

# COLONIALISM IN ANOTHER WAY. ON THE APPLICABILITY OF POSTCOLONIAL METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY OF POSTCOMMUNIST EUROPE

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**Słowa kluczowe:** postkolonializm, postkomunizm, Ukraina, imperium sowieckie, wewnętrzny kolonializm

**Key words:** postcolonialism, postcommunism, Ukraine, Soviet empire, internal colonialism

**Abstrakt:** Mykoła Riabczuk, INNY KOLONIALIZM. O MOŻLIWOŚCI ZAAPLIKOWANIA METODOLOGII POSTKOLONIALNEJ DO STUDIÓW NAD EUROPĄ POSTKOMUNISTYCZNĄ. „PORÓWNANIA” 13, 2013, t. XIII, s. 47-59. ISSN 1733-165X. Artykuł broni użyteczności podejścia postkolonialnego do studiów nad różnorodnymi procesami, zachodzącymi w krajach postkomunistycznych, które przez dekady należały do zewnętrznych lub wewnętrznych części imperium sowieckiego. Artykuł wykazuje w szczególności, jak niektóre zjawiska na postsowieckiej Ukrainie mogą być lepiej zrozumiane w kontekście rosyjsko-sowieckiego kolonializmu wewnętrznego oraz jak całkowita ukraińska ambiwalencja i wyrazisty regionalizm wynikają historycznie z różnych typów kolonizacji w różnych regionach. Autor mimo wszystko nalega na czytelne uznanie istotnych ograniczeń podejścia postkolonialnego, które wynikają przede wszystkim z nieobecności czynnika rasistowskiego w sowieckim imperializmie – komponentu, który jest kluczowy dla klasycznej sytuacji (post)kolonialnej i fundamentalnie odróżnia ją od sytuacji sowieckiej w kwestii całkowitego wykluczenia/potencjalnego wykluczenia podporządkowanych narodów. W rezultacie, cała przydatność teoretyzowania postkolonialnego do analizowania postkomunistycznego świata nie powinna powstrzymywać badaczy od uznania jej jedynie częściowej i warunkowej przydatności, wymagającej ograniczeń, autorefleksji i samokontroli.

**Abstract:** Mykoła Riabczuk, COLONIALISM IN ANOTHER WAY. ON THE APPLICABILITY OF POSTCOLONIAL METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY OF POSTCOMMUNIST EUROPE.

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"PORÓWNANIA". 13, 2013, Vol. XIII, p. 47-59. ISSN 1733-165X. The paper defends the usefulness of the postcolonial approach to the study of various processes in the postcommunist countries that belonged, for decades, to the inner and outer parts of the Soviet empire. The paper shows, in particular, how some developments in post-Soviet Ukraine can be better understood in the context of Russo-Soviet internal colonialism, and how Ukraine's thoroughgoing ambivalence and conspicuous regionalism result historically from different types of colonization of different regions. The paper insists, nonetheless, on a clear recognition of intrinsic limitations of the postcolonial approach, determined primarily by the absence of the racist component in Soviet imperialism - the component that is crucial for the classical (post)colonial situation and that makes it profoundly different from the Soviet one in terms of the complete exclusion / potential inclusion of subjugated peoples. In sum, all the usefulness of postcolonial theorizing for the analysis of the postcommunist world should not inhibit researchers from the recognition of its only partial and very conditional applicability, and of the need for due reservations, self-reflection and self-restraint.

My first, rather unexpected encounter with a debate on postcoloniality occurred back in 1993 at the Salzburg Seminar on "Ethnicity, Cultures and the Making of Nations," where I mentioned that my country grappled not only with totalitarian legacies of the Soviet communism but also with colonial legacies of the Russian imperialism.

I was immediately attacked by a couple of African participants who raised a simple but undisputable argument: "What are you talking about? You are white! How can you understand what the real colonialism means?!"

I babbled something about the Ukrainian language, which was our black skin - a sign of belonging to a lesser world, to a subhuman race of rural bumpkins, a lower caste of kolkhoz slaves, ghettoized in their wretched villages, paid in kind if at all, and deprived even of ID cards and the possibility to move elsewhere.

This was largely true but there was also a fundamental difference. Any Ukrainian who managed to sneak from his rural Third World - a sort of internal colony - to the more advanced quasi-First World of big cities, could easily change his stigmatized language, at least in the second generation, and pass for white.

