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Intellectual Sources of Parisian "Kultura": Adolf Bocheński's Wartime Political Thought

Intelektualne źródła paryskiej „Kultury". Myśl polityczna Adolfa Bocheńskiego okresu wojny

ABSTRACT

A significant aspect of the study of political thought is the recognition of its creativity, expressed in the ability to evaluate the past critically and to formulate groundbreaking ideas at moments of radical social and political changes. Undoubtedly, Adolf Bocheński's political thought in the texts published during World War II had this attribute. The ideas that Bocheński produced were a vital source of inspiration for the program of the magazine called Parisian "Kultura", which was the most influential center of Polish political emigration after 1945. The forerunning political thought of Bocheński inspired the critical approach of Jerzy Giedroyc's magazine to the social system of the Second Republic and a willingness to support transformations aimed at making social groups hitherto excluded from active participation in the life of the national community more aware of their rights as citizens. Bocheński's neo-federalist concepts were even more inspiring. He was undoubtedly a precursor of the concepts of eastern policy of Parisian "Kultura". When designing the post-war policy of Polish emigration, he postulated linking the Polish cause with the fight for national independence of nations subjugated by the Soviet Union, in particular with the idea of Ukraine's independence.

Keywords: Adolf Bocheński; Jerzy Gie droyc; Parisian "Kultura"; concepts of eastern policy; Ukraine's independence

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INTRODUCTION

An essential aspect of the study of political thought is the recognition of its creativity, expressed in the ability to evaluate the past and to formulate groundbreaking ideas at times of radical social and political changes. This article concerns a little-known fragment of Adolf Bocheński's intellectual output, which dates to World War II. I reconstruct the political thought of the author of *Między Niemcami a Rosją* (*Between Germany and Russia*) and put forward the thesis that it was an invaluable source of inspiration for the program of Parisian "Kultura" ("Paris-based Culture – Polish émigré literary-political magazine"), the most influential center of Polish political emigration after 1945.

The work of Bocheński has been the subject of scholarly and journalistic reflection for many years. The works authored by Marcin Król, Rafał Habielski, Aleksandra Kosicka-Pajewska, and Maciej Zakrzewski should be mentioned.[1] However, Bocheński's writing output from the war period and its impact on the post-1945 emigration thought have not been the subject of scholarly analysis. This article aims to fill this gap and to indicate the creative and innovative character of Bocheński's thought. The methodological approach of the article is based on the interpretation of Bocheński's texts, supplemented by the analysis of personal testimonies of people who played crucial roles in the intellectual life of Polish emigration. These testimonies enable a better interpretation of political thought and its impact. I assume that the political thought of Parisian "Kultura" has been accurately described and interpreted in many scientific works.[2]

BEFORE THE WAR WORLD II

At the outbreak of World War II, Adolf Bocheński was 30 years old and was already a respected political commentator. He declared himself to be a continuator of the school of Polish conservatism, particularly valuing the output of the Kraków group called after the Polish court jester, Stańczyk. He was undoubtedly the most

[1] R. Habielski, *Dokąd nam iść wypada? Jerzy Giedroyc. Od „Buntu Młodych" do „Kultury"*, Warszawa 2006; M. Król, *Style politycznego myślenia. Wokół „Buntu Młodych" i „Polityki"*, Paryż 1979; A. Kosicka-Pajewska, *Polska między Rosją a Niemcami. Koncepcje polityczne Adolfa Bocheńskiego*, Poznań 1992; M. Zakrzewski, *Rewolucja konserwatywna – przypadek polski. Myśl polityczna środowiska „Buntu Młodych" i „Polityki" 1931–1939*, Kraków 2021.

[2] R. Habielski, *op. cit.*; *Aktualność przesłania paryskiej „Kultury" w dzisiejszej Europie*, red. Ł. Jasina, J. Kłoczowski, A. Gil, Lublin 2007; J. Hofman, *Polska, Niemcy, Europa: program zachodni paryskiej „Kultury"*, Lublin 2009; A.S. Kowalczyk, *Wena do polityki. O Giedroyciu i Mieroszewskim*, t. 1–2, Warszawa 2014; K. Pomian, *W kręgu Jerzego Giedroycia*, Warszawa 2000; M. Żebrowski, *Życie przed „Kulturą"*, Kraków 2012.

