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Yasuko Shibata, *Discrimination for the Sake of the Nation.*

The Discourse of the League of Polish Families against “Others” 2001–2007

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Discrimination for the Sake of the Nation. The Discourse of the League of Polish Families against “Others” 2001–2007 written by Yasuko Shibata is the fourth volume of Polish Studies in Culture, Nations and Politics, a Peter Lang series that aims at publishing monographs and collections of articles dedicated to selected topics from the fields of sociology, political sciences and history. This publication is an example of the interdisciplinary Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) study, a type of the research that constitutes a very popular current in the broadly defined social sciences. It also fills the gap in the literature on the role of discriminatory and national discourses in Polish politics.

Since the League of Polish Families [Liga Polskich Rodzin (LPR)] there has been no Polish prominent political actor that would explicitly and successfully use the former category of discourse. This success, however, had its limits: LPR, the Polish far-right political party formed in April 2001 as a merger of several factions and political communities that were invoking the legacy of the National Democracy (ND), never played a key role in the Polish politics. The period between 2001 and 2007, however, was the time during which the party managed to enter twice, (2001 and 2005) the Parliament of Poland acquiring, respectively, 7,87% (36 candidates in the Sejm and 2 in the Senat) and 7,97% (34 candidates in the Sejm and 7 in the Senat) of the votes cast. Apart from a modest success in local elections of 2002 and 2006, the party also formed a coalition government with Law and Justice (PiS) and Self-Defence (Samobrona). Roman Giertych, the then chairman of LPR, was appointed Minister of Education and Vice Minister, that he held until the breaking up of the coalition on August 13, 2007. However, the biggest electoral success, that took many commentators by surprise, were the results of the first European elections in which Poland took part: 10 candidates who had started from LPR's lists became members of the European Parliament (2nd place in the country with 15,92% of the votes cast).

The material for the *Discrimination for the Sake of the Nation* comes from the briefly described period between 2001 (first case studies come from April) and 2007 (last text comes from March). The former date is the year in which LPR was formed whereas 2007 marks the beginning of its political marginalization. The research period is divided by the middle point of June 2004, the date of the first Polish elections to the European Parliament. The role of this division is very important from the point of view of the party's discursive evolution: the electoral success forced LPR, at least to some extent, to adjust its language and ideological proposals to the context of the mainstream European politics. In that respect the Polish right-wing party did something that other successors of ND could not: it abandoned the anti-systemic slogans and became a part of the Polish political establishment (p. 115).

The case study chosen by Yasuko Shibata has already been analyzed from several theoretical perspectives. LPR has appeared in numerous, mostly Polish, studies: as an example of a eurosceptical far right party (Michael Minkenberg's and Pascal Perrineau's "The Radical Right in the European Elections 2004" and Ewa Nalewajko's "Eurosceptyczne partie i ich liderzy w publicznej debacie o integracji prowadzonej w latach 2000–2003" ["Eurosceptical Parties and Their Leaders in the Public Debate on Integration in the Years 2000–2003"] articles), as one of the political actors promoting antifeminist and anti-LGBT attitudes (Agnieszka Graff's article "We Are (Not All) Homophobes: A Report from Poland"). One can also name several articles dedicated to post-electoral (e.g. Frances Millard's "Poland's Politics and the Travails of Transition after 2001: The 2005 Elections") and media (Rafał Miernik's "Liga Polskich Rodzin—prawica polskiej sceny politycznej" [The League of Polish Families—the Right-wing of the Polish Political Scene]) analyses. All publications have one feature in common: they are not dedicated specifically to LPR treating its activity as a part of a larger picture. Probably the only exception is the book written by Aleksandra Moroska *Prawicowy populizm a eurosceptycyzm (na przykładzie Listy Pim Fortuyna w Holandii i Ligi Polskich Rodzin w Polsce)* [Right-Wing Populism and Euroscepticism (on the example of List Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands and League of Polish Families in Poland)] in which the party in question functions, together with the second case study, Dutch Pim Fortuyn List, as a basis for comparative analysis of the ways in which two right-wing factions use populism and euroscepticism as mobilization techniques. This approach necessitates the embedding of the party in Polish historical and socio-political contexts. The former task, similarly as in other works that dealt with LPR, is limited to a brief description of tradition to which the party is referring and does not play a decisive role in the conclusions.