Of course, the opportunities for escape were limited, even after Nikita Khrushchev de facto abolished the Stalinist slavery by giving the villagers their ID cards (internal passports). Still, he retained the *propiska* system which was a visa surrogate that protected the better off urban world from the undesirable rural aliens. Without *propiska*, nobody could get a legal job or housing in the city. The usual way to obtain a *propiska* was very similar to today's visa acquiring. One had either to bribe officials, or enter a college or university, or accept a job unpopular among the city-dwellers and assigned typically to immigrants from internal or external colonies.

The process of passing for white – of assimilation into the dominant culture – is quite an eligible material for a postcolonial study. It included the rejection of the native language and language-connected identity, exposure to daily contempt (both real and imaginary) from socially and culturally advanced urbanites, recurrent feeling of embarrassment for rural, uncultured relatives, and profound, psychologically highly damaging internalization of superiority of urban whites over rural blacks – Russophones over Ukrainophones<sup>2</sup>.

It was probably Michael Hechter who first raised the issue of “white racism” as a crucial factor that maintains the structure of the internal colony and facilitates assimilation of the oppressed minorities (their passing for “whites”) or, alternatively, pushes them toward nationalism (to defend their “blackness”). Even though “Anglo-Saxons and Celts cannot be differentiated by color,” he wrote in his book *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (1975), racism came to full flower there, as well<sup>3</sup>.

(1) A defining characteristic of imperial expansion [he argued] is that the centre must disparage the indigenous cultures of peripheral groups. (2) One of the consequences of this denigration of indigenous cultures is to undermine the native's will to resist the colonial regime. (3) Political incorporation also had a decisive effect on the progress of anglicisation, which proceeded not only by government fiat, but through the voluntary assimilation of peripheral elites. (...) The conscious rationale behind anglicisation among the peripheral elite was to dissociate themselves as much as possible from the mass of their countrymen, who were so strongly deprecated by English culture. Thus, they eagerly learned to speak English at home, to emulate English manners and attitudes, to style their very lives on the English model. In effect, this was a voluntary renunciation of their national origins<sup>4</sup>.

Alexander Motyl who discusses a similar problem in Russia's East Slavonic “fringe,” specifically in Ukraine, employs the less metaphorical and therefore more precise term “suprematism” to characterize the contemptuous attitude of many Russians and Russophones to Ukrainian-speaking aborigines<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The pioneering work on the topic was Oxana Grabowicz's paper *The Legacy of Colonialism and Communism in Ukraine: Some Key Issues* presented in 1993 in Lviv at the Third Congress of the International Association of Experts on Ukrainian Studies, and published eventually in “Perspectives on Contemporary Ukraine” 1995, nr 2; and in Ukrainian in “Arka” 1994, nr 2. She drew extensively on C. G. Jung's concept of “collective shadow”, Volodymyr Odajnyk's *Jung and Politics*, and Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*.

<sup>3</sup> M. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966*. London 1975, p. XVI–XVII.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> A. Motyl, *Soviet-Style Imperialism & the Ukrainian Language*. “World Affairs Journal” 11.02.2013; <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/blog/alexander-j-motyl/soviet-style-imperialism-ukrainian-language>

This is, indeed, only one of many more aspects of the postcommunist world that can be examined from the postcolonial perspective, and I shall try to address them, even though briefly, in my eventual presentation. What should be stressed, however, at very beginning is a simple fact that all sorts of suprematism, oppression, and discrimination abundant in the communist world are no match to genuine racism experienced by non-white people – all other remarkable similarities notwithstanding.

This disclaimer, I feel, should be clearly made to prevent our field from undue overstretching and, at the same time, to protect our study from accusations in illegitimate interference into the area monopolized by the “true” postcolonialists. We can speak about various aspects of postcoloniality in our states and employ various instruments of postcolonial research, but we should also remember that postcommunist world was not colonial *sensu stricto* because it did not have the idea of racial superiority in its ideological core and never made racial exclusion into political practice. Communism as a system was highly unjust and discriminative against various groups, but at the individual level all Soviet subjects had a much broader opportunity to avoid discrimination than colonial subjects in Africa whose fate was eternally sealed by the mere color of their skin.