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prominent commentator of the magazines published by Jerzy Giedroyc – "Bunt Młodych" and "Polityka".[3] The constitutional issues and foreign policy were the main subjects of his journalism. Bocheński believed that, in the enormously difficult geopolitical situation, the vital interest of the Republic called for stable and solid executive power. Hence, he was critical of the March Constitution, which had failed to create the basis for a stable parliamentary majority and efficient executive power. At the same time, he fought against totalitarian and authoritarian tendencies, assuming that constitutional reform was possible and desirable within the framework of civilized rules and political competition typical of parliamentary democracy.

In the second half of the 1930s, Bocheński concentrated on foreign policy. The book *Między Niemcami a Rosją* (*Between Germany and Russia*) was an excellent study of European politics and the dilemmas that Poland's foreign policy[4] had to solve. Bocheński was convinced that the real danger was the prospect of German-Soviet cooperation against Poland's independence. He was looking for solutions to maintain antagonism between Germany and Russia. He advocated the creation of independent Ukraine as a factor structurally weakening Russia and strengthening Poland's security. In the above-mentioned work and in texts published in "Polityka" magazine, he presented the idea of neo-federalism – a partner federation of Poland, Ukraine, and the nations of Eastern Europe. He admired the work of Marshal Józef Piłsudski but was courageous enough to criticize the actions of the Sanation (Pol. *Sanacja*) regime after 1926. He opposed not only authoritarianism, but also the policy toward national minorities. Bocheński was an ardent supporter of liberalizing minority policy, especially concerning the Ukrainian minority. His experience of a man from the Borderlands (Pol. *Kresy*) (as he was born and lived in his manor in Ponikwo near Tarnopol) made him respect cultural diversity and understand the coexistence of both nations. For Bocheński, the state aspect was crucial. In his opinion, a rational policy towards the Ukrainian minority guaranteed social peace and prevented the disintegration of the state.

TOWARDS SOCIAL REFORMS

The moment the war started, Adolf Bocheński decided to do his military service. He fought in the September Campaign and immediately afterwards made his way through Hungary and Italy to France, where he received training in Breton Coëtquidan. In 1940, he fought at Narvik and defended France. In December of that year, he reached the Middle East, where the Polish Independent Carpathian Brigade

[3] K.M. Ujazdowski, *Żywotność konserwatyzmu. Idee polityczne Adolfa Bocheńskiego*, Warszawa 2004.

[4] A. Bocheński, *Między Niemcami a Rosją*, Warszawa 1937.

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was formed. He was one of the most famous soldiers of II Corps and remained at the front until his death near Ancona in July 1944.

In the first years of emigration, Piłsudski elite were held to account in an atmosphere of harsh condemnation. Judgments formulated at that time did not allow for a reliable assessment of the inter-war period. Bocheński attempted a recapitulation from the state perspective, as close to objectivity as possible. The journalist maintained a critical opinion on the minority policy of the Second Republic, but his judgment during the war was more balanced than before 1939. From a distance, one could see a glaring difference between Poland and the USSR, where there was discrimination and attrition of national minorities on a large scale.

More significant, however, was another aspect of the Second Republic's assessment. Just before 1939, Bocheński was severely critical of Poland's hermetic social structure, dominated by the clerical intelligentsia which took over the privileged position of the nobility. He wrote critically about the "bulgarization" of Poland, i.e. the Bulgarian-like situation in which, apart from the peasants, there was no group maintaining economic independence of the state[5]. During the War, Bocheński formulated this issue in a more cautious manner. In his text *Khanaquin and Coetquidan*, he stated: "One of the main causes of social tensions in Poland is a difficulty in passing from one social class to another. As a result of the lack of an 'equal start in life', i.e. lack of funds for education, a great number of exceptionally talented people cannot show their abilities, because they cannot gain a diploma. That causes unrest which is dangerous to the system". And he added: "(…) the question of the gap existing between the different classes in Poland, strictly speaking between the intelligentsia and the people, (…) makes Poland different from other countries, and it is the source of judgments about our country as a stronghold of reaction".[6]

