

Artur Jabłoński

ABSTRACT of the doctoral thesis entitled: The literary narrative of Jan Rompski about the Kashubian nation

The essential aim of the dissertation was to analyse and reconstruct what Kashubian identity was for Jan Rompski (1913–1969), Kashubian writer, activist, ethnographer, and co-founder of the ideological and literary group *Zrzeszyńcy*. The author understands Kashubian identity as a set of features characterising the life and culture of the nation, as well as the sense of belonging to the latter. He suggests that Kashubian identity should be interpreted as a group of features from an open set which includes in particular references to territory, language, culture, and citizenship.

The investigations included in the dissertation are presented from the point of view of the assumptions and ideas formulated by the *Zrzeszyńcy* ideological and literary group which Jan Rompski was a co-founder of. The group had its origins in the Regional Association of Kashubians established in 1929 in Kartuzy. Eventually, the community formed around the *Zrzesz Kaszëbskô* paper published in the years 1933–1939 and 1945–1947. The author of the dissertation made that choice due to Jan Rompski's involvement in the creation of that ideological and literary group, but also because he himself is active in the Kashubian movement and writes Kashubian literature, while his views related to the ethnic and political empowerment of Kashubians can be very concisely described as a continuation of the *Zrzeszyńcy* group's ideas in 21st century realities.

The dissertation focuses on the interpretation of works by Jan Rompski, and not of other members of the *Zrzeszyńcy* group, because the author believes that: 1. Jan Rompski was one of the main ideologists of the *Zrzeszyńcy* group, and in the late 1930s he definitely took over spiritual leadership within the group; 2. Jan Rompski's writings formed a well-thought-out, ethnically-determined project and the author's intention was to make them spread the national inspirations of the intelligentsia to all Kashubians; this is reflected in the form and content of his works in which consideration given to national issues seems to be the most important aspect.

The methodological plan of the dissertation was hybrid by assumption, determined by all the theories and definitions adopted in the various discussions, concerning concepts such as nation, language, and identity. It had to include the accepted understanding of their

meanings, which placed the deliberations within the area of anthropological, cultural as well as cultural and sociological studies. This also made it possible to use concepts from the fields of linguistics, including socio-, ethno- and ecolinguistics, as well as modern sociology of language. It made it necessary to use methods from sociology of literature and cultural text analysis, and finally to use discourse analysis, and more specifically critical discourse analysis, focusing on political and social aspects. Referring to Teun van Dijk, Dutch theoretician of critical discourse analysis, the author of the dissertation assumes here that language became important for the determination of the relationship between texts and social structures – the content transmitted and the perception of the target audience.

The state of knowledge on the nation concept and on the criteria of national belonging, using the example of selected theories, is presented in Chapter I. This is supposed to contribute to a better understanding of the ideas of the *Zrzeszyńcy* group as well as of Jan Rompski's own perception of the aspect of nation. Chapter III addresses the aspect of identity, which according to contemporary sociology should be connected with communities. Jan Rompski's literary works written in Kashubian, as well as some of his opinion journalism texts build a sense of community – of a bond with one's own group, and at the same time clearly point to a certain distance and sense of alienation (whether more or less pronounced) in relation to other groups. If one assumes the culture-based nation model, arguably most embraced by the author and his milieu, many building blocks can be indicated forming a symbolic universe of reciprocal communication. However, of all the selected elements of cultural systems shared by a community, language is among the most important ones. The nation-forming significance of language is discussed primarily in Chapter II of the dissertation, but references to its role manifested by Kashubians can be found in many places throughout.

Jan Rompski also saw the language in which he wrote – including the spelling he chose to use – as a part of the national culture canon, and perceived his writing within the framework of the medium available to him, which he used to communicate with the members of the imagined community, conveying content important for him. The author is aware that contemporary identity-related discussions pursued by Kashubian activists resonate at times in the dissertation. He has deliberately incorporated this echo in the text to extend the story of Jan Rompski to the present day, as he believes that the writer's narrative on the nation represents a timeless interpretation of the Kashubian identity. It can be summed up in several points:

- 1) Distinct language – as a linguistic fact, but also as a political and social fact.
- 2) Awareness of the land – of their own territory on the south coast of the Baltic Sea.
- 3) Distinct spiritual and material culture.
- 4) Shared historical memory.
- 5) Sense of citizenship consisting in the subjective involvement of Kashubians in matters concerning their own national community and the Polish state at the same time.