non-Russian nationalities, their cultures, and literatures.

Poland had certain traditions in Oriental studies, but it was Prometheanism that gave it an additional boost. Its main focus, along with Semitistics, was traditionally in Turkology due to the Turkic-speaking communities of Polish(-Lithuanian) Tatars and the Karaites. The Tatars were linguistically assimilated into Polish, but the Karaites used the Turkic Karaite language for their religious services. The most prominent Polish Turkologist in the interwar period was definitely Tadeusz Kowalski (1889–1948), who was not an active Prometheanist, but someone who was indirectly connected with the network and its activists, such as Ayaz Ishaki or Ahmet Caferoglu. Ishaki taught Turkish and Tatar at the University of Warsaw, which was affiliated with the *Instytut Wschodni*. Ishaki, Kowalski, and Caferoglu knew each other very well, and Caferoglu tried to get Kowalski out of German-occupied Warsaw during World War II by inviting him to be a professor at the University of Istanbul¹⁹. Caferoglu dedicated one of the volumes of his publications in the 1940s to Kowalski, whose disciple, Ananiasz Zajaczkowski (1903–1970), a Polish Karaite and trained Turkologist, was a frequent guest at Ahmet Caferoglu's apartment in the 1950s and 1960s. Zajaczkowski stayed in communist Poland, but interacted closely with the networks established in Warsaw in the 1930s. Zajaczkowski and the aforementioned Jan Reychman embodied different (dis)continuities within Polish educational and intellectual history before and after 1945/46. Zajaczkowski travelled to Soviet Baku,

¹⁹ M. Stachowski, Kowalski, *Caferoğlu und die Universität Stambul*, "Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları" 8 (1998), pp. 211–228.

but also to Istanbul, and he tried to maintain contacts with his colleagues in these countries. Caferoglu was an honorary member of both the Polish Academy of Sciences in the 1930s and the Ukrainian Free University in Munich in the 1950s, and he established strong ties between the University of Istanbul and Polish universities in the 1960s and 1970s.

This trend continued. In 1987, the authors, son and father Bohdan and Krzysztof Baranowski, published a profound monograph in the Polish language on the history of Azerbaijan in the prestigious edition Ossolineum in Wrocław. In the same year, their history of Georgia was published in the same edition, and in the series *History of the Countries of the World*. In the same series, Reychman published his *History of Turkey* in 1970²⁰. Both Baranowski and Reychman maintained contact with academic institutions in the Caucasian and Turkic republics of the USSR. Certainly, it was not a cooperation aimed at weakening the Soviet Union, but rather a cooperation aimed at strengthening academic ties between Poland, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and beyond. Since the 1970s, more and more Polish tourists have visited the Soviet Union, especially its southern republics. Indirectly, it was also connected with the Prometheanism of the interwar period, because one of its fields of activity was to popularise the knowledge of the non-Russian parts of the Soviet Union among Poles.

Outside of communist Poland, Prometheanism was able to enjoy much better opportunities for self-articulation. Włodzimierz Bączkowski embodied the diversity of Promethean incarnations and the continuity of interwar and postwar Prometheanism. He was born in 1905 to a Polish family in Siberia, tens of thousands of miles from Poland. Bączkowski spent his childhood and youth in Harbin, in the borderland between Russia and China, and in 1925, moved to sovereign Poland, where he began to study law at the University of Warsaw. He worked at the Instytut Wschodni and became editor-in-chief of the main Polish Promethean journal “Wschód-Orient”, which was officially founded in 1930 as the press organ of the Orientalistyczne Koło Młodych, a circle of young Orientalists. Two years later, Bączkowski founded the journal “Biuletyn Polsko-Ukraiński”, dedicated to Polish-Ukrainian relations and Ukrainian affairs, and to Ukrainian-Polish reconciliation. On the eve of the war, in August 1939, he was mobilised to the Second Department of the Supreme Commander’s Staff, and after the attack on Poland, he went

²⁰ J. Reychmann, *Historia Turcji*, Warsaw 1970.