Bocheński saw this problem from the perspective of national unity and concern for a firm social basis for the state. The journalist analyzed thoroughly the presence among the people of a radical and social set of views, which remain outside the hierarchy of values that create "an essential national unity". In his opinion, "the time that was most important for the development of Poland's identity means for the popular strata social injustice and exclusion from deciding on the fate of the nation and the state".[7] Here, there is the source of a tradition from Kostka Napierski through Father Ściegienny to *Kordian and Cham* by Leon Kruczkowski. The opposition in which this current found itself against the notion of Polishness was crumbling the national unity and undermining the possibilities of Polish politics.

[5] A similar argumentation can be found in the policy document of the community of "Polityka". See Zespół "Polityki", *Polska idea imperialna*, "Polityka" 1937.

[6] A. Bocheński, *Khanaquin i Coetquidan*, "Orzeł Biały", 24.10.1943.

[7] *Ibidem*.

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The wartime created an exceptionally favorable climate for democratizing relations and opening the social fabric. In the army, for obvious reasons, actual accomplishments meant more than formal positions and diplomas. Bocheński and Giedroyc advocated the appointment of talented people to command posts and relaxation of the official criteria for admission to officer cadet schools.[8] In Poland, the German occupation caused a social revolution. The eviction of the landed gentry and the intelligentsia from their estates in Greater Poland, Silesia and the Borderlands led to the easing of social tensions, while the patriotic attitude of these circles facilitated "the final assimilation of the strata once impaired to the romantic ideal of Poland".[9]

The appearance of this issue in Bocheński's political thought is evidence of a strong reaction to one of the most vital defects of the Second Republic. As it was mentioned earlier, he developed his views under the influence of numerous conversations with people from his ideological environment, above all with Jerzy Giedroyc and Józef Czapski. One should emphasize here that after the war, Parisian "Kultura" expressed views close to the social and democratic movement. The outline of the *Democratic Manifesto* (Pol. *Manifest demokratyczny*) written by Adolf's brother, Father Józef Bocheński and signed in 1951 by the whole team of "Kultura" magazine was radical and anti-capitalist in character.[10] The document, drafted in the spirit of European socialism, rejected capitalism as a system of unjustified inequality which "leads to morally intolerable situations".[11]

NEO-FEDERALIST PROPOSALS

Another strand of Adolf Bocheński's political thought during the War was the development of neo-federalist proposals. Attention should be paid to an exceptionally favorable background to those concepts in the situation when the Government's official policy was raising federalist issues. In December 1939, Prime Minister Władysław Sikorski expressed Poland's will to participate in a solidarity-based group of Slavic states. Prime Minister Sikorski's declaration signified his support for the concept of a confederation or federation of the states located in the Adriatic, Baltic, and Black Sea areas, intending to create a force to counterbalance the threat from Germany and Russia. The more specific political undertaking was the signing of the acts of the Polish-Czech Confederation with Beneš Government in 1940, and two years later, the Constitutional Act of the Union of Poland and Czechoslo-

[8] *Ibidem*.
[9] *Ibidem*.
[10] Zespół "Kultury", *Zarys Manifestu demokratycznego*, "Kultura" 1951, no. 9.
[11] *Ibidem*.

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vakia.[12] The act of aggression by Germany and Russia had certainly considerable significance for the revival of federation concepts. The design of a regional union of states was to form the basis of their independent existence in post-war Europe.

During the War, Polish integration thought gained momentum. Polish federalists, Oskar Halecki, Aleksander Bregman and Feliks Gross found an opportunity to promote their ideas in the USA. Their magazine "New Europe" was addressed to American experts and intended to influence the plans of the State Department.[13] This magazine projected a federation between Germany and Russia involving Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic states, Austria, and Yugoslavia. After 1943, when the Americans began to think about the post-war order and integration of Europe with the participation of Germany, Halecki and other federalists proclaimed a need for a regional sub-federation as a vital span of integration for the entire Europe.[14] That project was continued by the political thought of the post-war emigration,[15] and it also constituted a significant component of the manifesto of Parisian "Kultura".