### DEALING WITH “DOUBLE SILENCE”

The twelve years that have passed since the publication of the seminal David Chioni Moore’s article on postcommunism and postcolonialism, brought an impressive number of publications and conferences on the topic but did not dissuade the aura of marginality and tendentiousness around the subfield. This can be discerned in an obstinate disregard for the postcommunist world in mainstream postcolonial studies as well as in a similar ignorance of postcolonial problems and methodology in the mainstream studies of postcommunism. Virtually every scholar who dares to bridge the fields and match the “posts-” in postcommunism and postcolonialism, following Moor’s advice, starts his/her treatise with some sort of apology for the approach (s)he chose. And this also reflects the vagueness, uncertainty and contestability of the subfield<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> See H. Carey, R. Raciborski, *Postcolonialism: A Valid Paradigm for the Former Sovietized States and Yugoslavia?* “East European Politics & Societies” 2004, nr 2; J. Korek, *Central and Eastern Europe from a Postcolonial Perspective*. In: *From Sovietology to Postcoloniality. Poland and Ukraine from a Postcolonial Perspective*. Ed. J. Korek. Huddinge 2007; A. Fiut, *In the Shadows of Empires. Postcolonialism in Central and Eastern Europe – Why Not?* Ibidem.; *Postcolonialism/Postcommunism: Intersections and Overlaps*. Ed. M. Bottez et al. Bucharest 2011; M. Tlostanova, *Postsocialist ≠ Postcolonial? On Post-Soviet Imaginary and Global Coloniality*. “Journal of Postcolonial Writing” 2012, nr 2; T. Scheibner, *Okres postkolonialny czy postkolonialna Europa Wschodnia i Środkowa?* “Porównania” 2009, nr 6.

David Moore aptly outlined the main reasons for the postcommunists' and postcolonialists' mutual neglect, or, as he called it, "double silence". On the postcolonial side, he featured a "historical indebtedness to three-worlds theory" and the leftist inclinations of many postcolonialist scholars as the main cause of silence.

An enormous and honorable political commitment to the Third World has been central to much in three-worlds theorizing, the ancestor of postcolonial critique. One aspect of that commitment has been the belief, not without reason, that the First World largely caused the Third World's ills, and an allied belief that the Second's socialism was the best alternative. When most of the Second World collapsed in 1989 and 1991, the collapse resulted in the deflected silence ... and it still remains difficult, evidently, for three-worlds-raised post-colonial theorists to recognize within the Second World its postcolonial dynamic [and/or] to make the Soviet Union a French- or British-style villain<sup>7</sup>.

On the postcommunist side, Moore gave to main reasons for the reluctance of most scholars to apply the postcolonialist approach. First, he suggested that there was a noticeable discursive racially and religiously inflected line between the Soviet "West" and "East" which may have convinced the post-Soviet region's European peoples that "something radically, even „racially” differentiates them from the postcolonial Filipinos and Ghanaians who might otherwise claim to share their situation." And secondly, there was a strong postcolonial desire of Central and East European peoples to detach themselves from colonial Russia and "return to Europe" where they arguably had always belonged which "prevent[ed] most scholars of the post-Soviet sphere from contemplating „southern” postcoloniality"<sup>8</sup>. The Soviet dominance was understood primarily as occupation rather than colonization. East Europeans were afraid, not unreasonably, that their alleged colonial status would undermine their European identity in the eyes of the West Europeans and derail their fully-fledged integration into the Euro-Atlantic community.

Among other factors that determined the "double silence," omitted by Moore, we can mention, on the postcolonialist side, a desire to monopolize colonial sufferings and victimhood, and a fear that the really unique issue of racial discrimination and racist colonialism might be diluted and undermined by juxtaposing it with various cases of non-racial oppression and domination. (By the same token, the unique tragedy of Holocaust is often discursively fenced from any comparisons with other genocides or examination within the broader context of Nazi's "bloodlands" and brutal extermination of East European *untermenschen*<sup>9</sup>.)

On the postcommunist side, we can mention a widespread indebtedness to the transition paradigm that examines the changes in the Second world primarily in

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<sup>7</sup> D. Ch. Moore, *Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique*. "PMLA" 2001, nr 1, p. 117.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 118.

<sup>9</sup> T. Snyder, *Bloodlands*. New York 2010.

terms of democratization, institution building, and catch-up modernization<sup>10</sup>. All the cultural issues that are in the core of postcolonial theorizing, do not make up a significant part of the postcommunist studies. Perhaps only the path-dependence theory opens some venue for a postcolonial approach to postcommunism as not only a political, economic, or institutional phenomenon, but also a cultural and discursive<sup>11</sup>.