to Romania, where he stayed until 1941. During this time, he edited the magazine "Sprawy Sowieckie". This magazine was largely a continuation of the Promethean discourse. Bączkowski then moved through Turkish territory to the Mandate of Palestine, where, based in Haifa, he continued to work for the Supreme Commander's Staff and later for the Middle East Information Centre and Continental Action. All these institutions were part of the infrastructure of the Polish Army. After World War II, Bączkowski was one of the initiators of the establishment of the Middle East Institute "Reduta" in Jerusalem, where he worked with the Polish intellectual Stanisław Swianiewicz, a professor at the University of Vilnius. At the same time, he served as an honorary cultural attaché at the Polish Embassy in Beirut. In 1955, almost 10 years after the end of World War II, Bączkowski emigrated to the United States. He visited Istanbul, where he met passionate co-prometheanists such as Crimean Tatar leader Cafer Seydahmet. Bączkowski belonged to a younger generation, that of Caferoglu. His efforts to re-establish a new form of intellectual struggle against the Soviet Union, which had become a superpower after World War II, were not successful. However, he continued to maintain contacts with other emigrants who were active in Promethean circles. Bączkowski entered the service of the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. and died in the USA in 2000. Unlike Cafer Seydahmet, Noe Jordania, and Ahmet Caferoglu, Bączkowski lived longer than the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. In 1994, he received a special award in Poland. Jordania did not return to Georgia and, like many others, died in exile in Paris.

Ahmet Caferoglu was like Jordania and Cafer Seydahmet, so he never returned to his hometown. The difference was the generation gap. Jordania and Seydahmet did not take positions in the host countries after their escape. They remained very active in their communities, interacting with politicians, intelligence services, and journalists, giving public lectures and publishing about their beloved countries, communism, Soviet ideology, and international politics. Ahmet Caferoglu came to Turkey in 1920, in the late Ottoman Empire, and studied linguistics and literature at the University of Istanbul. He was in contact with the Azerbaijani exile community and was intensively involved in Azerbaijani Prometheanist publication projects supported by the Polish side. At the same time, he was active as an academic, as a young linguist. In this respect, there are clear similarities between him and the Ukrainian Roman Smal-Stocky. Both embodied two dimensions of Prometheanism, a public, intellectual one and an academic, scientific one. In

1925, Caferoglu received a scholarship from Germany and travelled to Berlin, and then to Breslau, to conduct his doctoral research, which he completed in 1929. During this period, he published in the Prometheanist press, often under a pseudonym, and was active as a scholar. In 1929, he returned to Turkey, became a naturalised citizen, and obtained a position at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Istanbul. Three years later, he founded his own journal, "Azerbaycan Yurt Bilgisi" (1932–1934), a Prometheanist journal aimed at both an academic and a general audience. While many representatives of the Azerbaijani, North Caucasian, and Tatar communities in Istanbul were forced to leave the country in the early 1930s, Caferoglu managed to stay in the country because of his academic network. After World War II, he became one of the most prominent voices advocating Turkey's integration into NATO and its closer ties with the Western security community, and he strongly criticised the rapprochement between Ankara and Moscow that began in the mid-1960s. Caferoglu maintained contacts with Rasulzade and Seydahmet until their deaths in 1955 and 1960, respectively. He also actively cooperated with Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty in Munich, and the prominent Kazan Tatar Prometheanist and writer Ayaz Iskhaki was a frequent guest at his home. Until his retirement in 1973, Caferoglu worked as a professor of Turkish language at the University of Istanbul and became an internationally renowned Turkologist. He shaped Turkish linguistics similarly to Smal-Stockyj, who had a tremendous influence on the establishment of genuine US-American area studies on Russia and Eastern Europe. And the criticism of Russia remained stable, thoroughly elaborated and academically articulated in the public and scholarly works of both. Caferoglu maintained contacts with the Turkologists in Soviet Baku, sending them books written by Azerbaijani exiles in the 1930s and 1950s, which were made possible by the certain liberalisation of Soviet relations with the world outside the Iron Curtain during the so-called stagnation period. Caferoglu died in 1975 in Istanbul, and his list of publications is astonishingly long. Besides his 5-volume masterpiece on the history of the Turkish language, there are numerous works on Central Asian writers and intellectuals, on the history of the Caucasus, and on Crimea. In the post-war period, Caferoglu did the same job as the Warsaw-based Instytut Wschodni in inter-war Poland: The goal was to popularise knowledge of the non-Russian regions, cultures, and literatures of the Soviet Union. Another dimension, the question of representation and self-representation, became crucial for many Prometheanists, especially during the Cold War.