Bocheński may have been satisfied. The federation ideas, which had not previously found wider recognition, gained support from the Polish Government in the new political situation and became an object of keen interest to the journalists. However, he warned against the Polonisation of federation concepts and revived the idea of neo-federalism, which consisted in creating a voluntary and partnership-like union between Poland and the nations of Central and Eastern Europe, particularly with independent Ukraine. That is why he opposed the revitalisation of the Jagiellonian idea. The conservative journalist reminded that the Jagiellonian era meant to our neighbors a period of Poland's political and cultural domination and a halt to their national aspirations.

PLAN FOR POST-WAR EMIGRATION

The Polish government-in-exile believed Poland had regained independence thanks to its participation in the efforts of the Allied forces against German expansion. The moment Germany invaded the USSR and Stalin joined the anti-German coalition, Polish politics found itself in a new situation. It had to face an ally who did not accept the integrity of the Polish state within the pre-1939 borders. Adolf Bocheński, like Jerzy Giedroyc, was a firm opponent of Władysław Sikorski's pol-

[12] The plans for a Polish-Czech agreement were prevented by Czechoslovakia because of the orientation of the policy of Prime Minister Edward Beneš towards cooperation with the Soviet Union.

[13] S. Łukasiewicz, *Trzecia Europa. Polska myśl federalistyczna w Stanach Zjednoczonych 1940–1971*, Warszawa–Lublin 2010.

[14] F. Gross, *Federacje i konfederacje europejskie. Rodowód i wizje*, Warszawa 1994, p. 43.

[15] M.M. Maciejewski, L. Machaj, *O jedność Europy. Antologia polskiej XX-wiecznej myśli europejskiej*, Warszawa 2007.

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icy as being too compliant with Russia. Both were highly critical of the behavior of their colleague Ksawery Pruszyński, who became a close associate of Ambassador Stanisław Kot, and at the end of the War, an advocate of seeking cooperation with Russia.[16] Such was the message of the essay entitled *Margrabia Wielopolski* (*Margrave Wielopolski*), published in 1943. One should remember that the signing of the Sikorski-Mayski agreement in 1941 weakened the inviolability of Poland's eastern borders and aggravated the dispute over the direction of Polish policy. "From the final resolution of the National Council and numerous speeches, it is known that the question of our eastern borders has not yet been resolved. Every intelligent person knows that there are countries which have not given up on establishing their social system in Europe – this system is repulsive to us",[17] Bocheński wrote in his article *Duch dziejów Polski* (*The Spirit of Polish History*). At the same time, he had no illusions about rebuilding an independent Polish state after the war ended. He was aware that Soviet expansion would primarily affect the Eastern Borderlands. As early as the moment of the German aggression against the Soviet Union, he was aware that World War II would deprive us of our independence. Jan Erdman recalled an exchange with Bocheński in the summer of 1941: "Adolf was a wise and far-sighted man. I remember a newspaper arriving at our bunkers in Tobruk in 1941 with the news of the outbreak of the German-Soviet war. Everyone was overwhelmed with joy. The prospects of victory became so much more likely than Vernyhora's prophecies. You probably remember it, don't you? Meanwhile, Adolf came out into the foreground with me and doused me with a cup of cold water. 'Don't you realize what has happened? – he said. – 'If the Germans win despite everything – we will die. If the Allies win, we will be in the Soviet orbit'".[18]

In this situation, Bocheński believed that the task of Polish political thought was to uphold the idea of independence and to influence Western public opinion. He thought that for that reason an uncompromising stance had to be adopted. In his text *Polska w polityce Stalina* (*Poland in Stalin's politics*), he wrote: "The only way for the Anglo-Saxon countries to see clearly, what is going on in Poland is to separate themselves clearly at every step from the Soviets and from the few Poles who are in favor of cooperation with them. In this case, the Soviet aim, i.e., the incorporation of Poland without any brawls or scandals likely to shake anyone's

[16] K. Pruszyński, *Margrabia Wielopolski*, Warszawa 1957. In an oral account given to me, Jerzy Giedroyc was very harsh in his assessment of Ksawery Pruszyński's behavior: "Ksawery Pruszyński conducted foolish activities at that post in Kyiv. He was driven by personal ambition. After the war, he hoped for an ambassadorship in the Vatican. In 1940, he spoke very badly of Sikorski, but when the latter invited him to London after the defeat of France, he did not even say goodbye to Adolf Bocheński and his brother Mieczysław and left" (from an oral account by Jerzy Giedroyc given to me in July 1989).