## CHECKING THE GROUND

There might be one more reason for a rather cautious attitude of postcommunism students towards postcolonialist methodology. They might be reasonably concerned with misusing the terms “empire”, “colonial”, or “subaltern” in popular journalism and political propaganda where they merely signify all things bad, and are often employed to charge the former metropolis with all current misfortunes, and discharge its alleged victims from any responsibility for their today’s plight. Additionally, the students of postcommunism might be aware of increasingly vociferous far-right movements in Eastern Europe that often articulate their anti-globalist and anti-modernity angst in anti-colonial terms, presenting the West as the new master who merely replaced the old one in Moscow.

All these factors might be good reasons for cautiousness but certainly not for the “double silence”. However significant are the multiple differences between the Second and the Third Worlds, it is similarities that justify application of theoretical concepts and critical instruments elaborated in postcolonial studies to some phenomena and developments in postcommunism. An application does not mean equation; with due reservations and methodological self-restraint, the critical language of postcolonialism might be “pertinent enough to represent the complex histories of dependence in a region that can be defined as the broadest conceivable margin of Europe, and the consequences of these histories for the present moment in social, cultural, political and economic terms.” It may provide us, as Dorota Kolodziejczyk and Cristina Sandru aptly suggest, with a wide range of “themes and concepts that postcolonial theoretical and critical practices have either formulated or helped propagate – i.e. structures of exclusion/inclusion (the centre/periphery model and theorizations of the liminal and “in-between”); formations of nationalism, structures of othering and representations of difference; forms and historical realizations of anti-colonial/anti-imperial struggle; the experience of trauma (involving issues of collective memory/amnesia and the rewriting of history); resistance as a complex of cultural practices; concepts such as alterity, ambivalence,

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<sup>10</sup> Th. Carothers, *The End of the Transition Paradigm*. “Journal of Democracy” 2002, nr 2.

<sup>11</sup> R. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*. Princeton 1993.

self-colonization, cultural geography, dislocation, minority and subaltern cultures, neocolonialism, orientalization, transnationalism<sup>12</sup>."

Remarkably, the authors are fully aware of the "potentially disabling problem posed by a comparative approach which seeks to find a common ground in intellectual perspectives that are differentially charged across historical and ideological contexts." Many critics of this approach may concede that "the earlier imperial legacies of east-central Europe (involving the Habsburg, Ottoman or Russian empires), or even the current postcommunist transition period marked by neocolonial imbalances of power similar to those between the rich north and the developing south, might benefit from a postcolonially-inflected investigation." Still, they are not so eager to recognize a direct link between colonialism and totalitarian communism, pointing to the multi-tiered disjunctions:

historical, societal and economic circumstances that cannot be conflated; different ideologies – colonialism as capitalism, socialism as an alleged transcendence of capitalist individualism; a rhetoric of difference construing the Other as essentially antagonistic versus a rhetoric of equality aimed precisely at erasing difference<sup>13</sup>.

The goal of the students is not therefore to reject the differences and disjunctions but, rather, to draw on conjunctions and similarities – as Kolodziejczyk and Sandru do referring to Neil Lazarus's reflections on the "destructive effect of capitalist regimes of expropriation and accumulation on the societies they colonized" and comparing it to the "behaviour of the socialist Soviet state towards the entities it brought under its political control": "For "applied Marxism" (i.e. communism) was, like industrial capitalism, a purveyor of enforced modernization; many of its policies – rapid industrialization and urbanization, development of infrastructure, fight against religious prejudice, tribalism and "traditional ways" (seen as barbaric by the colonial masters and "bourgeois" by the communists) – are similar to those deployed in newly-colonized countries<sup>14</sup>."

David Moore, in the aforementioned article, draws an even more detailed comparison between Russo-Soviet colonialism in adjacent territories and Western overseas colonialism deemed "classical". He describes colonization of Africa in a way that makes it strikingly similar to Russo-Soviet takeovers of neighbouring lands:

Indigenous governments are replaced with puppet control or outright rule. African education is revamped to privilege the colonizer's language, and histories and curricula are rewritten from the empire's perspective. Autochthonous religious traditions are

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<sup>12</sup> D. Kołodziejczyk, C. Sandru, *Introduction: On colonialism, communism and East-central Europe – some reflections*. "Journal of Postcolonial Writing" 2012, nr 2, p. 113.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 114.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 115.