The author of *Discrimination for the Sake of the Nation* asks slightly different questions about the activity of LPR. It is very visible in the book's structure. First chapter entitled "The Discourse of Discrimination against the Nations Strangers: Tools for Interpretation" is dedicated to the methodology used in the study, in the second ("Historical Contexts of the LPR Discourse") and third ("Political and Ideological Contexts of the LPR Discourse") the author discusses historical, political and ideological contexts of the LPR's discourse. In fourth ("The LPR's Racist and Xenophobic Discourse: Cases and Studies"), fifth ("The LPR's Homophobic Discourse: Cases and

Studies”) and sixth (“The LPR’s Gendered Discourse: Cases and Studies”) chapters the author presents and analyzes specific variants, each of them on a separate series of case studies, of LPR’s discriminatory discourse. The book is concluded by a very convincing synthesis (“Conclusions: General Answers”) and speculations on the future of LPR politicians and the possibility of actualization of their discursive practices (“Conclusions: Six Years After the Decline of the LPR”).

The general aim of the book is, therefore, to identify characteristics of LPR discriminatory discourse against ethnic and national minorities, homosexuals, and women, groups that were, with a few exceptions in some cases, positioned in the analyzed texts as “others.” The author focuses in her research on numerous case studies—texts created by politicians of LPR and individuals associated with its youth organization. Texts analyzed in the chapters dedicated to the specific discourses (or sub-discourses, if we follow the inner logic of the study) represent different language registers and genres. The empirical material comprises, among others, LPR’s election brochures, parliamentary questions, media interviews, public speeches, press articles, amendments and blog entries. The aim of the author is, therefore, to demonstrate that discriminatory discourse practices occurred on different levels of communication. Chosen examples are very interesting. It would be, however, very helpful to know more about the rules according to which the texts for the in-depth analyses were selected from a big corpus.

This minor objection does not change the fact that the text analyses are embedded in thoroughly defined theoretical and methodological frameworks. The author combines CDA with the “critique of fantasy” [krytyka fantazmatyczna] elaborated by Maria Janion. The research is primarily based on one of the currents of the former method, namely Discourse Historical Approach whose most prominent proponent is Ruth Wodak. The method is consequently implemented throughout the whole study, which is especially demonstrable in the chapters dedicated to the analysis of particular discourses. In order to characterize the way in which social actors are presented in the texts the author uses, among others, categories of foregrounding/backgrounding, suppression, role allocation and impersonalization (for example of backgrounding see pp. 256–257). Very important in the study are also metaphors used to present the “self” and “other” or, in other words, the labelling of social actors in the texts produced by the members or sympathizers of LPR. Another element of the analysis is the identification of specific *topoi* that are used in the discourse in order to strengthen the arguments. The author indicates many examples of this rhetoric category the most recurring of which is probably the *topos* of “threat/danger” which is activated in several discursive contexts, e.g., as a rhetorical argument that sustains: the thesis according to which the tolerance of ethnic minorities could lead to the destabilization of Poland (p. 148), the necessity of defense against undefined “Jewish forces” (pp. 154–155; usually in such cases the texts refer also to the “ideological fantasy of Jewish world conspiracy”) and the theory about the danger posed to the catholic morality by the “revolutionary” feminist groups (p. 268). Other applications of the given rhetorical tool are, e.g., the *topos* of justice (p. 169), authority (p. 207), humanitarianism (p. 249) and responsibility (p. 219).

The author consequently follows the analytical framework proposed by Ruth Wodak adding elements necessary for the analysis of the discursive activity of the Polish right-wing party. This procedure is exemplified also by the structure of presentation of the case studies. Each chapter dedicated to the analysis of texts is opened by the contextual introduction of a specific case, e.g., in chapter IV “The LPR’s Racist and Xenophobic Discourse: Cases and Contexts” the analysis of specific cases is preceded by a subchapter “The Legal Protection of Ethnic/National Minorities and Immigrants in Post-1989 Poland” that provides an indispensable contextual information about the post-1989 legislative reforms regarding the rights of national minorities and immigrants introduced in Poland. The same procedure is applied in chapters dedicated to homophobic and gendered discourses of LPR. Term “context” does not refer, however, only to the generally understood social or political status of a discriminated group. The author provides, always when it is necessary, background information that is needed to understand certain metaphors and *topoi*. All the descriptions and explanations are diligently provided which could be very important for the readers who do not have deep knowledge about Polish politics and history.