[17] A. Bocheński, *Duch dziejów Polski*, "Kultura" 1946, no. 2–3.

[18] Letter of 11 March 1975 written by Jan Erdman to Adam Majewski (in the author's archives).

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conscience, will not be able to be fulfilled".[19] This fragment when read in 1945, must have sounded polemical towards the actions of Stanisław Mikołajczyk and those who took up political activity in Poland within the framework of the limited People's Democracy. Bocheński's article could also be seen as a foretelling of the direction taken by Parisian "Kultura", built to uphold the Polish cause in exile. Bocheński emphasized the necessity to universalize Polish politics: "(…) if we want our political slogans to resonate internationally, we must put them on a much more universal plane. The nation's interest is considered important and valuable for us, but much less so for the foreigners whom we address. That is why it is exceptionally significant that, while defending our interests, we at the same time raise the interests of the nations that are closer to us, which are in a similar or even worse situation, such as the Baltic States or the countries of Intermarium in general".[20]

One can look at Bocheński's texts of 1943 and 1944 as an attempt to prepare the Polish emigration for the period of Soviet domination in Poland and Central and Eastern Europe. In the last years of World War II, he defended Poland's good name against the accusations increasingly present in the Allied press. Shortly before his death, he wrote a passionate polemic against the views of George W. Keeton, a British lawyer and expert that in his book questioned the rights of the Republic of Poland to the Eastern Territories.[21] Bocheński responded competently to the misinformation contained in Keeton's texts. The British lawyer claimed that the Second Polish Republic did not allow teaching the Ukrainian language at schools and even went so far as to claim that the situation in this respect was worse than in the Soviet Union. Earlier, Bocheński had disputed the texts of the French journalist, G. Tabouis. That journalist attributed part of the responsibility for the outbreak of the War[22] to Poland's intransigence towards the USSR. The French journalist's texts showed the influence of Soviet propaganda on public opinion in the Allied countries

[19] A. Bocheński, *Polska w polityce Stalina*, [in:] idem, *Między Niemcami…*, Kraków 2010.

[20] *Ibidem*.

[21] Idem, *Prowokacyjna Książka*, "Orzeł Biały", 13.8.1944 (posthumous publication).

[22] "The way the Polish diplomacy evaluated the policy of the Soviets during that period seems to be much closer to the historical truth. Until the danger existed that the Western countries would postpone the war indefinitely or even avoid it altogether through constant concessions to Germany the USSR was trying through its proposals of treaties to stiffen the position of the Western countries and to give them a boost against Germany. However, when because of the guarantee given by Chamberlain to Poland and the Balkan states, the policy of the Western countries was rapidly stiffening, the Soviet policy came to the conviction that to provoke a war it was rather necessary to strengthen the aggressive tendencies of Germany, which in this combination decided on military action. The whole interpretation of the Soviet policy by Ms. G. Tabouis loses all sense when we recall that the Soviets were bound with France by the Eastern Pact, when France was giving way to Germany in everything, allowing remilitarization of the Rhineland, armament, etc." (idem, *Wojna prewencyjna z Niemcami*, "Orzeł Biały", 12.11.1943).

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to strengthen the acceptance of Soviet claims to Poland's Eastern Borderlands, the Baltic States and Bessarabia.

