

INTRODUCTION



The papers presented here are the result of the conference “What’s *New* in the New Europe? Redefining Culture, Politics, Identity” which took place July 11–15, 2016. The conference was organized by ISSEI (The International Society for the Study of European Ideas) and the Faculty of International and Political Studies, University of Lodz, Poland. It was an honor for the Faculty of International and Political Studies to be invited by ISSEI to host its 2016 biennial international conference. Previous hosts of the prestigious conference include Amsterdam (1988); Leuven (1990); Aalborg (1992); Graz (1994); Utrecht (1996); Haifa (1998); Bergen (2000); Aberystwyth (2002); Pamplona (2004); Malta (2006); Helsinki (2008); Ankara (2010); Cyprus (2012); Porto (2014).

As Dr. Edna Rosenthal, the conference co-chair and the editor of the ISSEI’s periodical, *The European Legacy*, explained in the conference’s call for papers, the title of the 2016 meeting in Lodz was not coincidental. “What’s *New* in the New Europe? Redefining Culture, Politics, Identity” was to become an international interdisciplinary forum to discuss the changes that had occurred in Europe in the past quarter-century. In her words, they were

dramatic, rapid and unforeseeable. These changes—from the rise of the Solidarity Movement in Poland in the early 1980s to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the unification of Germany, the dissolution of the Soviet Bloc, through the creation of the Eurozone, to the enlargement of the Union to 28 states—seemed to reaffirm the spirit of Europa, the cradle and carrier of Western civilization. They also seemed to amply justify the ideal of the New Europe as defined by the European Union: to create a peaceful and prosperous Europe. This vision, it was hoped, would heal the continent, torn and destroyed by two world wars, and consolidate its central role in the global arena of world politics. Recent events, however, have seriously undermined this vision of peace and prosperity, including the global financial crisis, the political crisis in Ukraine, the humanitarian crisis of immigration, and the repercussions of the political upheavals across the Middle East, Europe’s geographical neighbor. It would

seem that Europe, that symbol of a united and peaceful Europe, cannot be upheld without examining what Europe is today, without, that is, attending to Europe's own self-understanding alongside how it is seen by non-Europeans, from east to west. Since ideals and realities have a history, often a very long history, and since our terms of reference are determined by particular methodologies and disciplines, the attempt to examine the ideal in light of the real, to assess what is new in the New Europe, calls for multiple perspectives on the ever-changing faces of Europe.

The conference in Lodz was attended by an impressive number of international academics, who were able to interact over several days in a variety of contexts. They presented and discussed their research in a range of topical workshops. In addition, there were plenary lectures and film shows. The organizers also invited the participants to attend entertainment activities which demonstrated some of the most interesting aspects of the town and its culture. For example, the University of Lodz Students' Folklore Ensemble presented their program in the colorful traditional clothes of the town and province, and a group of students of the Higher Musical School performed their professional musical arrangements. Other social events and coffee breaks enabled scholars to network over local foods and cakes baked by the famous local bakery and confectionery.

Conference participants were also invited to watch some movies about the City of Lodz and Polish culture. Particular interest was evoked by *The Promised Land*, directed by Andrzej Wajda, who received in 2000 the Oscar for Lifetime Achievement. The movie was based on a novel written by Wladyslaw Reymont, the 1924 Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature. It shows the history of Lodz at the end of the nineteenth century, as it was becoming a quickly developing manufacturing center for textiles in Poland. Finding itself under the Russian partition during this time, Lodz was one of the largest cities of the Russian Empire. The movie is highly critical of the blood-thirsty factory owners who took advantage of the newly born working class.

The other movie that drew the attention of the conference participants was *Karski & the Lords of Humanity*, a 2015 documentary directed by Slawomir Grundberg. The documentary shows the life of Jan Karski, who, as a member of the Polish underground, infiltrated the Warsaw Ghetto, a Nazi Transit Camp. He was next sent to Britain and the United States as an eyewitness of the atrocities. He informed the Allied powers of Nazi crimes against the Jews of Europe and warned the Western powers of the ongoing Holocaust.

