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PROF. ZDZISŁAW MACH

is a Professor of Sociology and Social Anthropology, and the founder and former Director of the Institute of European Studies, and one of the main authors of the European Studies curriculum in Poland. In his academic career, Prof. Mach has been, among other, the Dean of the Faculty of International and Political Studies at the Jagiellonian University (2016-2019) and the Rector's Proxy for International Cooperation (2012-2016). He is the chairperson of the Commission on European Matters of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences. His research interests cover identity issues such as nationalism, minorities and ethnicity, the development of European citizenship, migration and the reconstruction of identity, the ethnic origin of a nation and construction of identities as well as the development of the idea of Europe.



PROF. ZDZISŁAW MACH

Jagiellonian University, Poland

THE CURSE AND THE BLESSINGS OF THE SACRED PAST. THE POLISH RIGHT IN SEARCH FOR LEGITIMACY.

ABSTRACT:

The lecture discusses the process of construction of the past developed by the Polish right-wing political party Law and Justice, especially during the years 2015-2023 when it had the government. The discussion focuses on the attempt to re-invent the narrative of the memory of the post-communist transformation of Poland and on the process of construction of the memory of so-called “cursed soldiers”, who continued fighting against the communist regime in Poland after the end of WW II. The main argument is that the radical right in Poland needed to create a new version of the story of the transformation in order to build an image of their own leaders (the Kaczynski brothers and their associates) in opposition to those who were known as the leaders of the anti-communist opposition and transformation (Wałęsa). The radical right needed new heroes of the Polish national fight for independence who refused any compromise with the communist regime. These new heroes would become “patron saints” of the new, radical regime and its version of the Polish transformation of the early 1990s, the compromise with the communists and the liberal economic reforms which resulted in the impoverishment of many Poles. The populist discourse of the Law and Justice needed such an interpretation of history to legitimize their power and their radical policy against economic and cultural liberalism. In general, the new interpretation of history was aimed at promoting nationalism against globalism and European identity, presenting Poland as threatened in its identity and sovereignty by enemies (Germany, Russia, and the liberal EU).