suppressed in the colonial zone, idols are destroyed, and alternative religions and non-religious ideologies are promoted. The colonized areas of Africa become economic fiefs. Little or no „natural“ trade is allowed between the colonies and economies external to the colonizer's network. Economic production is undertaken on a command basis and is geared to the dominant power's interests rather than to local needs. Local currencies, if they exist, are only convertible to the metropolitan specie. Agriculture becomes mass monoculture, and environmental degradation follows. In the human realm, African dissident voices are heard most clearly only in exile, though accession to exile is difficult. Oppositional energies are therefore channeled through forms including mimicry, satire, parody, and jokes. But a characteristic feature of society is cultural stagnation<sup>15</sup>.

David Moore makes important qualification that both the communist and colonial worlds were pretty diverse, and therefore not all the colonial characteristics can be applied equally to all the states. The Soviet Union, in particular, was a very special empire, and

those who would characterize the Soviet experiment as noncolonial can point, *inter alia*, to the Soviet Union's wish to liberate its toiling masses; its dismantling of many ethnic-Russian privileges in the east and south; its support of many Union languages [however limited and ambiguous. – M.R.]; its development of factories, hospitals, and schools; its liberation of women from the harem and the veil; its support of Third World anticolonial struggles, seen as intimately connected with the Soviet experiment, from 1923 to 1991; and the fact that some minority of the Soviet sphere's non-Russians wished the Bolshevik regime.

On the other hand, he continues,

those who would argue that the Soviets were simply differently configured colonists could point, again *inter alia*, to the mass and arbitrary relocation of entire non-Russian peoples; (...) the genocidal settling of the Kazakh nomad millions from 1929 to 1934; the forced monoculture across Central Asia and the consequent ecological disaster of the Aral Sea; the Soviets' reconquest of the once independent Baltic states in 1941; the invariable Russian ethnicity of the number-two man in each republic; the inevitable direction of Russia's Third World policy from its Moscow center; and tanks in 1956 and 1968 in Budapest and Prague<sup>16</sup>.

There are many more arguments that may support either the colonial or noncolonial character of the Soviet Union<sup>17</sup> but Moore implies that their net result is de-

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<sup>15</sup> D. Ch. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 123–124.

<sup>17</sup> See T. Martin, *An Affirmative Action Empire: The Soviet Union as the Highest Form of Imperialism*. In: Suny R. G., Martin T. (eds.), *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*. Oxford 2001; F. Hirsch, *Empire of nations: ethnographic knowledge & the making of the Soviet Union*.



terminated primarily by the subjective feelings of subjugated peoples: "From an Uzbek, Lithuanian, or Hungarian perspective" the situation was definitely colonial. "By most classic measures – lack of sovereign power, restrictions on travel, military occupation, lack of convertible specie, a domestic economy ruled by the dominating state, and forced education in the colonizer's tongue – Central Europe's nations were indeed under Russo-Soviet control from roughly 1948 to 1989 or 1991<sup>18</sup>."

Needless to say that by all these measures, Soviet nations within the internal empire were even under tougher control and for a longer time.

## OUTLINING THE LIMITS

This way of reasoning leads us inevitably to the conclusion that nearly all nations in the world were at some point colonial and therefore can be analyzed now from the postcolonial perspective. David Moore does not feel any discomfort with this assumption, even though he recognizes the risk of inflation of the category „postcolonial” that may divest it of any analytic force. He defends an inflation – at least to a degree that allows to include the “enormous post-Soviet sphere.” Primarily –

because Russia and then the Soviet Union exercised powerful colonial control over much of the earth for from fifty to two hundred years, much of that control has now ended, and its ending has had manifest effects on the literatures and cultures of the postcolonial-post-Soviet nations, including Russia.

This barely raises any objections, especially as the author notes the “specific modalities of Russo-Soviet control [and] their post-Soviet reverberations,” and recognizes their substantial difference from the “standard Anglo-Franco cases.” His next twist, however, is very contentious:

But then again, to privilege the Anglo-Franco cases as the colonizing standard and to call the Russo-Soviet experiences deviations, as I have done so far, is wrongly to perpetuate the already superannuated centrality of the Western or Anglo-Franco world. It is time, I think, to break with that tradition<sup>19</sup>.

This logic is very odd since our recognition of the unique experience of racially subjugated people under colonialism does not privilege their oppressors any bit

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Ithaca 2005; С. Величенко, *Чи була Україна російською колонією? Деякі зауваження щодо поняття колоніалізм.* “Україна модерна” 2009, nr 3.

