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Millions of migrants in communist files

The last several weeks have brought inspiring guest to CMR, to whom we devote this issue of CMR Spotlight.

In December, dr. Wiktor Soral and prof. Michał Bilewicz from the Center for Research on Prejudice of the Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw, presented their research on hate speech in Poland and methods of instigating empathy (see page 3).

In January, historian prof. Dariusz Stola from the Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences and CMR inspired us to study migration from Poland through the use of communist-era documents, such as applications for one's own passport, which had to be filled out before every trip, and contained a wealth of personal information. Sixty kilometers of such files are still awaiting for scholarly attention (see page 2).

Both lectures can be viewed online (in Polish) on [CMR's YouTube channel](#)



Prof. Dariusz Stola encouraging CMR members to dive into the archives of the communist Security Service



On benefits of the communist regimes for migration studies

Dariusz Stola

The history of communist Poland, and other communist countries, can offer interesting insights into patterns of migrations and migration policies. This may sound paradoxical, as communist states are known for their highly restrictive migration policies and for many they are synonymous with closed societies. While in most cases this opinion is fairly accurate, some communist countries in some periods experienced substantial migration flows and other forms of cross-border mobility, which contrasted with periods of minimal such flows, restricted by heavy-handed policies of mobility control. Communist Poland was the country of greatest such changes, from an almost complete non-exit policy in the early 1950s, to an almost complete opening of the borders and mass cross-border mobility in the late 1980s.

Communist regimes should interest social and political scientists as much as they attract the attention of historians. They implemented various radical policies and brought deep social changes in a relatively short time. In particular, they extended governmental control over many spheres of life to a degree unknown in

other regimes. The instruments of this control were large state and party bureaucracies, which gathered a mass of data on individuals, groups and social phenomena. Thanks to the revolutions of 1989-1991, in most European post-communist countries the archives of these bureaucracies are largely available to research. Some of them, in particular the archives of secret services, are more accessible than their counterparts in the West, offering riches of information on a variety of topics.

Migrations from and to communist Poland are a case of such a (relatively) well documented social phenomenon and relevant policies. The archives of the communist Security Service alone contain some sixty kilometers of files of its Passport Department: a sea of policy documents, personal and statistical data on migrations, migrants and potential migrants. My lecture presented some of the types of such documents and data, and I tried to encourage the audience to make use of them in research on migrations.

How to sensitize to anti-refugee hate? Instigating empathy online and offline

Wiktor Soral & Michał Bilewicz

Social media bring new opportunities, but also pose new threats. They may improve communication between family members and friends, but they may also be used to inflame intergroup tensions, to create platforms for radical and xenophobic movements, and to spread fake news that shape beliefs about minority groups. All these threats have one thing in common: they are based on hate speech, defined as all forms of expressions that spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance. In this presentation, we ask what social sciences can do to stop the epidemic of hate speech. We examine theoretically grounded mechanisms that may be used to decrease an individual's propensity to use hate speech, and also to increase support for anti-hate-speech policies. We refer to interventions based on empathy and intergroup contact.

In 2016 refugees from the Middle East were the most frequent target of hate speech (HS) in Poland. Yet, only a small percentage of the Polish society had a chance to personally meet a refugee or any person from a Muslim country. At the same time, the beliefs of many Poles about refugees and Muslims are mostly shaped by social media content, which promotes contempt and mutes empathy. In two interventions – one based on direct contact (where participants had a



Dr. Wiktor Soral (left) and Prof. Michał Bilewicz (right) are shown in a room. Dr. Soral is on the left, wearing a blue sweater and jeans, with his hand to his chin. Prof. Bilewicz is on the right, wearing a dark jacket and glasses, holding a microphone. A laptop is on a table in front of them. The background shows a window and a whiteboard.

chance to personally meet and speak to a refugee, N = 133) and the other based on vicarious contact (where participants observed an ingroup member speaking with a refugee, N = 282) – we examined whether contact with a refugee can make participants more sensitive to HS, increase their support for HS prohibition, and decrease intentions to use HS. We found that both interventions increased empathy with refugees and at the same time made participants more sensitive to anti-refugee HS. Participants after the direct contact intervention were also more likely to support HS prohibition, and they declared less use of HS in the future. Crucially, in the vicarious contact intervention, we found that the effect of intergroup contact on sensitivity to hate speech was mediated by an increase in empathy with refugees. Altogether, our results suggest that intervention based on intergroup contact can efficiently inhibit HS.

Michał Bilewicz

Professor at the Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw and director of its Center for research on Prejudice. Previously Assistant Professor at the Department of Psychology, University of Delaware, Newark, USA.

Wiktor Soral

PhD, is a social psychologist at the Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw. He is also a senior researcher in the Center for Research on Prejudice at University of Warsaw. His research interest include antecedents and consequences of hate speech, determinants of individual and collective self-esteem, and reactions to control deprivation in the political settings. He also co-edited a volume on conspiracy thinking („Psychology of Conspiracy”, Routledge), and is a co-author of several chapters and articles in peer-reviewed journals.

Dariusz Stola

Professor at the Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, CMR member. He has been in the past, among others: the director of the Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews, vice-president at Collegium Civitas and senior scholar in several research projects.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not reflect the opinions or views of the CMR or its members.

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