In the post-war period, the main centres of Promethean incarnations were shifted outside of communist Poland, and Istanbul was only one of them. The nucleus of the original Polish thought was definitely the circle around the editor-in-chief of the prominent magazine "Kultura" (1947–2000), Jerzy Giedroyc²¹. And the Maison Laffitte became a synonym for Polish geopolitical projection, for the post-war search for normality, and for reconciliation with Poland's historical neighbours. The magazine "Kultura" reshaped the postwar Polish discussion and differed from the ideas of the interwar period, which was understandable after six years of World War II, in which Poland was one of its main battlegrounds. However, Giedroyc's journalistic career began in interwar Warsaw, and he worked with the Promethean journals, with their institutions, he knew people personally and maintained contacts both with them, scattered around the world after 1945, and with many representatives of Ukrainian, Crimean Tatar, and other intellectuals. Giedroyc did not return to the Polish Promethean formula of cooperation with all non-Russians against Moscow. He forged the so-called ULB community, focused on Ukraine (for "U"), Lithuania (for "L") and Belarus (for "B")²². These three groups of intellectuals were perceived by Giedroyc as those with whom he began to cooperate closely in order to find solutions to conflict situations in the Polish lands between various ethnic, religious, and other communities. Similar to the Prometheanists in the early 1920s, Giedroyc extended his hand to the moderately and liberally oriented Russian intellectuals, as Warsaw did by offering a stay in Poland to Filosofov, Gippius, and Merezhkovskii. Giedroyc's "Kultura" even published Russian-language issues and opened a dialogue with Russian exiles. Giedroyc and his circle wanted to build bridges²³. The Russian edition of "Kultura" featured texts on Russia, Russian culture, and Polish-Russian relations by prominent Polish intellectuals, writers, and poets such as Czesław Miłosz, Joseph Lobodowski, and others. Giedroyc published the Russian-language issues in 1960, then again in 1971 and 1981. Thus, the interest in dialogue with liberal Russian intellectuals remained

²¹ For more detail on "Kultura" see B. Wiaderny, "Schule des politischen Denkens". *Die Exilzeitschrift "Kultura" im Kampf um die Unabhängigkeit Polens 1947–1991*, Paderborn 2018.

²² P. Waingertner, *Jerzego Giedroycia idea ULB-geneza, założenia, próby realizacji. Zarys problematyki*, "Studia z Historii Społeczno-Gospodarczej XIX i XX Wieku" 15 (2015), pp. 143–159.

²³ I. Hofman, *Circles, networks, and relations of Jerzy Giedroyc and "Kultura"*, "Polish Political Science Yearbook" 50 (2021), no. 4, pp. 193–204.

stable, as well as Giedroyc's intensive cooperation with various Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Lithuanian intellectuals. Giedroyc advocated strong interest and cooperation between Poles and Ukrainians, and with the other two groups within the ULB community, and it was a clear similarity with the interwar Prometheanism. However, this cooperation should not be directed against anyone, including Russians. And that was a big difference between Giedroyc's incarnation of Prometheanism and its classical interwar version.

Certain ideas of Prometheanism could be found in the concept of *Intermarium*²⁴ (Polish: *Miedzymorze*), which had been strongly developed by numerous Eastern and Southern European intellectuals since the 1970s. It showed a different mental map of imagination, to which Poland belonged together with Croatia, Hungary, and other countries. Neither the Caucasus nor Central Asia figured prominently in this concept. The similarity was based on federalist ideas that could be found in both approaches.

As mentioned above, classical Prometheanism in the interwar period gave a boost to the development of Eastern European, Caucasian, Central Asian, and even Middle Eastern studies in Poland. After the war, when many from Communist-ruled Eastern Europe emigrated to the United States, Prometheanism inadvertently contributed to the development of Eastern European studies and so-called Sovietology in the West. Roman Smal-Stockyj personally embodied this; he became a professor at Marquette University in Milwaukee, and in 1960, he published his monograph *The Captive Nations: Nationalism of the Non-Russian Nations in the Soviet Union* in English, and in New York – the new centre of intellectual struggle against communism and the USSR. Since Pierre Bourdieu tried to draw our attention to the prefaces and the authors of the prefaces²⁵, it should be mentioned that this book by Smal-Stockyj included a preface written by Lev Dobriansky. Dobriansky was born in New York in 1918 into a family of immigrants from the Habsburg Empire. Of Ukrainian origin, he studied and received his Ph.D. from New York University and then joined Georgetown University as a professor of economics. Dobriansky was one of the strongest advocates of the Ukrainian cause and one of the most active protagonists of the National Committee

²⁴ For more on this concept, see S. Troebst, „*Intermarium*“ und „*Vermählung mit dem Meer*“: *Kognitive Karten und Geschichtspolitik in Ostmitteleuropa*, „*Geschichte und Gesellschaft*“ 28 (2002), no. 3, pp. 435–469.