<sup>18</sup> D. Ch. Moore, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, p. 123.

more than a similar recognition of uniqueness of Holocaust privileges the Nazis. The unquestionable centrality of racist-related experience in postcolonial studies has nothing to do with the alleged centrality of the Western or Anglo-Franco world. It merely establishes a reasonable framework and provides a convenient gauge for other experiences that can be compared to a certain degree and in specific aspects with that primary experience – but never can claim their own centrality, at least in terms of (post)coloniality.

If we imagine some axes where the quantified scope and strength of colonial subjugation can be located, the racist colonialism would certainly represent its absolute, undeniable crux. The experience of racially different people of the Russian and eventually Soviet empires may represent the closest analogue to “standard” colonialism – either of a settlers type, as in the Far North and Siberia<sup>20</sup>, or a classical-conquering type as in North Caucasus (up to present days) and Central Asia.<sup>21</sup> On the other side, Central and Eastern Europe represents the most distant case, with very tenuous similarities to “standard” colonialism – firstly, because all the nations of the outer empire retained some degree of political, economic and, especially, cultural sovereignty, incomparable to the nations of the inner empire; and secondly, because they never internalized inferiority complex vis-a-vis their master.<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, all of them cherished some sort of “occidental” superiority vis-a-vis “eastern barbarians”, so that the latter had to rely primarily on the crude force, very tenuously legitimized by the narrative of WWII liberation and buttressed by even more dubious myth of the superior Marxist-Leninist truth emanating from Moscow. All this types them primarily as countries occupied by the Soviets and transformed into a sort of protectorates, managed in a rather neocolonial than colonial way.

Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova represent an intermediate case between rather standard colonialism in the Russo-Soviet Asia and Caucasus and a rather light neocolonial rule over Central and Eastern Europe. On the one hand, as a group, they did not enjoy even the limited sovereignty as did their western neighbors. On the other hand, as individuals, they were not discriminated against since they were considered “almost the same” people as Russians, with whom they eventually were to create the core of the Russian-speaking “Soviet nation<sup>23</sup>.” David Moore assigns them to the third, “dynastic” type of colonization, which was possible only

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<sup>20</sup> Yu. Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North*. Ithaca 1994.

<sup>21</sup> S. Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy*. Cambridge 1994.

<sup>22</sup> C. Sandru, *Worlds Apart? A Postcolonial Reading of Post-1945 East-Central European Culture*. Cambridge 2012.

<sup>23</sup> A. Kappeler, *Mazepintsy, Malorossy, Khokhly: Ukrainians in the Ethnic Hierarchy of the Russian Empire*. In: *Culture, Nation, and Identity*. Ed. A. Kappeler et al. Edmonton 2003; A. Motyl, *Will the Non-Russians Rebel?* Ithaca 1987.

before the advent of modern nationalism and spread of national self-awareness among masses far beyond the narrow circle of educated elite. Until then, the empire needed only to co-opt the local elite into the imperial establishment to secure their loyalty and did not need to care much about the rest of the population.

Both the Russian and Soviet empires were inclusive enough to engage the most active Ukrainians and Belarusians into the imperial project by providing them due social lifting and, at the same time, suppressing sparse (proto)nationalistic dissent. One may argue, that inclusiveness of the empire facilitated assimilation of local elites, whereas imperial backwardness precluded assimilation of masses – as it happened, for instance, in a similar situation of dynastic colonization of various nationalities in France<sup>24</sup>. Russian empire succeeded in complete russification of cities but failed to do this in the mostly illiterate countryside<sup>25</sup>. Soviet modernization brought rather mixed result, boosting urbanization-russification on the one hand, but also provoking some sort of a belated “national awakening” (at least in the first, least repressive decade), on the other hand. The de facto enslavement of peasants in Soviet kolkhozes upheld the general ambiguity, making all things Ukrainian/Belarusian even more contemptible and unattractive on the one hand, but also preserving them in a socially engineered thematic park (or, rather, ghetto) on the other hand.