We also owe Bocheński the first analysis of the installation of communism in Poland. The author had predicted that at the first stage the communist policy would operate by mild means and would use camouflage aimed at disorienting Western public opinion. "The next stage in the effort to achieve this must be some form of connection between the legal Polish government in London and the ruthless supporters of Polish-Russian union, and if this fails, to undermine in the eyes of the West the feeling that our legal government does indeed represent Poland. It would, of course, be more desirable from the point of view of these plans, however, to supplement the government with some Soviet supporters and then slowly purge it of bourgeois elements, according to the methods used in the Balkans".[23] Only later, in the next phase, will the communization and total subjugation of Poland take place. Furthermore, Bocheński also foresaw internal tensions in the future socialist camp. "If a large part of the globe were to adopt this system today, new centers would undoubtedly arise after some time which could threaten the primacy of Russia". In the text, we have a forecast of the empowerment of communist China and Yugoslavia. At the same time, Bocheński believed that communists in Poland would not manage to create an autonomous position towards Moscow.[24]

CONCLUSIONS

Adolf Bocheński's wartime journalism indicates the creativity of Polish political thought. The capacity to appraise the Second Republic demonstrated a readiness to create an order satisfying the criteria of justice and which would make broad social groups more aware of their rights as citizens. A turn in this direction, present in the thinking of political circles supporting the government in exile, was one of the characteristic features of the emigration thought during World War II. The sharpness of Bocheński's views was typical of the circle of people who co-founded Parisian

[23] Idem, *Polska*...

[24] "On the other hand, it can be asserted with certainty that the introduction of a collectivist system in any country situated between Germany and the USSR could by no means jeopardize Moscow's dominance and would amount to an extension of Russia's sphere of cultural and political influence. The strongest national unit in this area is undoubtedly Poland. Well, it does not seem that Polish communism is, or could become, strong enough to threaten Russia's absolute supremacy in any team uniting the two nations. Thus, it seems that the communizing of the group of countries lying between Germany and Russia is in the interest of international collectivism, as well as in the interest of the Russian *raison d'état*" (*ibidem*).

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"Kultura" after World War II. The testimony of Jerzy Giedroyc himself suggests that he fully shared the position of his closest associate.[25]

But Bocheński's neo-federalist concepts had the most considerable inspirational power. He was undoubtedly a precursor of "Kultura's" concept of the eastern policy. After the War, the monthly created by Giedroyc linked the idea of regaining independence with support for the independence aspirations of our neighbors to the East. Even before the War, Bocheński wrote about the need to equip foreign policy with ideas that would build Poland's attractiveness in the international arena. He was an author of thoughtful geopolitical analyses and an opponent of subordinating foreign policy to ideological preferences. At the same time, he believed that one of the factors of the strength of real politics was the introduction of supranational values into international circulation. Before the War, he wanted Poland to set an example of a high standard of protecting the rights of national minorities. In designing a Polish emigration policy, he postulated linking the Polish cause with the fight for the independence of nations subjugated by the Soviet Union. Parisian "Kultura" continued Bocheński's philosophy to the benefit of the Polish cause.

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Letter of 11 March 1975 written by Jan Erdman to Adam Majewski (in the author's archives).

ABSTRAKT

Ważnym aspektem badania myśli politycznej jest rozpoznawanie jej kreatywności, wyrażającej się w zdolności do krytycznej oceny przeszłości oraz formułowania prekursorskich idei w momentach radykalnych zmian społecznych i politycznych. Niewątpliwie ten przymiot miała myśl polityczna Adolfa Bocheńskiego obecna w tekstach opublikowanych w czasie II wojny światowej. Idee sformułowane przez Bocheńskiego stanowiły ważne źródło inspiracji dla programu paryskiej „Kultury", będącej najbardziej wpływowym ośrodkiem polskiej emigracji politycznej po 1945 r. Prekursorska myśl polityczna Bocheńskiego inspirowała krytyczne podejście pisma Jerzego Giedroycia do układu społecznego Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej i wolę wsparcia przemian na rzecz uobywatelnienia grup społecznych wykluczonych dotąd z aktywnego udziału w życiu wspólnoty narodowej. Jeszcze większe znaczenie inspirujące miały koncepcje neofederalistyczne Bocheńskiego. Był on bez wątpienia prekursorem koncepcji polityki wschodniej paryskiej „Kultury". Projektując powojenną politykę polskiej emigracji, postulował związanie sprawy polskiej z walką o niepodległość państwową narodów ujarzmionych przez Związek Radziecki, w sposób szczególny zaś z ideą niepodległości Ukrainy.

Słowa kluczowe: Adolf Bocheński; Jerzy Giedroyc; paryska „Kultura"; koncepcja polityki wschodniej; niepodległość Ukrainy