²⁵ P. Bourdieu, *Les conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées*, „*Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*“ 145 (2002), pp. 3–8.

of Captive Nations. In 1952, eight years before Smal-Stockyj's monograph, Dobriansky delivered a manifesto-like address entitled *The Non-Russian Nations in the USSR*. The sub-title was *Focal Point in America's Policy of National Liberation*²⁶. Ambassador Lev Dobriansky was an active expert on the USSR for US political and military leaders, and apparently Smal-Stockyj worked closely with Dobriansky, who helped him introduce himself and his writings to the American community of decision-makers. Lev's daughter, Paula Dobriansky (born in 1955), became a decision-maker in US politics herself, working closely with the Bush Junior administration.

The two to three years between 1989 and 1991 were crucial for Eastern Europe and the rest of the world. Communist regimes fell one by one, and the Soviet Union was dismembered along the borders of its 15 republics. Baczkowski witnessed this as an old man. In 1994, he was awarded the State Prize by the order of the President of Poland. Mustafa Chokay, Ahmet Caferoglu, and the Polish protagonists Tadeusz Schaetzel and Edmund Charaszkiewicz (1895–1975) all died before the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the regaining of sovereignty in Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. After the 1989–1991 period, the writings of Chokay, Caferoglu, and, of course, those of Baczkowski, Schaetzel, and Charaszkiewicz could "return" accordingly to Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Poland. And it was definitely Poland, and especially Warsaw, that became an important place for historical and political research on Prometheanism. The close connection of the University of Warsaw with politics created an important synergy effect, so that the circle of Promethean researchers helped to shape the advice of contemporary Polish politicians, journalists, and academics. And indeed, it is possible to speak of the foundation of neo-Prometheanism. The majority of Polish scholars working on Promethean issues can be divided into two groups: those who work mainly in academia and those who combine academia with public intellectual activity. Dr. Pawel Libera represents the first group. He has published an amazing collection of sources on the entire Promethean activity in the interwar period²⁷, on Joseph Lobodowski²⁸, and on the is-

²⁶ *The Non-Russian Nations in the U.S.S.R. Focal Point in America's Policy of National Liberation*, address by Dr. Lev Dobriansky, Georgetown University, Ukrainian Congress Committee, <https://diasporiana.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/books/22166/file.pdf> [13.04.2025].

²⁷ P. Libera (ed.), *II Rzeczpospolita wobec ruchu prometejskiego*, Warsaw 2013.

²⁸ Idem (ed.), *Józef Łobodowski. Listy do redaktorów „Wiadomości”*, Toruń 2015.

sues of Polish-Japanese cooperation²⁹ in the Promethean context. Marek Kornat³⁰ and especially Andrzej Nowak³¹ belong to the second group: They worked extensively on the various issues of Polish history, delivered amazing accounts of Polish diplomacy in the interwar period and of Pilsudski's strategy towards Russia, and are active co-shapers of the Polish debate on Russia and the post-Soviet world. No one has had a greater impact on the contemporary Polish preoccupation with Prometheanism than the director of the East European Studies Program at the University of Warsaw, Jan Malicki. He not only forged a broadly structured program of Eastern European studies with regular courses in languages such as Georgian and Chechen but also created the framework for annual conferences on Prometheanism held in Warsaw. These conferences continue to be an important forum for Polish and international scholars working on the Promethean network, the history of non-Russian emigration and exile communities, and the history of relations between Poland, the Caucasus, Ukraine, and Central Asia. Many of the program's graduates have gone on to work at the University, helping to further strengthen Polish and Polish-language Caucasian and Ukrainian studies and to promote the city as an important international centre for so-called post-Soviet studies. Malicki succeeded in attracting international scholars to the program, such as the internationally recognised Tadeusz Swietochowski, former Polish diplomats such as Wiktor Ross, and many others.

1. Instead of a conclusion

When I was about to finish my dissertation at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt in Upper Bavaria, I applied for a small scholarship to participate in the First Polish-Caucasian Winter School. The program was very attractive and promising, and fortunately, I got on it and left Germany for

²⁹ H. Kuromiya, P. Libera, *Notatka Włodzimierza Bączkowskiego na temat współpracy polsko-japońskiej wobec ruchu prometejskiego (1938)*, "Zeszyty Historyczne" 2009, pp. 114–135.