Dr. Edna Rosenthal presented the journal *European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms—the Journal of the International Society for the Study of European Ideas*,

which is an international, interdisciplinary peer-review periodical in operation since 1976. It is published by Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group (UK), and included in the Thomson Reuters and Humanities Citation Index. The journal appears seven times a year online and in print. In 1996, it was listed as one of “The 10 Best Magazines of 1996.” In 2010, *The European Legacy* was rated by the Australian Government’s Australian Research Council as being among the top 15% global academic journals. It was included in a category where publishing “would enhance the author’s standing, showing they have real engagement with the global research community and that they have something to say about problems of some significance.”

Professor Krystyna Kujawska Courtney presented the *International Studies: Interdisciplinary Political and Cultural Journal*, published since 2004 by the Faculty of International and Political Studies, the University of Lodz. It is available in two formats—on the de Gruyter platform and in print by the University of Lodz Publishing House. It is one of the first journals of this kind, not only in Poland but also in Central and Eastern Europe. Its scope is not limited to the region; on the contrary, it aims at bringing to its readers the most interesting perspectives and opinions about current global issues along with the most topical and innovative research in the area of international, cultural and political studies. The *IS* publishes essays that vary in focus and methodology. In pursuit of the goal of continued excellence, it had invariably been dependent on the contributions of our colleagues working in other disciplines, such as philosophy, literature and anthropology. To date, the journal has generated a worldwide interest and has received quality submissions from all over the globe. It collects and publishes articles in special thematic issues, but also accepts proposals which are not connected with their current call for papers. The *IS* is on the Polish Ministry of Higher Education’s List of Eminent Journals.

At the heart of the ISSEI 2016 program were the 24 workshops, in which over 160 speakers participated. The wide range of subjects topics included “Evolving Identities in a Globalist Age: Constant Transition vs Stability”; “What’s Not New in the New Europe: Ancient Answers to Modern Questions”; “European Higher Education”; “Direct Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989”; “The Remains of Politics / The Politics That Remains”; “New Nationalisms in European and Postcolonial Discourses”; “Critical Reflections on the New and the Old in European Culture”; “Irony as Tool of Critique Resistance in European Literature and the Arts”; “The Linguistic and Cultural Manifestations of War and Terrorism”; “Classical Rationalism and the Politics

of Europe”; “Fading Europe? Confronting Limitations / Envisioning Alternatives”; “Shakespeare and/in Europe: Connecting Voices”; “Globalization and the New Europe: A Nietzschean Perspective”; “The Republic of Letters and Political Reality: How Intellectuals Relate to Politicians and Vice Versa”; “The Remains of Politics / The Politics That Remains”; “Critical Reflections on the New and the Old in European Culture”; “Fading Europe? Confronting Limitations / Envisioning Alternatives” among others.

The conference papers listed in this publication constitute only a selection of the discussions we had—many conference participants have already published their works in other journals or monographs. The variety of research areas they cover are not amenable to a simple classification. The three parts they are grouped into represent the dominant research themes their works describe: “European Culture and Its Multiple Voices” edited by Dr. Agnieszka Miksza; “Politics in the New Europe” edited by Dr. Tomasz Fisiak; and “A New Enquiry Concerning the Old World” edited by Dr. Grzegorz Zinkiewicz. I would like to express here my deepest gratitude to the editors of these sections for their work and involvement in the preparation of this volume.

I would like also to apologize for the delay in publishing the papers, which was beyond our control. In this context we would like to thank you, all the conference participants, hoping that the ISSEI conference in Lodz 2016 has left some indelible memories, a part of which is this publication.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Edna Rosenthal, for selecting the University of Lodz for the ISSEI 2016 conference and giving us guidance and freedom in its organization. In doing so, she has given us one of the most rewarding experiences of our professional lives.

Krystyna Kujawińska Courtney