

## **The nation's body and soul. Volkist motifs in Polish early national-democratic thought (1895-1918)**

### **Description for the general public**

At the end of the nineteenth century, in Poland under partitions, new political groups emerged: the National League (Liga Narodowa) and the National Democratic Party (Stronnictwo Demokratyczno-Narodowe). These parties gave rise to a new type of nationalism, with its own understanding of the concept of the nation. In my project, I want to focus on the ways in which - in the publications of the Polish national-democratic movement - the nation began to be identified with the people, understood as a biological community (community of blood) and described by the metaphors typical of the volkist ideology. Within this ideology (according to the definition by George Mosse, who wrote about the organizations preceding the national-socialist movement in Germany), the biologically understood body of the people / nation is considered as the place where the national soul manifests itself. In accordance with this ideology, the Polishness of a land and its inhabitants gets confirmed by ethno-cultural categories. The hypothesis of the volkist character of the motifs, concepts and metaphors present in the thought of the Polish national-democratic movement will be tested based on an analysis of the national-democratic press addressed to the people, to the intelligentsia and to women, and the writings of the movement's leaders, such as Roman Dmowski, Jan Popławski and Zygmunt Balicki. I will try to explain how the concept of the nation prevailing in the movement took on volkist connotations, what the socio-political circumstances of this process were, what traditions were important for the thinkers of the national-democratic movement, and what exactly these volkist ideas consisted in. I will present these problems in a wider context of Central Europe and against the background of the available analyses of the volkist ideology and the *völkische Bewegung* in the German Second Reich.

Debates on the heritage of nationalism remain valid. Questions about how to understand the Polish identity continuously reappear in the public life, and the answers become the basis for the inclusion or exclusion of people considered as Poles or non-Poles. It is therefore important to clarify the origins of the main concepts used by the ideologues of the national-democratic movement. However, it has been quite uncommon in historical reflection to focus on the issue of the corporeality of the nation, on the ways of recognizing it as a phenomenon that is expressed through specific human bodies and in relation to a specific location on Earth. Examining these aspects of the subject will contribute to developing reflection on the history of the Polish national-democratic movement. It will also fill a gap in the archives of the history of ideas, anthropology and cultural studies, adding to them threads which have not been analyzed in sufficient detail so far. Thus, the formation of Polish identity and forging of Polish independence in the years 1895-1918 will be presented in a new light.