³⁰ M. Kornat, *Bolszewizm – totalitaryzm – rewolucja – Rosja. Początki sowietologii i studiów nad systemami totalitarnymi w Polsce (1918–1939)*, vols. 1–2, Cracow 2003–2004; idem, "Polityka równowagi" (1934–1939). *Polska między Wschodem a Zachodem*, Cracow 2007.

³¹ A. Nowak, *Jak rozbić rosyjskie imperium? Idee polskiej polityki wschodniej, 1733–1921*, Warsaw 1995; idem, *Polacy, Rosjanie i biesy. Studia i szkice historyczne z XIX i XX w.*, Cracow 1998; idem, *Polska i Rosja. Sąsiedztwo wolności i despotyzmu X–XXI w.*, Cracow 2022.

Cracow in December 2008. It was sponsored by Poland and open to young scientists from Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. We spent several days in Cracow, Warsaw, and finally Wrocław with extensive sightseeing and lectures on history and politics. While in Warsaw, the students from the three countries were scheduled to attend the St. Peradze Conference organised by Dr. David Kolbaia at the Studium Europy Wschodniej, Department of East European Studies. It was clear that Poland, despite its own economic difficulties, was investing in scholarship programmes for students from the post-Soviet world, organising conferences that served as an important platform for the exchange of ideas and beyond. In April 2009, I moved to the Leibniz Institute of European History in Mainz, where I began my habilitation project on Prometheanism. It took 13 years until the book was finally published by the Franz Steiner Verlag in Stuttgart. And looking back on those years, I have to admit that it was an amazing period of close cooperation with Polish and international scholars, and it was usually Warsaw where we met once a year in November, at the Promethean Conference at the University of Warsaw. From the end of the 2000s, there were several traditions: the conference was held on the campus in the centre of Warsaw, we stayed in a very modest but nice hotel called the "Hera" near the huge building of the Russian Embassy, and last but not least, all participants at the conference were invited to the delicious restaurant "Pod Samsonem" in the old town of Warsaw. I attended the conference almost regularly during those years, and it was an excellent opportunity for me to meet numerous Polish historians working on related issues such as the aforementioned Paweł Libera, Ireneusz Maj, Marek Kornat, and many others. I often recall conversations with two Polish diplomats, Wiktor Ross and Wojciech Gorecki, who also attended the conference.

Our core group of researchers working on Prometheanism certainly included George Mamoulia and Nasiman Yaqublu, Valentyna Piskun and Salavat Iskhakov. I would like to highlight the work of George Mamoulia on the Georgian exile in Paris. He worked through a huge amount of well-preserved archives in the French police and foreign ministry, and private collections of the families of Georgian emigrants in Paris. He also worked on the archival collections in Tbilisi. This makes his book an amazing source for the Georgian pages of Prometheanism³². It should also be mentioned

³² G. Mamoulia, *Les combats indépendantistes des caucasiens entre URSS et puissances occidentales*, Paris 2009.

that Mamoulia worked at the Georgian Embassy in Moscow at the end of the 1990s, before moving to France to work in academia. This helped him to study Georgian and later Azerbaijani and North Caucasian exile activities from the point of view of diplomatic history. And among Polish and international scholars working on Prometheanism, George remains the only one who is able to read Georgian sources. Nasiman, who died unexpectedly in a car accident in August 2024, worked on Turkish-Azerbaijani and Polish relations. With the Polish scholarship, Nasiman conducted research in the Warsaw-based archives, being linguistically supported by Shahla Kazimova, and then published his findings in Azerbaijani. His work was essential for the transfer and dissemination of knowledge about the history of Prometheanism in Azerbaijan.

The Ukrainian historian Volodymyr Komar was the first outside Poland to give a profound account of Prometheanism³³. His monograph was published in Ukrainian in 2011 and was based on a thorough elaboration of the Polish research literature as well as on the findings in the Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian archives. He participated in the Promethean Conference of Malicki, but it was Valentyna Piskun who became the most active participant of the annual conference from Ukraine. She headed the department of the M.S. Hrushevsky Institute of Ukrainian Archaeography and Source Studies, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. Valentyna Piskun was 'our' main expert on Ukrainian history, our door to the Ukrainian archives. It was Valentyna who always had an answer about the vast world of the Ukrainian diaspora in interwar Europe.