In many terms, Belarus and Ukraine can be considered alongside Russia as Soviet internal colonies, where the urbanized quasi-First world exploited the rural quasi-Third world in all possible terms – as was briefly described in the beginning of this essay<sup>26</sup>. The difference between them and Russia, however, was also crucial. In Russia, both the colonizer and the colonized were of the same ethnicity, culture and language. In Belarus and Ukraine, the quasi-First world spoke Russian, whereas the quasi-Third world spoke Ukrainian (or Belarusian). There, unlike in Russia, colonial relations were ethnicized; local language and culture became a stigma, a sign of backwardness, “blackness”, and inferiority vis-a-vis the superior Russophones who represented both wealth and power – a relative, largely fictitious wealth of the Soviet cities, and absolute, highly coercive power of the totalitarian state.

The plight of inhabitants of the internal colonies might have been similar all over the Soviet Union. In Russia, however, besides the rural quasi-Third world, there was also the quasi-First world of big cities, primarily of Moscow and Lenin-

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<sup>24</sup> E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914*. Stanford 1974.

<sup>25</sup> А. Миллер, “Украинский вопрос” в политике властей и русском общественном мнении (вторая половина XIX века). С.-Петербург 2000.

<sup>26</sup> See also M. Riabchuk, *The Ukrainian ‘Friday’ and the Russian ‘Robinson’: The Uneasy Advent of Postcoloniality*. “Canadian American Slavic Studies” 2010, nr 1–2; A Etkind, *Internal Colonialism*. Cambridge 2011; А. Эткнд А. et al. (ред.), *Там, внутри. Практики внутренней колонизации в культурной истории России*. Москва 2012.

grad, where the native language and culture could flourish or at least stood alive, despite all ideological limitations, – something that was absolutely impossible in Kyiv, or Mensk, or elsewhere in those countries. This makes their postcolonial situation profoundly different from either Russian or Central European, or even West Ukrainian – which is closer, in many terms to that of the Baltic states, fitting essentially the Central and Eastern European pattern of occupied rather than colonized lands.

## TOWARD THE GLOCALIZATION OF POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES (IN A WAY OF CONCLUSION)

Coming back to David Moore's annunciation of postcoloniality as a global, universal condition of our days, we may wonder if it really “becomes as fundamental to world identities as other „universal” categories, such as race, and class, and caste, and age, and gender.” But we may fully agree with his more balanced statement – that

[t]he colonial encounters of the past two hundred years... were so global and widespread, in unstandardizable diversity, that every human being and every literature on the planet today stands in relation to them: as neo-, endo- and ex-, as post- and non-. This observation... should recast the views of postcolonial and post-Soviet scholars alike: not so much to help them judge whether place X „is postcolonial or not” ... but rather to cause them to ask if postcolonial hermeneutics might add richness to studies of place or literature X or Y or Z<sup>27</sup>.

I believe that the “postcolonial hermeneutics” should be the key-word here. This is actually what the scholars from our region meant when urged the colleagues to “take advantage of the resources of postcolonial studies” and benefit from the “self-reflexive quality of the ‘post’ in both postcommunism and postcolonialism, maintaining, at the same time, “the cautious skepticism of a comparatist/translator careful not to lose important differences in translation,” not to “engage in the fantasy of a fully autonomous, vernacular theory on the region, or in a wholesale import of a theoretical model.” As a viable alternative, they heralded “a multifaceted inquiry into the region’s location in European modernity, an inquiry that does not so much seek some postcolonial status for east-central Europe as it strives to find, theorize, and make productive spaces of difference within similar paradigms of subjection, subalternity and peripheralization<sup>28</sup>.”

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<sup>27</sup> D. Ch. Moore, op. cit., p. 124.

<sup>28</sup> D. Kołodziejczyk, C. Sandru, op. cit., p. 116.

As a person who deals primarily with political transformations in the post-communist world and in my native Ukraine in particular, I had many occasions to check the usability of “postcolonial hermeneutics” for analysis of many phenomena that can hardly be understood properly behind the framework of postcoloniality. Beforehand I sketched briefly Ukraine's postcolonial peculiarities among other postcommunist states. But there are even more interesting peculiarities within Ukraine, determined by different types of colonialism in different regions – the post-WWII occupation of the West that never resulted in any internalization of the colonial power by the natives, “dynastic” colonization of the Centre that brought rather mixed results in terms of assimilation and “settlers” colonization of the south east that resulted in a large-scale inferiorization and assimilation of local Ukrainians.

There are many more topics where the postcolonial analysis might be helpful – as long as we remember its original source and its limitations, and use it as an auxiliary instrument – alongside other analytical tools of postcommunist studies and not instead of them.