In addition to the abovementioned theoretical frameworks, the analysis conducted by the author is grounded in several concepts and theories. One of them is the Andrzej Walicki’s concept of three traditions of Polish patriotism among which the element that is revealed most frequently in the analyzed case studies is the tradition of ND. It does not mean, however, that LPR is resistant to the influence of the cultural resources of Polish Romanticism or gentry (it seems that the concept of *antemurale Christianitatis* is still very much alive, at least in the discourse of Polish far-right). Furthermore, the author refers to the Anthony D. Smith theory of the nationalist ideological movement (p. 30) and Schützean concept of “knowledge community” which is used in the study to construct the category of “other” (pp. 28–30).

Briefly sketched theoretical and methodological frameworks are used by the author in order to answer four general questions regarding the discriminatory discourse of LPR against “others:” what elements of Polish national tradition are instrumental in the process of discrimination? How Polish national ideologies are actualized? What is constant and what has changed, during the research period, in the LPR’s discourse against “others”? and What kind of rhetorical devices are used by LPR in the discriminatory discourse? (p. 12)

Of an utmost importance, especially for the third question, is the middle section of the research period. This threshold, as convincingly argued by the author, is a point in which the discriminatory discourse of LPR undergoes a change. The author presents how the party’s stance on many subjects shifts in order to fit into the new socio-political context. The relation with the sacred Polish resources, with an emphasis on the element of ND, however, still functions as one of the most important “moulds” that are used to construct discursive proposals. The shift occurs, e.g., in the case of the anti-Semitic discourse whose existence was very evident before June 2004: LPR members often used specific anti-Semitic undertones, the already mentioned fantasy of “Jewish conspiracy” (e.g., p. 155) could be one of the examples. After the first European elections the party started to, very consciously as the author notices

(p. 170–171), openly reject anti-Semitism. The place of the Jews, as a paramount threat for the Polish nation, was replaced by the figure of the immigrant in general and the follower of Islam in particular who can, in a very literary sense, endanger the existence of the Polish nation.

The dynamic of the discourse transformation does not function identically in every case. Whereas the anti-Semitism fades out after the middle point of the research, the homophobic discourse gains strength and changes its character. Poland becomes in the LPR's narrative a quasi-messianic figure, a construct that without a doubt would have been rejected by Roman Dmowski, the most important politician of ND, that would lead the depraved (mostly Western) Europe against the flood of the immoral strangers—the homosexuals. The image of Poland as a moral crusader leading European Union to the bright future functions also in the gendered discourse that is analyzed in the next chapter in which the author demonstrates how the traditional, culturally embedded image of the Polish woman, a Virgin Mary, a heroine that sacrifices herself for the good of the nation, is reproduced in the context of the discussion about the abortion law. In the discourse of LPR the woman functions, primarily, as a reproducer, in a biological and symbolic sense, of the Polish nation. She “guards the borders of the imagined community” (p. 271). The word “woman,” however, does not appear often in the analyzed texts. This situation changes after June 2004 when she becomes a romantic figure, analogically to Poland in the context of the anti-Semitic discourse, that would lead EU back on the moral tracks.

The given above interpretations are only a few general examples of the theoretical proposals that one can find in the book. They show, however, how the author merges several theories and prove that CDA is indeed an interdisciplinary approach. The tension between the purposeful action and unconscious realization of deeply, historically and, in general, socially, embedded structures, which is a problem that is touched upon in *Discrimination for the Sake of the Nation*, is far from being resolved. The establishing of LPR, from the point of view of dispersed and weak far right Polish parties, was without a doubt a rational action. On the other hand the attachment to the specific ideology and language, together with other factors, resulted in its political marginalization. Discourse Historical Approach helps us to identify specific manifestations of these “historical attachments” but does not allow to go far beyond that which, of course, should not be treated as a critique of the approach but rather as its natural limitations. The book by Yasuko Shibata is an example of how to construct within these limitations a very convincing analysis that would be a contribution in both social and political sciences.

Marcin Ślarzyński
(Ph.D. student)
Institute of Philosophy and Sociology
Polish Academy of Sciences
E-mail: mslarzyński@wp.pl