Salavat Ishakov was the only historian from Russia who regularly attended the conference in Warsaw. As a rule, we all stayed in the same place, and on the way back from the "Pod Samsonem" restaurant to Hera, we repeatedly discussed the activities, opportunities, and fiascos of Jordania, Smal-Stockyj, Pisludski, and others. Hiroaki Kuromiya, an American historian of Russia and Eastern Europe, was the one who had to travel the longest way to Warsaw. Originally from Japan, Hiroaki had a brilliant career in U.S. academia, teaching Eastern European history at several universities there for decades. Hiroaki alternated between Polish and Russian, wrote his academic papers in

³³ В.Л. Комар, Концепція прометеїзму в політиці Польщі (1921–1939 рр.), Івано-Франківськ 2011.

English, and read Ukrainian and Chinese with ease. Hiroaki enriched these meetings with his vast knowledge and diversity of perspectives.

In the mid-2010s, Jan Malicki's department was neither a master's program nor an MA program: it was much more, perhaps a mixture of a think tank, an intellectual circle, a hub... The department published several (sic!) journals: *Pro Georgia*, a scientific journal on Caucasian and Georgian history, language, and culture, and *Nowy Prometeusz*, a new popular-academic journal. And we, who come from outside Poland, have noticed that the Department generates very solid, interdisciplinary research conducted by the graduates of the Department. As an example, I would like to mention two doctoral theses written by two graduates at relatively the same time. Iurii Chainskyi is originally from Ukraine, and during his studies in Warsaw, he discovered an interest in Turkish and Turkey and then studied it. In the end, an amazing monograph on Turkey in the Polish Promethean strategy between 1918 and 1932 was published in the series of the University of Warsaw³⁴. Another graduate is Shahla Kazimova, who was born in Azerbaijan and studied East European Studies at the University of Warsaw. Her monograph was devoted to "Azerbaijani Prometheanism"³⁵ and especially to the activities of M.E. Rasolzade. Is he now an incarnation of Prometheanism? If we were to describe all of Poland's involvement in the post-Soviet Caucasus, Ukraine, or Central Asia from this perspective, then definitely yes. And indeed, Poland is eager to strengthen its ties with all the former USSR republics. And hopefully, this engagement will never end.

2. With whom our ways never crossed...

We work on topics related to Prometheanism, meet every year in early winter in Warsaw, and, of course, we read each other. Those of us who were fluent in Polish (Kuromiya, Ukrainian colleagues) tried to regularly read the abundant research literature published in Polish by Polish colleagues. Many debates and discussions in the margins of the conferences initiated by Malicki in Warsaw

³⁴ Iu. Chainskyi, *Walka za kulisami dyplomacji międzywojennej: Turcja w polskiej polityce prometejskiej w latach 1918–1932*, Warsaw 2020.

³⁵ Sh. Kazimova, *Azerbejdżański prometeizm. Działalność polityczna i publicystyczna Mehmeda Emina Resulzadego*, Warsaw 2021.

took place in Russian. The absolute majority of the scientific community working on Prometheanism was able not only to read in Russian but also to communicate in it. Salavat Iskhakov, as mentioned above, was the only Russian historian who ever came to the Promethean conference in Warsaw. However, he was not the only historian working on these issues in Russia. Lev Sotskov (1932–2022)³⁶ and Tatiana Simonova were the Moscow-based historians who produced several anthologies, articles, and edited documents on topics directly related to Prometheanism³⁷. We have all read them, we have all opposed them, and most of us have never met them, at least not in Poland. Many of us managed to come to Moscow, to the Military Archive, where a large part of the documents related to Prometheanism are still preserved. And I remember that when I was working in the archive a few years before the pandemic, and had to sign the [release] form, I saw with personal satisfaction the signatures of my Polish colleagues, Marek Kornat and Pawel Libera, who were working on the same files. Tatiana Simonova and especially Lev Sotskov had access to various archives that we never had access to. Sotskov had a background in intelligence and a military rank. He was entrusted with the politically motivated edition of documents from the Russian archives, which had to convince the readers of Poland's anti-Soviet activity, without any insight into the reasons for Warsaw's strategy. Did Sotskov and Simonova co-found a historiographical anti-Prometheanism? To some extent, this question should be answered in the affirmative. Sotskov's editions were not aimed at clearing up the unknown pages of the past, but at a certain fascination with the phenomenon of Prometheanism. The documents were presented out of context. Simonova's publications were much more academic than Sotskov's, but she mostly referred to the publications of socialist Polish historians, neglecting contemporary research after 1989. Tatiana Simonova was a senior researcher at the Russian Ministry of Defence. In 2002, the leading Russian historiographical journal "Novaia i Noveishaia Istoriia"

³⁶ Sotskov worked for Soviet intelligence abroad for more than 40 years. In 2022, he committed suicide in his Moscow apartment. И. Жуковский, *В Москве нашли мертвым отставного генерал-майора СВР. Кем был Лев Соцков?* [I. Zhukovsky, *V Moskve nashli mertvym otstavnogo general-mayora SVR. Kem byl Lev Sotskov?*], 15 June 2022, <https://www.gazeta.ru/social/2022/06/15/14994452.shtml?updated> [1.05.2025].

³⁷ Л.Ф. Соцков, *Секреты польской политики. 1935–1945 гг. Рассекреченные документы Службы внешней разведки Российской Федерации*, Москва 2010 [L.F. Sotskov, *Sekrety pol'skoy politiki. 1935–1945 gg. Rassekrechennyye dokumenty Sluzhby vneshney razvedki Rossiyskoy Federatsii*, Moskva 2010].

published her article on Prometheanism in Polish foreign policy between 1919 and 1924³⁸. In the years that followed, Simonova published extensively on this topic, as well as on the lives of Russian emigrants in interwar Poland and on Polish-Soviet relations. In 2020, the Moscow-based think tank Institute of Foreign Policy Studies and Initiatives presented an edited volume by two Russian historians and political activists on *Poland in the Struggle for Eastern Europe, 1920–2020*³⁹. The volume portrayed the foreign policy of the Second Republic as extremely aggressive, expansionist, anti-Soviet, anti-Russian, and at the same time eager to collaborate with totalitarian and extreme ideologies. The ideological concepts such as Prometheanism, Inter-marium, and others were described as extremely radical and exclusionary, but these concepts were Polish reactions, attempts to mobilise their own intellectuals as well as those from neighbouring countries in order to stand up to the political, economic, and cultural pressure from the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. In the conclusion, the co-editors, Krashennikova and Bunevich, wrote: "Today, Poland is once again claiming regional leadership, openly opposing Russia and almost openly against Western Europe"⁴⁰. They then went on to accuse the US of allegedly instrumentalising Poland to create a constraining dichotomy between Russia, Germany, and France on the one hand, and the US with Poland on the other. It is paradoxical to read this "conclusion" of 2020 today, three years after Russia launched a full-scale war against Ukraine in 2022: "The current policy of the Polish elite gives no cause for optimism. It seems that all the painful lessons of the past have remained unlearned. Lacking sufficient resources and blindly believing in their own historical fantasies, the leaders in Warsaw, like their historical predecessors, are persistently leading their country into a strategic dead end. However, there is a way out of any deadlock, but in order to find it, Poland will need to turn its policy 180 degrees"⁴¹.

³⁸ Т.М. Симонова, "«Прометеизм» во внешней политике Польши, 1919–1924 гг.," *Новая и Новейшая История* 4 (2002), pp. 47–63 [T.M. Simonova, "«Prometeizm» vo vneshney politike Pol'shi. 1919–1924 gg.," *Novaya i Noveyshaya Istoriya* 4 (2002), pp. 47–63].

³⁹ В. Крашенинникова, Д. Буневич, *Польша в борьбе за Восточную Европу, 1920–2020*, Москва 2020 [V. Krashennikova, D. Bunevich, *Pol'sha v bor'be za Vostochnuyu Evropu, 1920–2020*, Moskva 2020].

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 171.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 172.

Armen Sumbatovich Gasparian embodies the further perception of Russian anti-Prometheanism and a firm continuity with Sotskov's legacy. Gasparian was born in Moscow in 1975 and studied journalism. He is now on all the EU and UK sanctions lists for pro-Kremlin propaganda. He is the author of a number of books, monographs on the activities of the Soviet secret services abroad⁴², on the clandestine operation, Trest⁴³, aimed at the disintegration and division of the Russian emigrant communities in interwar Europe. One of his monographs was published under the title *Ложь посполита*. Literally, Gasparian reformulated the famous Polish term *Rzeczpospolita*, Polish for "Republic", into "Lie Pospolita". The publication of the book led to numerous public readings, discussions, round tables, and other formats in and through which the author-propagandist could disseminate his fake news and fabricated knowledge about his vision of the Polish Republic⁴⁴.

Conclusion

What is Prometheanism today? First of all, it is a phenomenon of the past, an amazing example of the intertwined and interwoven history of Poland, Ukraine, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Russia itself, as well as Turkey, France, and beyond. Research on it should definitely continue, and Warsaw is an important centre of "Promethean studies". Poland has tried and is trying to support democratisation in countries like Belarus, Russia itself, has supported and is supporting Georgia, Moldova, and all the post-Soviet states by launching several educational programs, offering scholarship and fellowship programs, and accepting refugees and seasonal workers from there. Of course,

⁴² А.С. Гаспарян, ОГПУ против РОВС. Тайная война в Париже. 1924–1939 гг., Москва 2008 [A.S. Gasparyan, *OGPU protiv ROVS. Taynaya voyna v Parizhe. 1924–1939 gg.*, Moskva 2008].

⁴³ А.С. Гаспарян, Операция «Трест». Советская разведка против русской эмиграции. 1921–1937 гг., Москва 2008; idem, Операция «Трест»: шпионский маршрут Москва – Берлин – Париж, блестящий дебют чекистов, крах Белой эмиграции, Санкт-Петербург 2017 [A.S. Gasparyan, *Operatsiya «Trest». Sovetskaya razvedka protiv russkoy emigratsii. 1921–1937 gg.*, Moskva 2008; idem, *Operatsiya «Trest»: shpionskiy marshrut Moskva – Berlin – Parizh, blestyashchiy debyut chekistov, krakh Beloy emigratsii*, Sankt-Peterburg 2017].

⁴⁴ Армен Гаспарян о книге „Ложь Пospолита“ [Armen Gasparyan o knige „Lozh' Pospolita"], 24 May 2018, <https://oper.ru/video/view.php?t=2836> [3.05.2025].

the asymmetry is huge, but understandable: Poland's engagement with Belarus and Ukraine is much more intense than with Armenia, Azerbaijan, or Kyrgyzstan. In contrast to its neighbours in the region, such as the Czech Republic or Slovakia, Poland established its embassies in all the post-Soviet states quite rapidly during the 1990s. The Polish interest in the East seems to have been shaped by the Prometheanism of the interwar period and its later "incarnations". One example is the establishment of "Stypendia Wschodnie" (Eastern Scholarships), which are financed directly from the Polish budget. Over the past two decades, applicants from almost all post-Soviet states, as well as Turkey, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Macedonia, have been eligible to apply, and over a 1000 scholarships have been awarded⁴⁵. Together with other Polish and international partners, the Polish Ministry of Education established the Free University of Belarus in close cooperation with the University of Warsaw in 2020. It is a great asset to support civil society in Belarus, but it is much more a reaction to what happened in Belarus than a part of a long-term strategy. What we are witnessing is stable and solid support by Poland for the non-Russian former Soviet republics within the framework of its financial possibilities and even beyond.

After Russia occupied Crimea in 2014 and attacked Ukraine by sending troops and violating the country's state border from the north and east in February 2022, a large number of articles were written in which the authors referred to Prometheanism⁴⁶. This was certainly good for scholars who had been working on the subject for years, but it created an atmosphere in which any Polish involvement in the East was perceived as neo-Promethean. This is certainly not the case. At the same time, Russian propaganda portrayed Prometheanism as an imperialist concept allegedly followed by Polish elites, and Moscow, paradoxically, similarly perceives any Polish action in support

⁴⁵ Stypendia Wschodnie, <https://studium.uw.edu.pl/programy-stypendialne/stypendia-wschodnie/> [4.05.2025].

⁴⁶ A. Umland, *Countering Russian expansionism: Blueprints for a new security alliance. Prospects for a central and eastern European security union*, European Council on Foreign Relations, https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_countering_russian_expansionism_blueprints_for_a_new_security_al/ [4.05.2025]; K. Nawrocki, *Once again, we are Europe's shield*, 9 August 2024, <https://wszystkoconajwazniejsze.pl/karol-nawrocki-once-again-we-are-europes-shield/> [4.05.2025]; P. Goble, *Prometheanism Becomes the Centerpiece of Ukraine's Approach to Russia*, The Saratoga Foundation, 11 February 2025, <https://www.saratoga-foundation.org/p/prometheanism-becomes-the-centerpiece> [4.05.2025].

of Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, or any other country in the post-Soviet space as imperialist and Russophobic.

In any case, Prometheanism has left a huge legacy in Poland, especially among its intellectuals. One of its elements was the academic preoccupation with non-Russian nationalities, languages and literatures, and another was Oriental studies. At the same time, there were many Polish Orientalists in the interwar period who were not Prometheanists. And one should not follow the pattern and see Prometheanism in everything that Poland cooperated on with the countries east of Przemysl.

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